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Indus Treaty

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Islamabad has asked the World Bank to honour the Indus Water Treaty executed between India and Pakistan in 1960. This is in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s remark that India is free to use the water which flows into the sea. This is not correct because according to the treaty India cannot use more than 20 percent of the Indus water.

The World Bank spent many years to persuade New Delhi and Islamabad to reach an agreement. I recall that afterwards Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Martial Law Administrator General Mohammad Ayub travelled in the same car Mian Iftakharuddin suggested if they could sign an agreement on Kashmir in the same spirit, both remained silent. Iftakharuddin was then the top Muslim League leader who had joined it after being a Congressman for many years.

According to the treaty, India could draw water from the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej while Pakistan from the Indus, the Chenab and Jehlum. Even though both counties felt that they could utilize the water which was flowing through their country, they refrained from doing so because of the treaty. In fact, the Indus Water

Treaty is an example before the world that it held the ground even when the two countries went to war.

Modi’s off-the-cuff remark has created consternation in Pakistan, forcing it to appeal to the World Bank to “fulfill its obligation” relating to the treaty. In a letter to World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, Pakistan Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has said the treaty did not provide for a situation wherein a party can ‘pause’ performance of its obligations and this attitude of the World Bank would prejudice Pakistan’s interests and rights under the treaty.

I think that the fear of Pakistan is exaggerated. The country does not want any alteration in the treaty. In its reaction, the World Bank has said that it has paused its arbitration in the water dispute between India and Pakistan, saying it is doing so to protect the Indus Water Treaty. India would take no unilateral step to stop the water going unused into the Arabian Sea. However, there is a case where the two countries should sit and hammer out another treaty because the old one is outdated. Then it was thought that the water given to Rajasthan would be utilized by the rest of the country because the state,

part of the desert would not be able to do so. But this has turned out to be wrong. The state has utilized the water allotted to it and wants more.

When Prime Minister Modi wants to have good relations with Pakistan and has wished his counterpart Nawaz Sharif on this birthday last week, Modi would not take any step which would harm Pakistan. There were enough of provocations from Islamabad like the attacks on Pathankot and Uri that killed many civilians to act unilaterally. Even otherwise, it is in the interest of both countries that peace should prevail in the region. Both would benefit.

Kashmir is the problem which divides the two countries. Representatives of both countries should sit across the table and sort it out. Nawaz Sharif unnecessarily harangued Kashmir on the Pakistan television networks that Kashmir belonged to Pakistan and there would be no peace in the region until it became part of his country.

This irresponsible statement, coming as it does from a country's Prime Minister, has affected the tourist season in the valley still further. So much so that even Syed Shah Geelani, the pro-Pakistan Hurriyat leader, joined a procession to appeal to the tourists to return to the valley. Both he and Yasin Malik, who wants the valley to be independent, were part of the procession. They were particular that the message should reach New Delhi so that it takes steps to see that the tourists return to Kashmir.

The separatists in the valley do not realize that the tourists flocked to the valley as if they were visiting part of India. The demand

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Remembering Viswabharan

Varughese George

P. Visambharan who led the socialist movement in Kerala for several decades passed away at his ancestral home in Kovalam in Thiruvananthapuram on 9th December, 2016. He entered public activity through Travancore Students Congress that was affiliated to All India Students Congress. That was in mid-1940s. Though the country was preparing for national independence, in Travancore the Diwan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer had been meditating about an independent Travancore insulating it from Indian nation. The progressive forces in Travancore were fighting the Diwan against this idea and suppression of civil and democratic rights was rampant. Travancore Students Congress convened its first state conference at Trivandrum in August 1947 and Asoka Mehta was to have inaugurated the conference, but the Diwan imposed a ban on the conference and clamped a black law forbidding assembly. But students held the conference violating the ban at Trivandrum Railway station premises. The President of Travancore Students Congress, K. Prabhakaran and Secretary N. D. Jose were arrested. P. Viswambharan was the moving spirit behind the conference.

At that time he was a BA student of University College, Trivandrum. Asoka Mehta, who had to wait at Madras due to the ban came to Trivandrum since then and confabulated with the young socialists about constituting the Trivandrum District committee of Socialist Party. In 1948 when

Socialist Party was formally formed P. Viswambharan was appointed the District secretary of the party. Meanwhile Jayaprakash Narayan deputed T. S. Ramaswamy from Nagercoil to help socialists in Trivandrum to organize unions in unorganized sectors. T. S. Ramaswamy was a student of Lucknow University and an activist of All India Students Congress. With Ramaswamy's help Juba Ramakrishna Pillai organized the Scavengers' Union, S. M. Noohu formed the loading and unloading workers' and P. P. Wilson and Subbayya mobilised the estate workers. Thus the social base of the party was slowly being expanded in Trivandrum District. In 1954 elections to the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly eight party nominees including P. Viswambharan won from Trivandrum District that helped the formation of the first socialist state government in the country led by Pattom Thanu Pillai. P. Viswambharan was elected the secretary of the legislature party.

In the elections to the Kerala Assembly in 1960 P. Viswambharan was elected from the Nemom constituency for the second time. In Lok Sabha elections of 1967 P. Viswambharan was elected from Trivandrum constituency. He was also the secretary of Praja Socialist Party in the state during this period. In September 1973 socialist Party and CPI(M) began consultations on making a joint platform to fight the anti-people policies. The two parties decided to form united

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A ploy to retain power by confusing citizens

**Sandeep Pandey
Rahul Pandey**

Although some people, including one of the authors of this article, had been advocating withdrawal of bigger denomination notes for quite some time, the intent was different from the one with which what the Narendra Modi government is doing now. It was believed that, in spite of the fact that cash comprises only 6 % of total black money in India, with banning of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 notes it would become inconvenient for people to hoard large amount of black cash as well as to pay huge sums as bribes. It was never the suggestion to reintroduce bigger denomination notes. They were supposed to be banned permanently. By bringing in new Rs. 500, Rs. 1000 and Rs. 2000 notes the government is creating new opportunities for hoarding and corruption.

Utter mismanagement

The manner in which decisions have been changed almost every day regarding limits and rules for depositing old currencies and withdrawal from bank has made a mockery of the functioning of the entire financial system. One among the many ludicrous moments was when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) directed the banks not to accept amounts bigger than Rs. 5000 with more than a week to go before the period during which one could deposit old notes was to expire and the Finance Minister (FM) said there was no limit but people should deposit whatever they have only once. After a confusion which prevailed for a couple of days both decisions were withdrawn. There was no well thought out rationale

to most orders and there was little coordination between the ministers, including the Prime Minister, and the banks, including the RBI. In the entire process the RBI has lost whatever autonomy it had carefully built over the years. It is literally dancing to the tune of Prime Minister and FM now.

While on the one hand people were given freedom to deposit whatever they had including black money with a 49.5 % tax, whenever somebody came up with big amounts the Income Tax authorities were after that person. People who would queue up in front of banks found that they could not withdraw even the limited amount of their own money that the government was promising them. To avoid long queues people who went later to deposit old currency more than a week before the officially declared deadline of 30th December, 2016, were being questioned about the source of money. With the exception of the Emergency, never before in the history of independent India the government has held the system hostage in this manner. The government is not willing to honour its own announcements and keeps going back on promises. The credibility of the entire banking system has been eroded for a long time to come. Now people will remain ever suspicious of this institution and its decisions.

Within days of new notes being introduced large amounts started being recovered from people, even in new currency. A question to be asked is, when the government had

put a limit of Rs. 24,000 and Rs. 2,000 which could be withdrawn from banks and Automatic Teller Machines, respectively, how did big amounts make public appearance? Could it have been possible without the connivance of bank officials? In the period since demonetization was enforced we have heard about a number of people caught with lakhs and crores of rupees, part or full in new currency, but we hardly came to know about any action against bank or RBI officials as culprits for the release of big amounts in new currency. No prominent big businessman or business group, especially among politically influential ones who are known to deal in black money, has been raided either.

So, we have a bizarre scenario. Ordinary citizen is being treated as a culprit in her dealings with the banks and big offenders are not even being touched.

Major source of corruption unquestioned

Nor did we hear of any raids on big politicians or political parties when a fundamental reason why black money exists and is encouraged in our economy, institutionally, is that it is used for contesting elections. It is a known fact that of all political parties, Indian National Congress (INC) and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) are the top two recipients of unaccounted cash donations. Over the past decade both parties have reported to have received a total of Rs. 5,450 crores from unknown sources, most of which is likely to be

black, i.e., tax on which was not paid. A significant portion of these funds would likely have been contributed by big businessmen and corporate houses. Corruption in government schemes and projects is another big source of funds, especially for ruling parties. Government officials, who act as agents of parties, most having assets disproportionate to their known source of income were also spared.

This has a serious meaning. Since no action has been taken against people who were involved in hoarding big amounts in black which is used for contesting elections, the system of corruption and black money financing the political parties would go on. In other words, the cycle of corruption would continue as before and the governance would keep getting compromised. Then what was the purpose of all this drama.

A recent survey by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch shows that BJP received the most amount in donations, Rs. 76.85 crores, in amounts above Rs. 20,000, from 613 donors whereas the INC got Rs. 20.42 crores from 918 donors in the financial year 2015-16. The amount received by BJP was three times bigger than combined donations of the remaining six national parties including Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India, Nationalist Congress Party and All India Trinamool Congress. BahujanSamaj Party did not receive any donation bigger than Rs. 20,000 for the 11th consecutive year. Significantly, BJP received Rs. 67.99 cr. from 283 corporate donors while INC got Rs. 8.83 cr. from 57 donors. Remaining Rs. 8.86 cr. to BJP was contributed by 330 individual donors while Rs.

11.24 cr. to INC was contributed by 859 individuals. PAN details were missing for Rs. 8.11 cr. donations from 318 donors to INC and for Rs. 2.19 cr. donations from 71 donors to BJP. From the above facts it is clear that BJP, which started receiving more donations than INC only since the last three financial years, has now five times more private corporations contributing more than seven times to it than to INC. Similarly BJP has fewer but bigger individual donors than INC. Interestingly, BJP donors are more adept at working with the system which implies they'll most easily adjust to the cashless economy than, for example, traditional donors to BSP. The cash donations, of amounts in excess of Rs. 20,000, were Rs. 1.17 cr. to INC whereas only Rs. 51,000 to BJP.

At the same time the real culprit, the total cash donations in amounts less than Rs. 20,000 by each donor, as reported by BJP and INC, comprise more than half to four-fifths of their total reported donations. In 2014-15, out of total of Rs. 970 cr. donations to BJP, Rs. 505 were from unknown sources. For INC the corresponding figures were Rs. 593 cr. and Rs. 445 cr. As per Election Commission norms such donations have to be merely reported and their details are not required to be disclosed.

In reality the total black money fund of these parties is likely to be much more than what they report.

Truth is all parties use black money in elections. This is the reason they got together to scuttle the formation of Jan Lokpal Bill during Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement. Many parties, especially the ones at the state level, rely on such donations largely from mid-sized merchants, businessmen, mafia and criminals whereas others, such

as BJP, are funded heavily by large corporations too. Therefore they push for policies favourable to their major funders, even at the expense of hurting interests of the poor and ordinary folk. It was not very long ago when Modi government unsuccessfully made three attempts to weaken the land acquisition law. Compared to politicians like Mayawati, who disallowed Reliance Fresh stores in UP and Nitish Kumar, who prevented entry of Special Economic Zones in Bihar, BJP will have to play more to the corporate tune.

While the black money which Narendra Modi promised to bring from foreign banks never came, the government has increased the limit under 'Liberalised Remittance Scheme' to \$ 2,50,000 per year from \$75,000, allowing more money to leave the country, which doesn't have a role in national economy after it is gone.

Grim present and grim future

Therefore, in the short run, the entire demonetisation exercise has caused only a temporary inconvenience to a few small and mid-sized black money hoarders and none whatsoever to big businessmen, bankers, politicians and political parties. On the contrary, it has allowed innumerable black money hoarders to launder their cash into white, as almost all of the high denomination old notes have come back to the banks. In the future all corrupt and black money related activities will continue unabated.

The push for digitisation is likely to increase online transactions and make them accountable, however, that will be only a blip in the face of overwhelming reliance on cash among the small businessmen,

shopkeepers, farmers, traders, distributors, less skilled workers and informal sector entrepreneurs. In any case, enabling people to adopt digitisation and making economic transactions accountable requires drastic upgrade of infrastructure rather than demonetisation.

The short term effects of demonetisation – positive or negative – are going to be eclipsed by some deeply damaging impacts in the medium-to-long term. We are listing below some of these impacts only briefly:

(a) Shifting the focus of development and governance from “welfare of people” to “sacrificing the poor for fabricated nationalist causes”.

At least 100 people have died since 8th November directly because of mismanaged cash supply. Many poignant videos available on the social media show how some persons committed suicide because they could not draw money for urgent family needs, some could not save their loved ones as private hospitals refused to treat them without deposit of fee, several aged people could not survive the exhaustion of standing in long queues, countless daily wage workers have lost jobs and desperately cut daily intake of food in their families, and many – mostly the poor and low income citizens – have been subjected to humiliating experiences of being part of disorderly crowds and melee outside banks. A few deaths and unruly queues at banks are still being reported every day by some local media and activists even after 45 days of banning old notes. If the government would like to propagate the myth that all these people are foot soldiers in the fight against corruption, i.e., they are suffering

for a national cause, should these deaths not be compensated in the same manner as the sacrifice of a soldier on border or death even in some accident or natural calamity? Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Yadav, has taken the initiative to give Rs. 2 lakhs each to families of 14 such ‘demonetisation victims,’ but it is the responsibility of the central government to undertake such an exercise nationally.

While all this ought to generate outrage and trigger emergency relief measures, what we have witnessed instead are highly muted reports in the mainstream national media and absolutely no words of grief from the Prime Minister or his senior ministers. Real suffering of people solely due to incompetent management of demonetisation is being justified, even glorified by some, as a minor cost in return for greater future gain. By all realistic analysis, the purported future gain remains a figment of imagination.

(b) Damaging the reliability of key institutions of economic and financial governance.

As mentioned before, large-scale laundering of black cash into white has happened since 8th November. Well connected touts, some bank executives and politicians have acted as efficient conduits in this process. The government’s failure to prevent or even control such large-scale and widespread laundering has shown it to be administratively incompetent. Pathetic planning and execution of cash replenishment has only reconfirmed this fact.

During financial years 2013-14 to 2015-16, twenty-nine state owned banks wrote off a total of Rs. 1.14 lakh crore of bad debts, the largest so far and much more than

they had done cumulatively in the preceding nine years. At present the top ten corporate groups owe close to Rs. 6 lakh crore to state-owned banks and financial institutions. According to the Finance Ministry, the total outstanding amount in 2,071 accounts in state run banks that have been classified as non-performing assets or bad loans is Rs. 3.88 lakh crore. Thousands of crores of loan write-offs of some of the wealthiest businessmen were announced recently. All this stands in glaring contradiction to post-demonetisation acts of making lakhs of ordinary citizens go through the distress of cash crunch, lost jobs and reduced incomes and temporary small-time raids on some mid-sized cash hoarders.

Forcing vast deposits of public money into banks, a minor percentage (but significant amount) of which might remain with the banks for a long time, will relieve the banks: they can tide over their bad debts, and thus pave the way to grant further loans to the same defaulter companies. This will severely compromise financial governance. Rather than strengthening the due process of monitoring non-performing assets, making defaulter debtors accountable and tightening the discipline of lending and other banking activities, the current move sends a wrong message that largest defaulters can be let off the hook easily, the banks need not become more independent and fiscally responsible, and short cut measures can be relied on to rescue both. This is akin to a banana republic.

(c) Farmers and small and mid-sized businesses affected.

Lack of cash in the economy affected the livelihood of farmers and small businesses. The farmer

was not able to sell her produce and procure seed, fertiliser, etc. for the Rabi crop season. Similarly, small and mid-sized businesses which rely on cash for purchase and sale were badly affected, some had to close down. People lost their income by standing repeatedly for hours in front of banks and ATMs, which was a terrible national waste. The arbitrary rules now force people to make a number of visits to banks for tasks which used to be accomplished in a single trip. The banking system came to a stand still for some of its regular activities like opening of new accounts during this period of madness.

(d) Legitimising “reactionary decisions and event management combined with nationalist propaganda” rather than “serious pursuit of development policies” as a solution to nation building.

In these last two and a half years the Modi government has no worthwhile result to show. New employment generation in 2015-16 has been the lowest in the past seven years, and both investment and exports have seen a decline. Budgets of public health care and education have fallen in spite of India’s pitiable performance in these crucial sectors and an urgent need for upscale. All major initiatives of this government such as Make In India, Swachh Bharat, and Start Up India have been utter failures. They have sucked up thousands of crores of rupees with no significant outcome on the ground.

While demonetisation too is an event backed with similar government propaganda, it is the most tragic so far. It has caused enormous distress to the poor and is likely to impart a big dent in the economy. The impact of job losses

and fallen incomes on the health and well-being of families of daily wage workers and small farmers will be prolonged over several months or more than a year. Fabricating emotions of patriotism around demonetisation has helped to divert attention from its real impacts.

Some of these adverse socio-economic impacts might eventually become irreversible or the cost of recovering from them could be extremely high. This is so because

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of independence or the threat of disturbance has scared them. They have picked up some other hill resorts in India which may not be as beautiful as the valley but compares favourably with it. They would wait and see whether the peace had really returned before drawing up their itinerary for the next year.

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

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

the strategy that is being pursued by the government, i.e. series of events managed with nationalist propaganda, will probably keep many people confused for longer periods and delay the process of getting the focus firmly back on the real development priorities of citizens’ health care, education and employment. But for how long can the people’s discontentment due to absence of security and economic opportunities be contained?

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

The Indus Water Treaty can be replaced with another treaty but the consent of Pakistan is necessary. When it has not been willing to allow getting electricity from the run of the river it is difficult to imagine that it would agree to the use of rivers in the Indus system even though water from them is pouring into the Arabian Sea without being used for either irrigation or hydroelectric projects.

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

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opposition fronts in all states and in Kerala it was known as Left Democratic Front. P. Viswambharan was the first convener of LDF in Kerala. The elections to the national executive of Socialist Party were held in Calicut in December 1974 during the national conference and P. Viswambharan who was also the Chairman of the Kerala state committee had lost the election. Affirming moral responsibility he resigned the post of convener of LDF.

When Emergency was declared in 1975 P. Viswambharan showed his true mettle and courage. He activated all party units against the Emergency and co-ordinated party and underground campaign against Emergency. Along with veteran Gandhians he toured all districts and conducted meetings against forty second constitutional amendment. A distress relief fund to help the families of political prisoners was formed with M. M. Thomas as President and P. Viswambharan as secretary along with Rev. M. J. Joseph as treasurer. He was also the secretary of Peoples Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights during this period. Later he became the president of Janata Party and Janata Dal in Kerala. He retired from active politics since then. He was a great benefactor of Janata weekly and wrote about Kerala politics on several occasions. On 10th December evening his body was cremated with full state honors in the compound of his house at Kovalam.

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Triple talaq is neither constitutional nor a Quranic form of divorce

Irfan Engineer

The observations of Allahabad High Court on Thursday stating that the Muslim personal law on triple talaq didn't give unbridled authority to a Muslim male to unilaterally divorce his wife would be welcomed by Muslim women who have been victims of misuse of the provision in particular, and to Muslim women in general, who face the threat of capricious use of the authority not granted to men by the Quran.

Though the court refused to comment on the legality of triple talaq enabling Muslim men to unilaterally divorce their wives by uttering the word "talaq" thrice, its observations are a tight slap on Muslim Personal Law Board, which had claimed in its affidavit before the Supreme Court in a writ petition filed by Shayara Bano case that the court had no jurisdiction to hold triple talaq as invalid from of divorce and claiming protection of Article 25 of the Constitution, under which every person is entitled to freely profess, practice and propagate religion. The right granted under Article 25 is subject to other provisions of the chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution. Right to practice religion is therefore subject to Article 14 — right to gender equality.

Severing marital relations instantly by pronouncing the word "talaq" thrice is not only anti-constitutional, it is also anti-Quranic. Quranic verse 2:229 states: "A divorce is only permissible twice: After that (the parties should either hold together on equitable terms,

or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah. . If you (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she gives something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by Allah; so do not transgress them, if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others)".

Pronouncing talaq in one sitting was a pre-Islamic practice which was not validated by the Quran. The second khalifa Hazrat Umar invoked this pre-Islamic form of divorce and made it irrevocable to punish men who would cheat their second wife they wanted to marry. They would claim that they had divorced their first wife by pronouncing "talaq" thrice knowing that it was not valid divorce.

This is not the first time that a high court has held triple talaq to be invalid in law. In Rukia Khatun's case, the division bench of Gauhati High Court at para 13 held that the correct law of talaq, as ordained by Quran, is: (i) that "talaq" must be for a reasonable cause; and (ii) that it must be preceded by an attempt of reconciliation between the husband and the wife by two arbiters, one chosen by the wife from her family and the other by the husband from

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Principles of Socialist Party (India)

1. All human beings are equal. Discrimination and divisions based on caste, religion, gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, qualification etc. are human created concepts. Socialist Party (India) considers elimination of inequality and prevailing of a sense of justice in society, among human beings as its main objective.
2. All human beings have an equal right to the natural resources of the earth. Natural resources should be used to meet the needs of the human race and not to earn profit. We believe that human being, the last arrival on earth, is embedded in nature and will survive only when the nature thrives.
3. The purpose of economic policy should be to provide employment to all and GDP growth should be a result of employment generation and equitable distribution of resources. The income of the working class, which includes farmers, labourers and artisans, should not be less than those in the business and service sectors of the economy. According to the Lohia's tenets, the ratio of lowest and highest income should not be more than 1:10. Instead of defining below poverty line we should rather set the upper income line.
4. Individual enterprise and innovation should be encouraged keeping in mind overarching socialist principles. Trusteeship principle of Mahatma Gandhi should prevail over the idea of private ownership.
5. Education and healthcare should be equal and free of cost for all.
6. Food, clothing, housing, water, energy, communication and transportation, the basic needs of each family, should also be taken care of.
7. The security of people should be based on mutual trust and not on weapons and violence. We dream of a world which is free of arms and ammunition.
8. Production and consumption processes should be sustainable, low-carbon, and non-polluting. The principle of 'Reduce-Recycle-Reuse' should be the basis of human activities. Socialist Party (India) likes to describe itself as the green party of India.
9. We envision a world free from alcoholism, tobacco and drugs abuse.
10. We want to build a society which is free of political and administrative corruption.
11. Socialist Party (India) believes in promoting rational thinking.
12. We need to ensure that we are not straying away from the enshrined principles in our constitution's preamble.
13. All laws made during English regime should be abolished and new laws based upon the founding principles of human rights and democracy be passed and ratified.
14. Land acquisition should be done in cultivable land instead the land on which industries/institutions that have shut down should be first acquired.
15. Until internal party democracy becomes a reality, strengthening democracy in the country is not possible. If parties cannot function democratically then we should consider the option of party-less democracy.

To support us, please make regular contributions in the name of Socialist Party (India), Allahabad Bank, Hazratganj Branch, Lucknow, Account Number: 50084256339, IFSC No.: ALLA0210062. Contact phones: 0522-2286423, 9795000546 (Pawan Singh), 9839422521 (Chunnilal)

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Manifesto

If Socialist Party (India) wins the 2017 Vidhan Sabha elections to form the next government in UP, then it will:

Deliver the following within 1 month:

1. Implement ban on liquor immediately and effectively control addictions
2. Ensure that the corruption ends in government offices as well as extortion made by police and touts ends
3. End the category of Very Important Person (VIP) and Very VIP (VVIP). We will also end the use of red and blue beacon lights on vehicles
4. Call upon central government to make social, economic and caste-based population survey of 2011 public
5. Latest order pertaining to sale of land belonging to a Dalit will be changed back.
6. Stone and sand mining will be strictly regulated so that illegal mining comes to an end.
7. Foreign Direct Investment will be banned altogether.

Deliver the following within 1 year:

1. Implement right to property of female child to father's property. Register wife's name in all movable and immovable property of husband.
2. Implement public distribution system by making woman as family head and providing every family with wheat at Re 1/kg and rice at Rs 2/kg, and every

individual with 14 kgs of food grains, daal and dry fruits. We will implement the scheme universally.

3. Reduce public transport fares for the women and children under 14 years of age just like it is done for senior citizens. We will increase number of vehicles driven by female drivers.
4. Create new employment opportunities for the young people and women. We will also provide employment guarantee for 100 days every year to the people in urban areas just like it is offered to those in rural areas, and to unemployed educated people from urban-rural areas. If government is unable to provide employment then it will offer respectable unemployment compensation.
5. End the tradition of manual scavenging and stop human beings from going inside sewers for cleaning purposes. Tasks that are detrimental for human health will be done by machines.
6. Ensure that the food given in schools and anganwadi is of good quality and nutritious so that malnutrition affecting half of children of this country can be eliminated. We will also make it mandatory for every religious centre to run 'langar' for people of all religion and caste.
7. Ensure that the minimum wage of contractual employees is Rs 18000 per month. Likewise minimum daily wage of labourers should be Rs 720 per day.
8. Ensure that the minimum support price of food grains should be at least 1.5 times of the investment

made by the farmers. We will establish Farmers Commission which will decide this price. Farm labourers will get their wage from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme so that farm labourers are ensured minimum wage at least and the burden is not on the farmers. Likewise prices of other commodities in the market will not be allowed to be more than 1.5 times of their manufacturing/ producing cost.

9. Ensure that the pension amount for widows, senior citizens and those who are physically challenged is Rs 5000 per month.
10. Implement 50% reservation in jobs and Vidhan Sabha for women. We will demand 50% reservation for women in the Parliament. Reservation policy will take into account the diversity in terms of religion and caste. We will give special attention to those who are physically challenged and transgender people.
11. Ban use of loudspeakers at all religious places and also prohibit organizing private-public programmes on roads. Efforts will be made to stop lavish weddings and no public programme will be allowed which may cause inconvenience to common people.
12. End caste-based discrimination in all educational institutions, workplaces and public places by enacting Rohith Vemula Act.
13. Allot available land in Gram Sabhas to landless farmers and families.

14. National Vendors' Policy will also be implement in Nagar Palika, Town Area.
15. Encroachment on water bodies such as ponds, rivers etc will be removed and efforts will be made to rejuvenate these water bodies.
16. Implement the recommendations of Sachar Committee.
17. Process of disbursing loans by banks will be improved so that poor people are not getting harassed and rich people as well as private companies are not allowed to manoeuvre undue benefits. Loans of farmers will be waived off when necessary to prevent suicides.

Deliver the following within 5 years:

1. Take effective measures to curb violence against women and girls and transgender people in all forms.
2. Construct a toilet in every house within 5 years so that no woman has to go to defecate in the open.
3. Ensure every child goes to school. We will strictly stop child labour. We will implement Allahabad

High Court order that children of those who are receiving salaries from the government and all elected representatives should compulsorily study in government schools. Likewise all those who receive salary from the government and are elected representatives, and all those dependent on them, will have to seek healthcare from government healthcare facilities only.

4. Ensure that education and healthcare is made free for everyone in government institutions. Government will take over all private educational and health institutions. We will ensure there is no shortage of teachers and healthcare providers. We will ensure that there is one small hospital in every gram panchayat and 'mohalla' in urban areas.
5. Strengthen panchayat and urban local bodies by implementing 73rd and 74th amendments of our constitution.
6. Plan for meeting energy needs from renewable clean energy sources such as solar, biogas, biomass, etc.
7. support the initiative to

strengthen syncretic cultural heritage by helping Mahant Yugal Kishore Shastri's attempt to convert his temple into a Sarva-Dharma-Sadhbhav Kendra in Ayodhya. Followers of all religions, even atheists, will be welcome from around the world at this centre.

8. Judicial reforms will be initiated so that justice is delivered in time-bound manner.
9. Those people who are innocent and are in the jail since a long time, will be released.

In 2017 Vidhan Sabha elections in UP, at least half of the candidates of Socialist Party (India) will be women and elections will be contested by spending much less amount than prescribed by the election commission. If Socialist Party (India) gets to form the next government then the Chief Ministerial candidate will also be a woman and most ministries will also be headed by women.

Please come forward to support a first-ever genuine women government in UP in 2017. Please cast your vote in favour of Socialist Party (India) candidate and support them.



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his. If their attempts fail, "talaq" may be effected.

Upholding these observations of the Gauhati High Court, the Supreme Court in the case of Shamim Ara v/s State of UP held, "A plea of previous divorce taken in the written statement cannot at all be treated as pronouncement of talaq by the husband on the wife on the date of

filing of the written statement in the court".

Triple talaq is neither constitutional nor a Quranic form of divorce. Observations of the Allahabad High Court would be before the Supreme Court for consideration in the writ petition filed by Shayara Bano strengthening the petitioner's case.

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Demonetisation: yet another huge fraud on the people - II

Neeraj Jain

This much amount of black money - Rs 3 lakh crore - is just 3% of the total black income generated in the economy this year (Rs 93 lakh crore), and 1% of the black wealth (assuming black wealth to be a low Rs 300 lakh crore). Even assuming that the government is completely successful in eliminating this Rs 3 lakh crore of black money, that means it is only eliminating a very small fraction of the total black income generated in the economy this year, and an even smaller fraction of the black wealth.

Assuming that only the top 3% of the population has black money, this means 3.6 crore people have black money - of around Rs 3 lakh crore. That means an average black money holding of less than Rs 1 lakh per person; and the government is permitting people to deposit Rs 2.5 lakh per person without questions being asked! Of course, not everyone in the top 3% of the population has black incomes, and so many would have black money more than this limit specified by the government. But then, they are finding innovative ways of converting their black money into white. Thus, on the day the demonetisation announcement was made, jewellery shops were reported to be open till 3 am, issuing backdated receipts for purchase of gold, jewellery, etc. People are also resorting to stratagems like employers paying employees salaries for several months in advance, or giving money to the poor to deposit in their Jan Dhan accounts, to be returned later as white money. Of the 25 crore Jan

Dhan accounts opened by the poor, 3 crore accounts have seen a total of nearly Rs 29,000 crore in increased deposits. The tax department simply does not have the infrastructure or resources to investigate these 3 crore Jan Dhan accounts.¹⁸ Modi's pet project of financial inclusion has itself become a robust platform for money laundering!

So, in all probability, the government will not be able to demobilise even Rs 3 lakh crore; at best it may demobilise Rs 50,000 to Rs 70,000 crore. This is precisely what is happening. By mid-December, of the Rs 15.44 lakh crore of notes in circulation, around Rs 13 lakh crore had already come back to the banks, and experts are predicting that it may all end up with nearly 90–95% of the money coming back—so very little is actually going to get demonetised.¹⁹

To quote Prof. Arun Kumar, “If the bulk of the money comes back into the system it will be seen as the most foolish decision by the government involving all pain and no gain.” He stated that the whole exercise will then simply be described as replacement of current stock with negligible demonetisation.²⁰

And on December 6, Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia too admitted that the government was expecting all scrapped notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 to come back into the banking system,²¹ implying that the government has failed in achieving its third objective too.

Past experience

This is not the first time that demonetisation has been done. In 1978, the Morarji Desai Government too had demonetised currency, but it had only demonetised high value notes - Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 notes. In 1978, Rs 1,000 was a lot of money. The step did little to curb the black economy, but at least it did not affect the ordinary people. That is because ordinary people did not use these high value notes; the notes demonetised accounted for only 0.6% of the currency in circulation; so the impact of this demonetisation was not felt by the common people, and life went on as usual. However, even then, the then RBI Governor I.G. Patel had pointed out that “such an exercise seldom produces striking results” since people who have black money on a substantial scale rarely keep it in cash. “The idea that black money or wealth is held in the form of notes tucked away in suit cases or pillow cases is naïve.”²²

Can demonetisation curb black economy?

Be that as it may, what is even more fatuous about the government's exercise of demonetisation is that it is aimed at demobilising only the black money (that is, the illegal cash) stored with people, which is only a fraction of the black income generated in this year, and is an even smaller fraction of the black wealth accumulated in the economy over the past several years. The government is not taking any steps to eliminate, or even curb, black income generation. So, even assuming that a part of the black income generated

this year will be demobilised by demonetisation, black income is going to be generated in the coming year too, and the year after that, and so on, and it may even be more than that generated this year. Be it narcotic drugs or charging capitation fees, or be it hiding of incomes by lawyers and doctors, or be it understating real estate deals or understating industry profits, or be it under-invoicing and over-invoicing in international trade - all that is going to continue in the coming years too. Black money in the form of cash will again be generated in all these transactions. And since the government has introduced notes of an even higher denomination, that is Rs 2,000, storage of black money is going to be that much easier!

There is another reason why the black economy cannot be attacked by demonetisation. As the classical political economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo had pointed out, long before Marx, that capital always flows from the less profitable to the more profitable activities. Therefore, till the government takes steps to make black income generation unattractive, and so long as “black activities” remain profitable, they are going to attract capital.

Is the government serious?

Many people will argue: even if demonetisation cannot significantly curb the black economy, at least the Modi Government has shown its willingness to attack it, and will soon come up with more steps to eradicate this menace.

To begin with, even assuming that the government initially wanted to tackle black money only (and not black income generation), the method adopted, of demonetisation, is bizarre. To give an analogy, if there is a crime in a locality, this

is like the police calling all the residents of the locality to the police station to investigate as to whose hands have bloodstains, or whose eyes are bloodshot, or who was where at the time of the crime, and so on. The correct way to pursue the case is to diligently investigate all the leads available, and then call in for questioning only those who are the suspects. Similar is the case with black money. If there is an honest tax administration that operates without interference, it can through painstaking efforts unearth substantial amount of black incomes and black wealth. Irrespective of how high and mighty a person is, if he/she is prosecuted and sent to jail for tax evasion/black activities, that will act as a deterrent to others. This is what is done in all countries that have taken some effective steps to curb the black economy, such as the US or UK - they have acted to curb the black economy by serious investigation and prosecution.

In contrast, the Indian government, in the name of curbing black money, has through demonetisation put into enormous hardship all people with cash, a majority of whom actually have white money. At the same time, it is wilfully not taking any action against those who really are deeply involved in black income generation and have huge hoards of black wealth. This is evident from so many examples.

For instance, black money is generated in election funding. It is estimated that probably nearly Rs 30,000 crore was spent by parties in the 2014 general election. A major part of this was spent by Narendra Modi for his high-voltage electioneering. If the government was serious about curbing black money, it should have declared the sources from where it got its funding,

and pressurised other parties to declare their sources of funding too. As per the law, parties don't have to reveal the names of donors for donations of amounts below Rs 20,000; taking advantage of this loophole, all parties, including the BJP and the Congress, declare most of their donations as being below this amount. Modi could have moved to change this law, and asked every party to name each donor, no matter how small the donation, and thus bring in transparency in political funding.

A large part of the black money generated every year is parked in land and gold /jewellery. The government can easily monitor big land deals and gold-jewellery purchases, and put them under scrutiny. Then again, our intelligence agencies are tracking export deals on a daily basis. A *Hindustan Times* analysis of RBI data, gleaned from 1972 to 2015, shows that 1,88,605 export transactions were not remitted home, and involved exports worth Rs 17 trillion.²³ This means that the government has the details of the deals through which money is being funnelled abroad. If the PM wants, he can easily stop this outflow. As discussed above, a known way of storing black money is by sending the money abroad, and then bringing it back to invest in securities through ‘P-notes’, which do not require the buyer to reveal his/her identity. Both the UPA and the supposedly anti-corruption BJP have been reluctant to impose curbs on P-notes. Even after the government recently amended the Indo-Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty, taxation of P-notes was left untouched.²⁴

Another obvious step that the government can take is to go after those who have stashed their money

abroad. In February 2012, the director of India's Central Bureau of Investigation stated that an estimated \$500 billion or Rs 24.50 lakh crore has been stashed away by Indians in foreign tax havens, more than any other country.²⁵ Modi had in fact promised to bring this back in his election speeches, to the point that people had actually believed that the government was going to deposit Rs 15 lakh in each of their Jan Dhan accounts. But after winning the elections, the BJP government made a complete U-turn on the issue and has even gone to the extent of refusing to divulge the names of foreign account holders in the Supreme Court. Commenting on the application moved by the attorney general on behalf of the government in the Supreme Court, senior advocate Ram Jethmalani, who was the petitioner in the case, stated, "The government has made an application which should have been filed by the criminals. I am amazed."²⁶

Actually, this shouldn't be surprising. Journalist Josy Joseph, author of the book *A Feast of Vultures*, writes that the biggest case of black money parked in offshore havens being investigated by Indian authorities is that of business tycoon Gautam Adani.²⁷ Considering the close relations between Adani and Modi, and the fact that Adani grew from being a small time businessman to one of India's biggest business tycoons during just the decade when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, it is obvious that Adani will never be prosecuted.²⁸

In 2016, 11 million documents held by the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca were leaked by an anonymous source, and obtained and made public by the International Consortium of Investigative

Journalists (ICIJ). The documents show the myriad ways in which the world's rich exploit secretive tax havens to hide their wealth. The leak, that became infamous as the Panama Papers scandal, contained the names of 500 Indians who have links to offshore firms, including politicians, businessmen and films stars. The names include those of Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai, DLF owner K.P. Singh, Garware family, Nira Radia, Harish Salve, and Gautam Adani's elder brother Vinod Adani, to name a few.²⁹ In February 2015, *Indian Express* released the list of 1195 Indians account holders and their balances for the year 2006–07 in HSBC's Geneva branch, in what has become infamous as the 'Swiss Leaks'. The names include several prominent Indian businessmen - Mukesh Ambani, Anil Ambani, Anand Chand Burman, Rajan Nanda, Yashovardhan Birla, Chandru Lachhmandas Raheja and Dattaraj Salgaocar - and the top diamond traders of the country - Rusell Mehta, Anoop Mehta, Saunak Parikh, Chetan Mehta, Govindbhai Kakadia and Kunal Shah. A year earlier, in April 2014, the government disclosed to the Supreme Court the names of 26 people who had accounts in banks in Liechtenstein, as revealed to India by German authorities - adding three names later. Each time there has been a leak, all that Modi and Jaitley have done is to order an investigation.³⁰

The action so far? HSBC whistleblower Herve Falciani, talking to media in November 2015, said the Indian government "had not used information on those illegally stashing away black money in foreign bank accounts, and still millions of crores were flowing out".³¹

Changing narrative to cashless economy

The point we wish to make is that the real purpose of the demonetisation exercise is not to curb the black economy. Had the government been serious about it, it could have easily gone after those responsible for generating and storing black incomes both inside the country and abroad.

This is also being borne out by a recent change in the government tune. On November 8, when the government issued its first press release announcing demonetisation, the release spoke extensively on the black money issue, and made no reference to moving towards a cashless society. PM Modi's speech, also delivered on the same day, where he announced the decision to ban Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes from the banking system, also projected that the major focus of demonetisation was war on black money, terror funding and corruption; the speech also did not make any major reference to shifting to a cashless economy.

Now, a month after this so-called 'war on black money' was launched, the government has shifted its rhetoric to pushing for a cashless economy. In his *Mann Ki Baat* speech on November 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi shifted his focus from the drive against black money to exhorting the people to make the transition first to a 'less-cash economy' and then later a 'cashless' economy. He urged people to start using cash substitutes like debit cards and digital wallets. The RBI Governor, after maintaining a stoic silence on the note ban ever since the decision was announced, too shared his "mann ki baat" on the same day, and urged people

to migrate to a cashless society.³² The government has pushed its departments to shift from cash transactions to cashless transactions; for instance, the Urban Development Ministry has announced that people will have to make e-payments in matters of property tax, professional tax, utilities like water, power and gas, fee and licensing charges, etc. On December 8, the Finance Minister announced a slew of incentives to encourage people to move towards cashless transactions, including: waiver of service tax on digital payments amounting to less than Rs 2,000; discounts on petrol and diesel purchases, suburban railway tickets and toll payments at Toll Plazas on National Highways if payment is made through digital means; and issuance of 'Rupay Kisan Cards' to farmers to enable them to make digital transactions, as well as installation of two PoS machines (swipe machines) free in 1 lakh villages with population of less than 10,000.³³

The Finance Minister is claiming that as the economy moves towards a cashless economy, black money will come down, and tax evasion and corruption will decline.³⁴ But in reality, there is no connection between a cashless economy and tax evasion and generation of black incomes. Currency notes are not necessary in generation of black money. Most of the black incomes or tax evasion or corruption in economy are indulged in by the rich or the big corporations. And they use all kinds of legal accounting gimmicks to do so, using banking channels.

Thus, in the USA, according to the Federal Reserve, as much as \$1.48 trillion is in circulation, which works out to approximately 8% of its GDP. The cash to GDP ratio of the USA

is less than that of India; according to the RBI data, the currency in circulation in India is 12% of the GDP.³⁵ Nevertheless, hundreds of the biggest US corporations have used all kinds of accounting gimmicks to show their profits as having being earned by subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, so as to avoid paying US taxes. According to one estimate, at least 303 of the Fortune 500 US corporations collectively hold a whopping \$2.4 trillion of profits offshore, and thus are avoiding paying up to \$695 billion in US federal income taxes.³⁶

The situation in Europe is no different. In the Eurozone countries, cash is 10.63% of GDP; and yet, tax evasion in Britain every year totals around 16 billion pounds; while the French Parliament says that tax evasion costs France between 40 and 60 billion euros a year.³⁷

Already, in India, cashless transactions exceed cash transactions in value terms. At the end of fiscal 2015, electronic transactions at Rs 92 lakh crore topped paper-based ones at Rs 85 lakh crore transactions. This January, over 188 million transactions were carried out through electronic fund transfers of a value of Rs 7.09 lakh crore. By October 2016, this had risen to over 133 million transactions of a value of over Rs 9.5 lakh crore.³⁸ And yet, there are no indications that the volume of black economy has reduced even marginally. This again proves that there is no relation between proportion of cash transactions in the economy and black income generation.

Therefore, the new drive of the Modi Government to further push towards an even more less-cash economy is not going to lead to a reduction in tax evasion or reduction in the black economy.

The real motive

If demonetisation is not going to lead to a reduction in the black economy - and the government obviously knows this - then what is the real motive behind the demonetisation exercise and now the push towards a less-cash economy? The real purpose is: to destroy India's informal economy, especially agriculture and small scale retail trade. For those who have become 'Modi bhakts' because of the media propaganda, this may sound unbelievable, but all the facts point to this.

The overwhelming number of the Indian people depend on the unorganised sector for their livelihoods. Ever since India began globalisation in 1991, despite the massive entry of Western multinational corporations into the economy, and despite the Indian economy having expanded at a rapid rate of 7.3% per annum during the decade 2000–10, this has not led to a generation of formal or organised sector jobs. The total organised sector employment constitutes only 15.8% of the total employment in the country.³⁹ And even within the organised sector, firms have adopted a policy of systematically replacing permanent workers with contract workers or subcontracting out work to smaller units in the informal sector, because of which actual formal employment within the organised sector constitutes only 8% of the workforce.⁴⁰

The two biggest components of India's vast unorganised sector are:⁴¹

Agricultural sector, on which 53% of the population depend for their livelihoods;

Small-scale or unorganised retail sector, which accounts for around 9% of the total employment.

Newspapers are full of reports about how these sectors are being devastated by demonetisation and the push towards a less-cash economy. Demonetisation was announced just as the kharif crop was being harvested and sowing for the rabi crop was about to begin. This has pushed the farmers into a difficult situation. Business at the mandis is down, by anywhere from 25% to 70%, as there are no buyers - the cash crunch has affected shopkeepers, hotels and restaurants, and even the small street vendors. And so, traders

at the mandis do not have cash to pay to the farmers for their produce (or they are forcing farmers to sell at half the price); even if they pay in cheque, farmers are not able to encash them as banks are facing a cash crunch. The other source of funding for farmers, disbursement of loans by village-level credit cooperative societies, has also been affected due to restrictions imposed by the RBI on these institutions. And so, farmers do not have the money to buy seeds and fertilisers, and to hire tractors and other equipment,

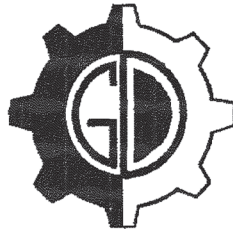
and pay their labourers - and they need cash immediately, because the agricultural season does not wait upon humans. The extent to which the rabi crop is going to be affected is evident from one newsreport, according to which the disbursement of crop loans in Maharashtra has been badly hit. By November end, only 17% of the earmarked outlay had been disbursed, despite the fact that this year, the water situation is satisfactory across the state due to the good monsoon after two years of weak season.⁴²

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Simultaneous Elections - not possible and against federalism

Rajindar Sachar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has for last six months kept a continuous refrain for holding simultaneously Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls and the supposed advantages that would flow from it. As was to be expected number of newspapers and persons are picking up this matter. It is unfortunate that Election Commission of India and Nitee Aayog should have gone along with this suggestion without regard for even the minimum constitutional requirement of a public debate and seminars – and more unforgivably without discussions of the matter with other major political parties and the State governments. In order to have a worthwhile debate, it is necessary to know the legal and factual situation at present.

The present life of Lok Sabha expires in May 2019. Modi's repeated emphasis on simultaneous poll is actuated by the realization that the mood of exhilaration that he was able to create in 2014 Parliamentary poll is diminishing very fast. The background situation from 2004–2014 of UPA regime had exposed so much scandals, both financial and administrative, that people were sick of goody but not-visible Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh because of the domination of Sonia Gandhi family. The exposure by the Supreme Court of telecom and Coal scandals had made BJP's task easier. By itself BJP under leadership of other than Modi (helped fully by RSS) may not have done that well. But Modi had created such an illusion of strong and honest government in Gujarat that people were willing to ignore or even forget one of the worst periods under Modi, namely the state supported mass slaughter of Muslims in 2001. Such was the communal passion aroused by RSS that the country which was already disgusted with the corruption and inefficiency of UPA government and also by the split amongst the various political parties that Modi romped home with overwhelming majority of seats in Lok Sabha but with just 31 per cent of votes – of course greatly helped and boosted by corporate funding.

That illusion has now been exposed. Even ardent supporters of Modi now do not place hundred percent bet on Modi winning Lok Sabha polls in 2019 - that is why the effort of Modi to work out a strategy to keep his rivals caught up with State

Assembly polls so as not to be able to put combined pressure on him in Lok Sabha polls.

But this strategy of Modi is not constitutionally possible. After the Emergency, Constitution (44th Amendment) has provided in Article 83 and Article 172, of the Constitution that Lok Sabha and State Legislatures of the State shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer. Thus the factual situation at present will show that it is constitutionally not possible to hold simultaneous polls in May 2019.

This is because it would require extending the term of Assemblies in States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (by 5 months), Mizoram (by 6 months) and Karnataka (by 12 months) which is not constitutionally possible. Of course the terms of State Assemblies of Haryana and Maharashtra (by 5 months), Jharkhand (by 7 month) excepting NCT of Delhi (by 8 months) could be curtailed as these states are under BJP governments, but Delhi would not agree. Punjab and U.P. must go to polls in the next 2 months. Obviously no one can expect Tamil Nadu, Bihar, J & K, West Bengal and Kerala, all ruled by opposition parties, to agree to advance elections as their terms are up to 2021. Assam can go to polls in 2019 though due in 2021 as it is BJP - will Modi agree to curtail its legislative term when BJP has for the first time come to power in the State?

The Central government whose terms would expire by 2019 cannot continue thereafter without holding fresh elections in May 2019.

If however Modi is so keen on holding simultaneous polls even
(Contd. on Page 3)

Message of Dipa Karmakar

Sandeep Pandey

Because of the fantastic performance in Gymnastics in the Rio Olympics in 2016 Dipa Karmakar was chosen along with P.V. Sindhu and Sakshi Malik, the two medal winners, by the Hyderabad Badminton Association to be awarded a BMW car which was presented by Sachin Tendulkar. Dipa has now returned the car saying the roads of Tripura where she lives are not broad enough for this car and there is no BMW service centre there. She has decided to buy a less expensive car which is suitable for the conditions where she lives. She requested V. Chamundeshwaranath, the President of HBA, who actually sponsored the cars, to either compensate her with the amount of the car or give her whatever amount he thinks appropriate.

Dipa's honesty is commendable. When she took a decision to return the car it was not certain that she will get its value back. She had no expectations from the sponsor of the car. In contrast when Sachin Tendulkar was given a Ferrari by Fiat company upon equalling the record of 29 centuries of Don Bradman in test cricket he tried to get the Rs. 1.13 crores tax waived, which was ultimately paid by the company, and then sold the car to a Surat businessman. Dipa too could have sold her car. But probably her conscience didn't allow her. She put the entire matter before V. Chamundeshwaranath in a manner which would not hurt him. Dipa Karmakar has set new moral standard for professionals. This act of her is many times superior to her Olympics performance.

There is a message in this act of Dipa Karmakar for the country.

We should not blindly imitate the West for our development. Some of its ideas may not be suitable for our country. Nobody would have returned a BMW in the West. We should keep the conditions of our country in mind when making a choice. The technology which is not appropriate for people should not be forced upon them. It will result in wastage of resources. For example, maintenance would have cost Dipa Karmakar a lot if she had decided to keep the BMW.

Demonetisation was implemented in this country without adequate preparation. Midway through the process in which people were returning old notes the government came up with the idea of cashless economy. The government wants people to use mobile phone apps, cards and computers to carry out transactions. Narendra Modi has appealed to educated people to teach the uneducated how to operate the mobile apps. Maybe Narendra Modi should have asked the educated to first make the uneducated literate.

India claims a literacy rate of 74 per cent although the quality of government schools makes this figure a suspect. We can safely assume that roughly the same number of people as are uneducated also do not keep mobile phones and do not have bank accounts. This implies that one-fourth to one-third of population either is illiterate, doesn't have a bank account or doesn't keep a mobile. Only one out of the three situations or two out of three may apply on some people but most among these would fulfil

all three conditions. Now, how is an uneducated poor who doesn't have a mobile going to become part of cashless economy? Out of the about 22 crores Jan Dhan accounts which were opened, for 33 per cent it was not their only account and there was no activity in 28 per cent accounts. For an uneducated poor a bank account is akin to BMW for Dipa Karmakar. A poor probably spends all of what he earns every day on the same day. He is not comfortable dealing with bank. Maybe he needs cash to buy material to do business next day. The time when he earns is also the bank opening hours. Standing in bank queues would mean an income loss for him. In any case, after 8 November, 2016, you need to spend more time at banks even for simple transactions.

The rulers must realise that only systems suitable to poor should be implemented. The country doesn't belong to a miniscule number of rich. Poor would be uncomfortable with most arrangements for the rich. In addition to mobile phone apps like pay-tm, various kinds of cards, computers. A good example is water fountains on air ports which have been copied from the US. Tomorrow they could be installed at other public places. You've to drink from a stream coming up from the opening. People used to drinking water from taps where it comes down by gravity may find it inconvenient to drink from a stream coming up into their mouth. At least they may not be able to drink to their heart's content. People used to defecating by sitting on ground find the chair type seats uncomfortable. Now at some places there is no option of ground level seats. In sleeper class coaches railways has followed a practice of providing only one out of 4 chair type seat toilet. In this country people are used to eating by keeping their plate on ground or on some platform. In many modern set

ups now you're expected to eat in standing posture. The expressways connecting cities are being built only for 4-wheeler fast moving motorised vehicles whereas most people in this country use other means of transport. At many public places announcements are being

(Contd. from Page 2)

with some States he can do so by dissolving Parliament in 2017 and then hold simultaneous polls by dissolving also at the same time BJP-led State Assemblies whose terms are not yet over as mentioned above. If he is not willing to take this step, is Modi trying cover his government failures by conjuring up such illusory undemocratic solutions.

But a greater principle of democracy is involved in simultaneous polls of parliament and state assemblies unless by fortuitous circumstances the five year period of Parliament and State Assemblies happen to coincide. But to bring about such a situation by contrivance has very dangerous implication and is against the basic structure of our Constitution. According to the Article 1(1) India is a Union of States which means a federation of States.

Our Constitution specifically provides exclusive List-I empowering the Central government which alone can legislate on certain subjects in list-I in Seventh Schedule. The States alone can legislate on List-II - Parliament cannot. Both Centre and State can legislate on subjects in List-III. State List-II includes very important subjects like agriculture, law and order, etc. on which only State can legislate and Centre has no jurisdiction. Obviously voters have different priorities when voting for State Assemblies than when voting for Parliament. Supreme Court

made in English where people can't understand it.

We should learn from Dipa Karmakar that country should develop only according to its needs, habits, etc.

of India (1951) specifically held: "The State legislature under our Constitution is not a delegate of the union parliament. Both legislatures derive powers from the same Constitution. Within its appointed sphere, the State Legislature has plenary powers".

Modi wants to deny this strategic advantage of States and weaken decentralization which is the core of our constitutional jurisprudence.

Examples of other countries like U.S.A. and Europe would show that it is constitutionally recognized that the priorities and interests of States in day to day governance are emphasized differently. Thus in U.S.A a rather extreme position prevails where Law and Medical degrees of one State are not even recognized in the rest of the States. As far as elections they have different laws in each State. They have separate laws for poll for President's election and separate laws for elections for Senate and House of representatives and also separate.

We wisely did not go that far. Also the distinction between the priorities of Centre and the States are different. The sooner Modi relinquishes this idea of simultaneous poll it is better. Simultaneous poll gives unfair advantage to national parties as against state parties and distorts the sentiment of voters that government be close to the people of area concerned.

South asia will need cooperation to face the biggest threat of climate change

Bharat Dogra

At a time when various threats of hostile actions have been exchanged between India and Pakistan, it is important to remind these two countries and indeed the entire South Asia region that the biggest threat to their people and environment in future is likely to come from escalating natural disasters and other adverse impacts related to climate change. While the threat of war including nuclear war can hopefully be avoided by better comprehension of the most terrible implications by the leadership of the two countries helped by international advice and pressures, the ability at this stage to avoid the big threats related to climate change is much lesser but certainly much can be done to reduce the damage caused by such threats. This in turn will depend to a significant extent on the capacity for mutual cooperation and peace among the various nations of South Asia.

21 per cent of the world's people live in South Asia which however has only 3 per cent of the world's land. South Asia has also been on the wrong side of history in modern times as its major part suffered from colonial exploitation and plunder for two centuries from mid-eighteenth century to mid-twentieth century, a crucial historical period for development. For perpetuation of their rule based on extreme injustice, colonial regimes aggravated existing divisions among various communities and at the time of their hurried departure left behind many artificially created

boundaries, resentments and conflicts.

All this taken together needed very well planned economic development, careful governance and a firm commitment to peace to ensure that the needs of all people can be met on a sustainable basis. Such planning, governance and commitment were for the most part in short supply in this region, leading to persistence of deprivation and conflicts on the one hand and aggravation of ecological ruin on the other hand.

It is in this already disturbing situation that climate change related factors are being introduced and will do so on an increasing scale and with greater frequency in the near future. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has indicated, South Asia is likely to be among the regions that are more badly affected by climate change. South Asia has a very long coastal zone, islands, vast snow covered and other mountains as well as vast deserts and other arid areas likely to be more vulnerable in times of climate change. Projections indicate that compared to the average in the 20th century, average annual temperature could rise by 2 degrees C over land in most of South Asia by the mid-21st century and exceed 3 degrees C, up to more than 6 degrees C over high latitudes, by the late 21st century under a high-emissions scenario.

Global mean sea level rise by the last two decades of the 21st century (as compared to sea-level in 1986-2005) is likely to be in the range of 26-55 cm. under a low-emission scenario, but 45-82 cm. for a high-emission scenario—with total sea-level rise of up to 98 cm. by 2100 under the later scenario. The IPCC has warned that this magnitude of sea level rise by the century's end implies significantly increased risks for South Asian coastal settlements, particularly if this is combined with increases in cyclone intensity and frequency. Low lying, densely populated areas will be at increased risk of strong surges, putting many millions at risk. Low elevation coastal zones will be most at risk.

In addition more rapid melting of glaciers can first lead to more severe floods and later to more severe droughts. Due to subdued winter or early spring the ripening of a very important crop wheat can be adversely affected over vast areas while there can be other adverse impacts on other important food crops like rice such as much higher damage from droughts and floods. Then there is the increased risk of many health problems which needs to be much better understood before it is too late.

The IPCC in its fifth assessment report has made an important observation that the effects of climate change depend as much on the inherent vulnerability of

(Contd. on Page 8)

Remembering Raj Narain

Anand Kumar

The socialist stream of Indian freedom movement, particularly its initiatives to organize students-youth, Kisan and workers and the heroic role of the socialist leaders during the Quit India Movement (9th August, 1942-1946), attracted many courageous and patriotic students and youth leaders towards it on the eve of independence from foreign rule. Such young patriots got associated with the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and occupied leading roles after the party decided to leave Congress to work among the masses to take India towards complete Swaraj. Raj Narain (1917-1986) was one of such student leaders, who came from Banaras Hindu University and became famous for his role during the August Revolution forcing the British to end their colonial rule by 15th August, 1947. He chose the path of peoples' politics under socialist banner after independence. His sincerity, courage and honesty made him one of the architects of socialist movement of post-colonial India.

'Netaji', as he was fondly addressed, Raj Narain was an iconic socialist mass leader, who was a movement in himself for justice, dignity and equality. Most of the time, either he was touring the country in rail or agitating for a peoples' problem or in jail. He was as relaxed during multiple imprisonments for one cause or the other as he was in parliament. He converted his jail terms into training camps for his colleagues. On the other hand, he used the floors of UP Assembly and Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for educating fellow politicians about the visions and approaches of Marx, Gandhi,

Narendra Dev, Lohia and JP and the promises of the national movement. He was equally comfortable with national leaders and grass roots workers which made him one of the most accessible leaders of our time. He trained countless students-youth, Kisan activists, trade unionists and other men and women and helped in their evolution into political leaders in the Indo-Gangetic zone of national politics.

Raj Narain ji was an example of a de-caste and de-class leader. He was very sensitive to the issues of caste atrocities of the dominant castes and communal discriminations against minorities. He led the movement for temple entry for the ex-untouchables at Kashi Vishwanath Temple and was badly beaten by the Pandas and police. The orthodox forces took revenge with him by defeating him in 1980 when he contested for Lok Sabha from Varanasi. He was one of the first national leaders to reach any site of communal violence and always encouraged the programs of communal harmony in all circumstances including the Indo-Pak war of 1965, communal riots during the SVD Governments and Janata Raj. He was subjected to physical removal from the UP Assembly for demanding relief from famine for the rural masses. His mobilizations against landlords made him a class enemy of the rural rich. He was also a 'caste enemy' for advocating and promoting the cause of Backward Classes and Dalit communities.

At the same time, he always attracted ridicule from the middle classes for his rural ways in public sphere. He was very adamant about

promoting of Indian languages and Angrezi Hatao as a continuity of the principles of Gandhi and Lohia towards decolonization of the Indian education and the intelligentsia and that earned him rejection from the urban elite. Politically, he was never forgiven by the authoritarian and bureaucratic forces for defeating Indira Gandhi and helping JP in his quest for Total Revolution during the 1970s. He invited violence from the followers of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh for resisting the takeover of state apparatus during the Janata Raj and pulling down the Morarji Desai Government on the issue of 'dual membership' with the help of Congress in 1980. It made everyone ignore his pro-people health initiatives and transparent functioning as a union minister. On the other hand, he was not forgiven by the Communist parties for challenging them on the issues of their role in the national movement, including the Quit India Movement, their support for the Emergency Raj of Indira Gandhi and his unqualified support to Jayaprakash Narayan and his efforts against corruption in 1974. Of course, he was always criticized by a section of socialists for being a Lohia loyalist and then Charan Singh's Hanuman in the post-Lohia years of his public life. He faced these expected adversities with stoic indifference. But he felt betrayed and deserted after many of his time-tested colleagues left him to fend for himself in the last political battle of his selfless public life when he parted ways with Charan Singh after the electoral debacle of 1980.

Of course, his politics was not always a series of successes. He had his share of victories and

defeats; failures and achievements; controversies and conflicts; alliances and splits. He never cared for personal gains and popularity. He was almost indifferent to his family members. His volunteers always received generous support. But all of his children and grand children remained nearly strangers for him. Politics is often associated with power and glamour but he was almost indifferent to personal fame and power; to electoral successes and defeats. He was twice successful (1952, 1957) and then defeated twice (1962, 1964) in the contests for UP Vidhan Sabha. He came to Rajya Sabha in 1966. But faced defeat in his second attempt due to split in socialist votes in 1972. Similarly he was four times un-successful in national electoral battles: in 1971 against PM Indira Gandhi, in 1974 against fellow socialist Madhu Limaye, in 1980 against veteran freedom fighter Kamalapati Tripathi, and in 1984 against his close ally and leader Charan Singh and only one time successful in 1977 against PM Indira Gandhi in his efforts to enter Lok Sabha. If he was passionate about making alliance to promote a cause then he was equally merciless in breaking bonds to protect a principle. But he was never blamed for casteism, communalism, nepotism or corruption. He always maintained cordial relations with his adversaries in his own child like ways. But he was uniquely unfortunate about loyalty of his colleagues which made him a lonely warrior in the last years of life as he unsuccessfully tried to resurrect the banner of socialism in the era of 'identity politics'.

But his tragic last days did not diminish the significance of his outstanding contributions towards politics of social transformation as pillar of socialism through a judicious combination of civil disobedience movements and parliamentary power

in most adverse circumstances. In his eventful political journey of more than five decades as a selfless and fearless militant socialist leader from anti-imperialist struggle to post-colonial socialist movements, there were many moments of historical significance. But 1977 was his 'year of global glory' when he achieved electoral victory against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in most insurmountable circumstances of dictatorship. He had already got her disqualified in a landmark court judgment for electoral corruption in June, 1975. But she had refused to resign and put total opposition leadership including Raj Narain in jail for long 19 months without trial under the provisions of 'internal emergency'. He was one of the few examples of the efficacy of ballot power which catapulted him from prison to not only parliament but also gave him one of the front seats in the national government from 1977 to 1980.

He made his mark very early in the politics of socialism by getting elected to Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha in 1952 from rural Varanasi and establishing himself as an impressive parliamentarian who was equally effective as a Satyagrahi socialist. He was one of the main socialist leaders who made Satyagraha and socialist politics synonymous in India after independence. He was an example of courage of conviction on issues of caste, communalism, colonial mind set, national unity and power to the people. A law graduate and post graduate in political science, Raj Narain was born in a landlord family of Varanasi. He belonged to the lineage of Maharaj Balwant Singh, the founder of the princely state of Banaras. He received his first lessons of patriotism and socialism from the founders of Indian socialist movement like Acharya Narendra Dev and

Dr. Sampurnanand at Kashi Vidyapith, the nursery of freedom fighters and socialist activists. It inspired him to become member of the Congress Socialist Party which gave him opportunity to receive training in political leadership from two of the most charismatic socialist leaders - Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia. Retirement of JP from party politics in 1954, and split in the Narendradev-led Praja Socialist Party made him closely associated with the Lohia line of socialist politics. After untimely death of Dr. Lohia in 1967 he took command of socialists and made bold moves for the next nearly twenty years in pursuit of Lohia's call of 'Congress Hatao-Desh Bachao'. He led the socialists through several movements and electoral alliances after Lohia till complete uprooting of Congress Raj in 1977 national election. It has to be appreciated that much maligned Raj Narain was one of the main architects of the Janata Revolution (1974-1977) under the leadership of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, after nineteen dark months of Emergency.

There is no denying that Raj Narain ji was an extra-ordinary socialist who pursued path of socialist mass politics in selfless and inspiring way by transcending the barriers of caste, class and religion in most fascinating manner. He also achieved great fame as one of the pillars of socialist politics in post-colonial India. It is expected that the centenary year of such a hero will be an occasion of studying his complex life journey and its ever changing contexts. So that there is learning of appropriate lessons to be able to meet the present challenges of Indian politics and society, including the much fragmented socialist movement and politics in its multiple manifestations from electoral battles to social mobilizations.

Exit, Obama!

Jawaharlal Jasthi

Barak Obama, the gentle President of the United States of America has become a bit wild in the last month of his presidency. Stumping helter-skelter unmindful of consequences and his status as the leader of the lone super power. Perhaps he started realizing that he failed to achieve anything substantial during his tenure as President in spite of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. On the other hand he displayed audacity to claim that he would have won the third term but for the constitutional restrictions. What else he would be doing in his third term is not clear. He only implies that he would have prevented Donald Trump win the presidency now as if that itself would be a great achievement. He is angry with Putin of Russia for spoiling the chances of Democrat Hillary Clinton by exposing the secrets behind her campaign. Hacking is definitely a crime. What happened by hacking was revelation of certain facts that were committed sinisterly to prevent Bernie Sanders from getting Democrat nomination. They influenced the National Democrat Committee to do it and tried to hide it. Of course, that is what every contestant in elections tries to do – to hide adverse facts. But election needs that electorate know all the facts. To that extent what the hacking has done is a service to election process but it was done by an alien. That is a matter of grudge. The leaks never stated that Hillary shall not be voted or that Trump shall be supported. Even then the hackers were alleged to have done it with intention to help Trump in election.

Meanwhile FBI was playing on the e-mails of Hillary during her tenure as secretary of state. The head of FBI was a Republican. So it was presumed he revealed it deliberately at that particular time.

Until the results of election were out on the night of 8 November, 2016 everybody, including herself, took for granted that Hillary would be the winner. It was also rumored that Michelle Obama may be getting an important position in the cabinet of Hillary Clinton. The President himself was aggressively involved in canvassing for Clinton unmindful of propriety and telling the voters that Trump is not a man worth being President of the country. The hope was based more on the bad mouth of Trump than on anything positive on the part of Hillary Clinton. Trump was outspoken even in his indiscretion while Hillary was secretive and scheming expecting the voters to react to the behavior of Trump. But people saw openness in Trump and secrecy and unreliability in Hillary. His aggressive speaking was so untraditional that even some of the senior members of his Republican party blamed him openly. But what he said was the true convictions of the Republican Party. The only difference is he was blunt and did not try to hide it to woo the voters as happens during election time.

The defeat affected Obama, equally if not more, than Clinton as he took upon himself to see that Clinton wins and Trump gets defeated. When he became president

he came with an “Audacity of Hope”. He promised to close the prison in Guantanamo Bay. Close the unwanted wars in which the country was involved and also solve the Palestine problem. He did not succeed in any of those areas. The African Americans were too enthusiastic to welcome him as the President as they considered him as one of themselves. But they had to cry that “Black Lives Matter”. But the President could not do anything to help them, not even an open statement to condemn the atrocious behavior of the police in that regard during the eight years of his stay in the White House. On the other hand his presidency resulted in a reaction among the white supremacists to take back the presidency for themselves. They could not accept Hillary Clinton to serve that purpose as she was openly supported by Obama calling Trump names.

In regard to the Palestine problem, he failed to bring any pressure on Israel to stop building settlement in West Bank. On the other hand he was offering billions of dollars of military assistance as usual. Now and then he used to advise Netanyahu to stop settlement. At one stage he was just pleading him to heed his advice. He did not say anything about his stand even during the campaign for Hillary and tried to avoid the problem as it will get confrontation with the Jewish votes. Hillary herself was sitting on the fence regarding that problem. After the defeat, Obama could not contain himself from blaming Netanyahu for going on with settlement constructions as

if it was a problem that had arisen then only. We can be sure that he would not have said it so openly if Hillary Clinton won the presidency. That betrays the character of Obama than anything else. Not taking a stand on the Palestine issue would ensure support of Jewish votes to Hillary Clinton. He expected Israel to be friendly with Hillary when she wins. Once it is clear that she did not win, he became aggressive about Israel. That creates problem for the successor. It is obvious that Netanyahu would not care, nevertheless he said it. It is crooked politics that dominate the West. If America failed to exercise veto, Britain could have done it. But they did not. At the same time the Prime Minister had the cheek to find fault with Obama for not applying the veto. Hypocrites all!

The reaction of Obama for the hacking of Democrat computers is also excessive and irresponsible. The intelligence is stated to have tracked the hackers to Russia. It is believed that it could not have happened except with connivance of the leader Putin. It is a surmise. There is no public proof of Putin's involvement. Even then he felt it necessary to make wild allegations against the person of Putin. He did not dare to make such allegations against Netanyahu in spite of the fact that he never cared for his overtures. He has gone to the extent of expelling about 35 members of Russian establishment. In normal circumstances such an act would invite tit for tat. But Putin played the game with circumspection. He restrained himself from retaliation. It might be because of the fact that Trump, an ally, is coming to the seat in a few days. Or it will give him a better image as head of a state. It made Trump pay complements

to Putin which again is shown as a proof of collusion between the two.

It does not mean that Russia and America (Putin and Trump) are going to be friends in the long run. Both of them need enemies, not friends. Each of them is the best

(Contd. from Page 4)

social and ecological systems as on the magnitude of climate change. In other words if socio-economic inequality and injustice are high, if social harmony of various communities is disturbed or if various forms of ecological ruin are already high, then the suffering caused by climate change related factors will be much higher. From this perspective the situation in much of South Asia is a disturbing one.

The IPCC in its fifth assessment report has also said that heavy losses from extreme weather in South Asia suggest that current strategies are unable to deal with existing climatic threats. Overall the preparations to face the impending threats of climate change and related or other disasters are quite weak.

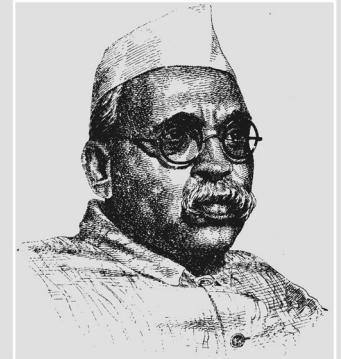
Clearly much more attention needs to be given to climate change adaptation as well as mitigation. The adaptation aspects in particular need to be seen beyond the Paris framework also because many existing policies and favoured projects of these governments are at variance with the real needs of adaptation and important corrections are needed. It is also clear that cooperation among various South Asian countries for facing the challenges of climate change will not just bring shared benefits to all of them but in addition this cooperation may become of critical importance in crisis situations. Last

enemy for the other. The diplomatic drama goes on, on the world stage.

The only regret is that Barack Obama exposed himself at the end of his presidency and adopted a scorched earth policy. His behavior is unbalanced and undignified.

but not the least, it needs to be re-emphasised that such challenges can be effectively met only in conditions of peace and stability. On the other hand escalating mutual hostility can only lead to the relative neglect of even such obvious priorities as climate change.

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Demonetisation: yet another huge fraud on the people - III

Neeraj Jain

Likewise, India's small scale retail sector is also being decimated by demonetisation. India has more than 14.9 million retail outlets, the highest in the world. India's retail sector is presently overwhelmingly dominated by small retailers, consisting of local kirana shops, owner-manned general stores, furniture stores, chemists, hardware-footwear-garment-cutlery shops, stationery shops, bakeries, vegetable and fruit shops, paan and beedi shops, hand-cart hawkers, pavement vendors, etc. According to the Confederation of All India Traders - one of the largest trade associations in India - businesses in markets across the country has reduced by a whopping 75% since the government announced demonetisation on November 8 night. People simply don't have the cash to buy even essentials, and even if they have cash, it is a Rs 2,000 note that most small traders cannot accept as they do not have enough change.⁴³

The push to a less-cash economy is going to further destroy these sectors. PM Modi expecting the pavement tea-seller or a roadside fish-seller to have a PoS machine with which to accept payment from the credit card of a daily wage worker, or expecting a street hawker to sell a dozen bananas and accept payment through Paytm, or expecting a small farmer to make payment to his labourers by cheques, is akin to Marie Antoinette asking Parisians to go eat cake.

This then is the real objective of demonetisation, and the push towards a cashless economy - to destroy India's informal economy. It is an acceleration of a policy that has been implemented in the country for the last more than two decades, known as globalisation. Its aim is to corporatise the Indian economy, and allow big corporations, both foreign and Indian, to acquire decisive control over it. This requires the destruction of India's informal sector.

Thus, in agriculture, where the majority of the Indian peasants are small farmers with landholdings of less than 1 hectare, the objective of the economic reforms under globalisation is to slowly strangle these small farmers and drive them out of their lands so that big agribusiness corporations can take them over. And so successive governments have been reducing public investment in agriculture, cutting subsidies given on major inputs needed for agriculture (such as fertiliser, electricity and irrigation subsidies), gradually eliminating output support to agriculture (in the form of public procurement of agricultural produce), gradually phasing out subsidised credit given to agriculture by public sector banks, and allowing imports of heavily subsidised agricultural produce from the developed countries into India. These policies have pushed Indian agriculture into deep crisis, and driven the hardy Indian farmers into such despair that more than 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since the reforms began, the largest

recorded wave of such deaths in history.⁴⁴ The Modi Government's policies of the last two years have further worsened this crisis. It has cut the budgetary allocations for agriculture related sectors, from 1.07% of the GDP in 2014-15 BE to just 0.92% of the GDP in 2016-17 BE - for a sector on which over half the population depend for their livelihoods.⁴⁵ Consequently, farmers' suicides in 2015 recorded a 40% increase over the figure for 2014!⁴⁶ Now, demonetisation is probably going to be the proverbial last nail in the coffin of the small farmers.

As regards the retail sector, after coming to power, the BJP has given up its opposition to the previous UPA Government's agenda of opening up the retail sector to giant foreign multinational retail corporations. The entry of giant retailers like Walmart, TESCO, Carrefour and Metro from abroad into India's retail sector will decimate India's small retailers. That is because these MNC retail giants are huge, much beyond our imagination: for instance, in 2009-10, Walmart alone had total global sales of \$405 billion, meaning that Walmart alone sold more goods than all of India's 1.5 crore retailers combined! These big retailers have the financial muscle to source their supplies from the lowest cost producers at the global level, like China. Therefore, they will be able to sell their products at cheaper rates than the small retailers - if necessary, they will even sell at a loss. Not just the kirana stores and street vendors will be forced out of business,

the entire network of wholesalers and distributors will be displaced. There is absolutely no exaggeration in this, it is happening all over the world. Small retail has virtually been wiped out in the developed countries. And it is in the process of being wiped out in those developing countries that have opened up their economies to these giant retailers.⁴⁷ Small retailers have waged powerful struggles against FDI in retail. So, in order to break their resistance, the BJP Government has resorted to the stratagem of pushing for a cashless economy - it will destroy small-scale retail and push people to go for shopping to big malls. There, it is possible to have tea and snacks, or buy fruits and vegetables and other daily necessities, with a credit card. Once the backbone of small retailers is broken, it will be easy for Walmart to set up shop in India.

Most anti-people government

Just like his other slogans such as *Make in India* and *Skill India*, PM Narendra Modi has covered his demonetisation policy and drive towards a cashless economy too with a coat of nationalism. With the corporate controlled media firmly backing him, the BJP's 'indoctrination' machinery has launched a huge propaganda campaign calling it a 'surgical strike' against black money and terrorism, while labelling those criticising the government decision as being anti-development and hoarders of black money, and even anti-national. Despite having to stand in queues for hours to withdraw their own money - and that too only in limited amounts in Rs 2,000 notes - for more than 40 days now, despite the mounting evidence that demonetisation is having ruinous consequences for agriculture, retail trade and small businesses, and

has destroyed the livelihoods of lakhs of people, a large number of people have been befooled by the propaganda and continue to believe that demonetisation is indeed going to curb the black economy and that finally, *achhe din* are around the corner.

However, the reality is that the Modi government is even more pro-corporate and anti-poor than the previous UPA government. Over the last two and a half years it has been in power, it has drastically cut government welfare expenditure on the poor, while simultaneously transferring lakhs of crores of rupees of public funds to the coffers of the rich under various guises.

Transfers to the rich

Union Budget documents reveal that successive governments at the Centre have been giving tax exemptions to the rich to the tune of lakhs of rupees every year. These tax exemptions have reached a new high under the Modi government. In 2014-15, the Modi government gave away Rs 5.49 lakh crore in tax exemptions/ deductions/incentives to the very rich; in 2015-16, these tax exemptions touched Rs 5.51 lakh crore!⁴⁸

Ordinary people defaulting on bank loans have their house/scooter/ other assets seized, and 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. The banks simply write-off their loans! The Minister of State for Finance recently admitted in the Rajya Sabha that during the first two years of the Modi government, public sector banks have written off loans given to the super-rich to the tune of Rs

1.05 lakh crore.⁴⁹

Loan write-offs, however, make bad news, both for corporate houses and banks/government. So public sector banks are adopting a new stratagem to provide succour to these 'helpless' rich - they 'restructure' their loans. That's the buzz word today, 'Corporate Debt Restructuring' (CDR). Under its name, the payback period may be extended, interest may be waived, and/or a part of the loan may be converted into equity; the corporation is even given another loan to tide over its 'crisis'. Private corporations whose loans have been approved for restructuring include some of India's most well-known names. Public sector banks had cumulatively rescheduled/ restructured loans worth Rs 4.03 lakh crore under the CDR scheme till March 2015.⁵⁰ While we do not have figures of the amount of loans restructured under the Modi-Jaitley regime, all indications are that this legal transfer of public funds to the corporate houses in the name of 'loan restructuring' is gathering speed under the new government. While on the one hand the bad loans of Indian banks have gone up to Rs 6 lakh crore (90% of which is on the books of public sector banks), at the same time, in June 2016, the Reserve Bank of India relaxed guidelines for restructuring bad loans of large borrowers so that banks can restructure them more easily.⁵¹

Another 'innovative' way in which public funds are being transferred to the private sector is under the guise of what is being called 'Public-Private-Partnership'. Under this, the government invites the private sector to invest in infrastructure, provides the private investor a direct subsidy of up to 40% of the project cost,

gives it land and other resources at concessional rates, guarantees the private partner a minimum rate of return on its investment, and as if this was not enough, even the investment money is also often provided by the government in the form of long term loans at concessional rates. (And yet it is called free market capitalism!) In his Union Budget 2016–17, Finance Minister Jaitley allocated Rs 55,000 crore for construction of roads and highways in partnership with the private sector under the PPP model - implying that this is the amount that is going to be given as subsidy to the private sector to build roads and highways in this financial year. Last year, the amount transferred to private corporations under this head was Rs 43,000 crore.⁵²

These are just a few examples of the mindboggling amounts of public funds being transferred to the private corporate houses under the Modi regime under various guises. And on the other hand, the BJP Government in its three budgets presented so far has made steep cuts in government spending on welfare schemes meant to provide essential services like education, health, drinking water and sanitation to the poor at affordable rates.

Withdrawal of subsidies to the poor

In a country where more than 40% of the children drop out of school without completing elementary education;⁵³ where even for those going to school, the conditions of the schools are so pathetic and quality of education is so bad that 52% of Class V students are unable to read Class II-level text and 49% cannot solve simple two-digit subtraction problems (that they are expected to learn in Class II);⁵⁴ an insensitive Modi Government has slashed the

school education budget so severely that the budget allocation for 2016-17 is lower than 2014-15 BE by as much as 32% (in real terms)!⁵⁵

India 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. 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; India also accounts for one-fifth of the 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. This "crisis" gripping India's health system is because of low public expenditure on health, due to which the country's public health system is in a bad shape, and hence the people have to depend on the private sector for treatment - and obviously, only the rich are able to afford good quality health care in costly private hospitals. The solution is to raise India's public expenditure on health care - India's public health spending is amongst the lowest in the world, with the country ranking 171 out of 175 countries in this.⁵⁶ However, Finance Minister Jaitley in his latest 2016-17 budget has kept the budget allocation for health at the same level as two years ago, which implies a cut in real terms by around 13% (taking inflation at 8% for both the years).⁵⁷

India is one of the world's worst places to be a woman. She may be killed even before being born, or as an infant or a little girl. If she survives, there is every possibility that as she grows up, she may be molested/raped/tortured by her

husband. In India, a crime against a woman is committed every 100 seconds: a woman is molested every 7 minutes, raped every 15 minutes, a case of cruelty committed by either the husband or his relatives occurs every 5 minutes, and a dowry death occurs every 65 minutes (all figures for 2013).⁵⁸ And yet, the Modi Government's allocation for the Gender Budget (this captures the quantum of budgetary resources earmarked for women by various departments and ministries) for 2016-17 is lower than that for 2014-15 by 7.6% even in nominal terms.⁵⁹

More than six decades after the Constitution outlawed the practice of untouchability and discrimination on the basis of caste, and guaranteed that every citizen shall have equality of status and opportunity, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continue to face many forms of untouchability practices as well as social, economic and institutional deprivations. Not only that, they are also subjected to enormous atrocities, ranging from abuse on caste name, murders, rapes, arson, social and economic boycotts, to naked parading of SC/ST women, and being forced to drink urine and eat human excreta. And so the government in the 1970s 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 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 *Manuwadi* BJP Government's budget allocations for

SCSP and TSP in 2016-17 are lower than the allocations made in 2014–15 BE by as much as 23-26% even in nominal terms. Consequently, the allocation for SCSP has fallen to just 7.06% and the allocation for TSP

to a lowly 4.36% of the total Plan expenditure for 2016-17.⁶⁰

There is no doubt. While one may have strong disagreements with the overall orientation and

policy framework of the various governments that have come to power at the Centre since Independence, the present NDA-BJP Government led by Narendra Modi is undoubtedly the most anti-people of them all.

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Non-productive assets

While going through the Economic Resolution of the Socialist Party (India) published in Janata, issue of 11.12.2016 it is observed that the resolution did not mention about NPA in banks in PSU. This is one of the important issue which should have reflected in the resolution. It has been observed that neither UPA nor NDA government has taken this issue as a serious one. On the other hand the governments under UPA and NDA have strengthened the financial position of the banks in public sector. The governments under UPA or NDA were afraid of taking drastic action

against the Boards of Directors of banks in PSU, borrowers and guarantors, the reason for which is best known to them. But one thing is clear that public funds have been misused to the disadvantage of poor people. When a particular industry is likely to go in NPA such industries i.e. borrowers has been granted concessions under restructuring of loan just to avoid any action. Such looters of public money and national wealth are moving in the society with “respect and honour”. This shameless act must be condemned by political parties like the Socialist Party (India) in future. The Socialist

Party (India) should start raising voice against such anti-people policies of the Government. Such policies amount to cheating but nobody is held responsible or accountable. The demonetization of high currency notes cannot root out corruption in public life.

I, therefore, appeal to the Socialist Party (India) to raise voice against the economic crimes committed by the government authorities, banks in PSU to save public funds which are misused by the authorities with the support of the government.

- R. D. Prabhu

Anupam Mishra leaves behind a rich legacy of knowledge

Harsh Mander

Gently and with the quiet dignity that characterised the way he lived his entire life, Anupam Mishra left the world on December 19, 2016. He was 68, felled after a long and painful battle against cancer. He leaves behind a massive and fertile legacy of knowledge distilled from centuries-old indigenous folk wisdom, about the ways that we must live with our planet if our world and we are to survive.

I was privileged to know Anupam Mishra from the days of the Emergency, more than 40 years ago. The Gandhi Peace Foundation in Delhi in those days was a hub of resistance to the Emergency, and also a nucleus for the propagation and generation of Gandhian ideas. As a university student and for some years after, I volunteered with the foundation. Anupam Mishra had joined it a few years earlier, and he became in those days a close friend and thoughtful guide. I knew rural India too little at that time, except from books. With his encouragement and direction, I began to travel, and spent a few years trying to experience and understand India's rural people and life, and also the intolerable inequities and deprivations that characterised our countryside.

These were the initial years of my politicisation. I was attracted to the ideas of the Left, but also to Gandhi. Many of my learnings and insights about Gandhi came from long conversations with Anupam. He had immersed himself in the Lohia movement after his post-graduate

studies in Sanskrit in Hindu College, Delhi University, and volunteered to work with the towering Jayaprakash Narayan's campaign for the voluntary surrender of dacoits of the Chambal valley. This charismatic movement caught the imagination of the country at that time, because it powerfully demonstrated the application of Gandhian ideas to crime and punishment, building on the possibility of reform of even dreaded criminals through a change of heart. This association led to Anupam's first book, *Chambal Ke Bandooke, Gandhi Ke Charanon Me*, written with journalist Prabhash Joshi and Shravan Kumar Garg.

The book is out of print, but I could find an extract:

“(T)he Chambal Valley – a place... enough to strike terror in one's heart – for this area has, through the ages, been an ideal sanctuary for people who, for various reasons, have turned outlaws. The martial background of the people, their fight against alien invaders and rulers, and the immense socio-economic disparities, have combined to produce rebels or ‘baghis’ – a name also given to the dacoits... In 1971... Jagroop Singh, an emissary of Madho Singh, another notorious dacoit... traced JP [Jayaprakash Narayan] to Patna. In spite of his preoccupations and ill health, JP, sensing a genuine change of heart and desire to solve the problem of dacoity, agreed to take up the challenge. He... issued an appeal on 13 December 1971, advising them to surrender,

requesting the community to open its doors for their peaceful return to normal life and the government to consider their cases sympathetically. For six months, JP conducted his ‘Operation Persuasion’ not as a spiritual leader but as a social worker. Except for the dare-devil Madho Singh, his contacts with the dacoits were through the Chambal Ghati Shanti Mission. Assisted by Pandit Lokman Dikshit, and Tehsildar Singh (ex-dacoits) and Madho Singh they worked day and night, not caring about their personal safety. The dacoits had to be traced in their hideouts, deep in the jungles and ravines. The Madhya Pradesh police had created an undeclared peace zone to make mobilisation easier. JP came into personal contact with the dacoits when he camped at the Pagara Dak Bungalow 70 kilometres away from Gwalior and situated atop a hill. The dacoits with their families had been camping in the village of Dhorera down the hill. Dhorera, an otherwise sleepy village, won world-wide fame almost overnight. The first to come to meet JP was Mohar Singh who carried the highest reward of Rs 2 lakh on his head. The government was sceptical about his desire to surrender because, unlike Madho Singh's, his gang was intact and he was equipped with most modern arms. He told JP that his only condition for surrender was that he should be the first! The dacoits formally surrendered in batches at the Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram in Jaura, on 14 and 16 April 1972. Thousands watched them lay down their arms in front of a portrait of

Gandhiji, and cheered them as they shouted ‘Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai’, ‘Vinobaji ki Jai’, ‘Jaiprakashji ki Jai’. A wave of relief seemed to sweep the Valley of Terror.”

During the years that we spent together at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Anupam Mishra was greatly drawn to the Chipko Andolan led by Chandi Prasad Bhatt. With Satyendra Tripathi, he wrote *The Chipko Movement*, which was very influential in bringing to the attention of both India and the world at large this unique movement for “hugging the trees”. In this evocative and effective form of mass non-violent resistance, women and men demanded that if a tree was to be felled, they should be cut down with it.

The carefully researched account described for the rest of the world this incipient eco-feminist mass movement of forest conservation that began in 1973. This went on to establish a precedent and a model for non-violent protest in India, as well as for many later environmental movements all over the world. Their account of this mass movement inspired many eco-groups around the world to fight deforestation, expose forest mafia, enhance ecological awareness and, above all, demonstrate the strength and weight of non-violent and grounded people’s movements and struggles. Their reports highlighted, especially, the role of women as the backbone and also the mainstay of such struggles – women were the ones most affected by rampant deforestation because it resulted in shortages of firewood, fodder as well as water for drinking and farm irrigation, and ultimately added to the care and collection-based unpaid work burden on them.

I left the Gandhi Peace Foundation to join the Indian Administrative Service in 1980, and since I spent my subsequent years mostly in far-off corners of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Anupam Mishra and I lost contact, although I remained informed and influenced by his work. After I finally returned to Delhi and especially after the Gujarat carnage of 2002, I became increasingly critical of the foundation and Gandhians in general for not taking as strong and outspoken a stand against communal politics as I would have hoped. The few times I discussed this with Anupam Mishra, he did not dismiss me as judgemental as many others did. He listened to me in his gentle, civilised way.

Anupam Mishra remained for most of his adult life a staff member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, serving several years at its helm as its secretary as well. He retired in 2007, but the foundation was not willing to let him go and he, therefore, continued to work with it until he left the world. Yet, as pointed out by his close friend Himanshu Thakkar, he rarely described himself as a Gandhian. He was and remained one of the most credible faces of the institution, which otherwise had its peaks and troughs over the years. He also edited for many years a leading journal of Gandhian thought called *Gandhi Marg*.

Anupam Mishra is, of course, best known for his work in discovering and chronicling traditional systems of water harvesting in water-scarce regions like Rajasthan. He celebrated the technical and environmental wisdom and skills of often non-literate creators and maintainers of these extraordinarily complex systems. His books, photographs, slides and talks about these have

influenced two generations, not just of environmentalists but also students, engineers, social workers and thinking, concerned citizens. His writings on this subject have been translated into 19 languages from India and around the world, including Braille.

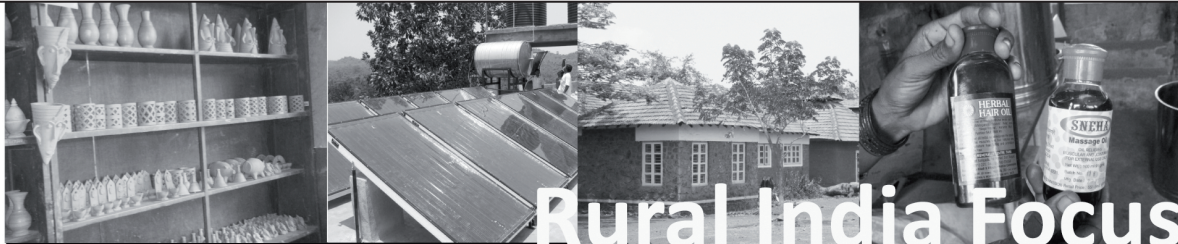
His son Shubham, an architect, told me about his work in recent years unearthing and documenting traditional water conservation, storage and regeneration systems in Delhi, to which successive dynasties contributed. Each contributed to recharging the underground water table, and these flowed into a series of small streams and rivulets that crisscrossed the city and then all flowed into the Yamuna. But today, these rivulets are dirty nallahs, the Yamuna a receptacle of all of Delhi’s mostly untreated waste, and the city has recklessly built over its multitude of wells, tanks and water passages. Anupam Mishra could not live long enough to put these into a book, but his son is committed to collecting and putting up all of these, and indeed all his books, pictures and talks online as an open resource for future generations. It was a matter of principle for Anupam Mishra that all his books were without copyright, and this electronic resource will likewise be open-source.

There are few people who have contributed more to our understanding of not just traditional water systems but also people’s own knowledge carried over through the generations than Anupam Mishra. His enduring influences are both on Indian environmental movements and the democratisation of knowledge itself. Yet, he remained self-effacing, low-key, deeply committed to immersing himself in his chosen work with hard work,

study and research. His criticism of modern science and technology and government systems was laced in irony and wit rather than anger

and judgement. There are few men as gentle and civilised as him, a man who was at once authentic, reflective, a fighter, and democratic.

His passing leaves a large empty space in India's eco-democratic movements, which will be very hard to fill.



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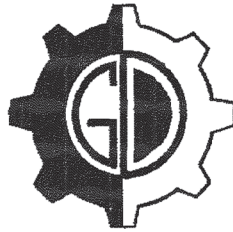
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Centre-State relations going sour

Kuldip Nayar

One development which has gone unnoticed in the confrontation between Trinamool Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is the delineation of relations between the Centre and the states. When the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) protected the West Bengal BJP office, it gave a message that the Centre was the ultimate authority and it had its own force to ensure implementation of its word.

When West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said that they too "were a government," she threw down the gauntlet to the centre that the state was supreme in their own affairs. India is a federal polity. The states have their autonomy as spelled out in the constitution. The Supreme Court has said in many judgments that the Centre could not run roughshod to suppress the states in their own spheres.

This is the same old story: the state's assertion against the Centre's. It has happened in the case of certain states earlier. Kerala, which has often the Communists at the helm of affairs, was disturbed many a time by New Delhi, including imposition of the President's rule for the first time ever in the country.

Soon after independence, E.M.S. Namboodiripad was the chief minister of Kerala. He differed with New Delhi, ruled by the Congress. It wanted to extend the Preventive Detention Act. But Namboodiripad argued that it was a way of the British rule and did not fit into the democratic structure of the country. He opposed the enactment. Among the chief ministers, he was the only one to do so.

Tall chief minister B.C. Roy of West Bengal, present at the meeting, was so offended that he chided him and said that "you were the only patriot among us." Namboodiripad did not budge from his stand and merely said that he did not want to join issue with him. But he wanted his 'no' to be registered. When it came to his party whether or not to endorse his stand, it gave him full support.

However, it did not take long to prove what he had said. Soon after, the Centre faced the Railways strike. Kerala government supported the demands of the railways men. The encouraged workers in Kerala threatened to set on fire the central government's offices in the state. New Delhi deployed the CRPF to protect its properties. This was an odd situation

to face when the state's police force would not do anything to ensure that no harm came to what belonged to the country, not a particular state. Fortunately, there was no showdown because the central government accepted the workers' demands and the strike averted.

The fallout of the threat of railways strike led to the creation of zonal councils—East, West, North, South and Central—presided over by the Union Home Minister. The purpose was that the states could discuss the matter among them so that they could iron out the differences before it came to parliament. The councils lasted till the Congress ruled both at the centre and the states. When the other parties came to power in the states, the arrangement did not work. The experiment ultimately ended in 1977 when the Janata Party, a combination of several parties, ruled the centre. It was given out that the zonal councils were not required because the party in power represented all of them.

Even otherwise, the centre-state relations have not been cordial, particularly ever since the BJP came to power. It tends to enforce its ideology on states ruled by parties other than the BJP. The RSS is its foot soldiers. This is resented by the opposition. If the BJP continues to formulate such policies which reflect its ideology, the coherence of the very federal structure is threatened. The elders in the BJP should look up and take necessary measures so that the unity of the country is intact.

But, unfortunately, with five states—Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa—going to the polls the BJP is bent on adopting

all possible methods to capture power in these states. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah will go to any extent to extend its rein. Their pre-poll speeches in recent times indicate what the party has in its mind.

To a large extent, the BJP cause has been served by the family feud in the Samajwadi Party (SP). Although Mulayam Singh has said that he was the party chief and would see to it that there was unity in SP but his brother Shivpal Yadav appears to be the spoiler. Chief minister Akhilesh Yadav has the majority of MLAs with him and there is no question of him being displaced.

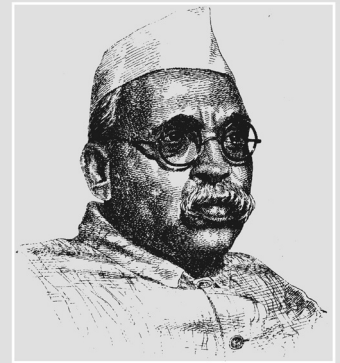
May be, it is only a storm in a tea cup, but it has dented the image of the party. Akhilesh is bound to gain because of his image before the voters is that of a clean person who was trying to run government transparently. His welfare measures, too, will stand him in good stead. Not surprisingly, even the Congress wants to have a pre-poll alliance with the SP to prevent the BJP coming to power.

The scenario in Punjab is no different. The Akali-BJP combination may still get a majority because the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) does not have a Punjabi face to project as if it is from the state itself. In Uttarakhand, the Congress may scrape through after how the BJP tried to dislodge the Rawat government before the court's intervention. In Manipur and Goa, the local elements may come to matter the most. But one cannot rule out the BJP's ascendancy when the Congress no longer remains the only alternative.

Whatever the outcome of the polls,

the BJP-ruled centre cannot turn a Nelson's eye to the developments in the states, particularly West Bengal where it is the weakest. The daily bickering between the Trinamool Congress and the BJP will only aggravate the situation and drive the people to question the very democratic system itself.

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Communal Violence in 2016

Irfan Engineer, Neha Dabhade and Suraj Nair

India continued to be confronted with the menace of communal violence in the year 2016. The Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) monitors communal violence tracking five newspapers in two languages – English and Urdu. Some newspaper reports were then cross checked with web portal TwoCircles.net. The newspapers monitored were Mumbai editions of *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *Inquilab* and *Sahafat*.

Violence is a broad term which encompasses in its ambit communal attitudes or symbolic violence, structural violence and physical attacks resulting in injuries, deaths or loss of property. However, the present report is limited to physical violence wherein communal hatred motivates attacks on members of a community only on the basis of their religious identity. The report excludes primarily ethnic violence with communal overtones as, for instance, in Manipur. This report does not include inter-sect or inter-denominational violence, for instance within the Muslim community in Kalyan between Barelvis and Salafis on 28th December.

Every year CSSS reports communal violence on the basis of data and figures released by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). However neither the NCRB nor the Ministry of Home Affairs has released data on communal violence for the year 2016. There is usually a huge gap

between the communal violence reported by the media and the data of communal violence gathered by the NCRB and MHA. For instance, in the year 2015, according to the Home Ministry data, there were 751 incidents of communal violence in which 97 people died and 2264 were injured. Whereas the five newspapers mentioned above, reported only 47 incidents in the same year in which 15 lives were lost and 272 suffered injuries.

The MHA data for the year 2016 is available only till the month of May. According to MHA data, upto May 2016 there were 278 incidents of communal violence in which 38 lives were lost and 903 were injured. The state wise break of the MHA data on communal violence in the year 2016 till May is as under:

States	Incidents	Killed	In-jured
Assam	1	0	2
Bihar	23	0	85
Chhattisgarh	1	0	3
Delhi	4	0	16
Gujarat	16	3	38
Himachal Pradesh	1	0	0
J & K	4	0	4
Jharkhand	12	5	76
Karnataka	40	4	116
Kerala	3	0	3
Madhya Pradesh	35	2	110
Maharashtra	40	4	127
Manipur	4	3	58
Odisha	2	0	26
Rajasthan	16	1	20
Tamil Nadu	3	0	3
Telangana	3	1	6
Uttrahand	2	0	7

Uttar Pradesh	61	13	185
West Bengal	7	2	18
Total	278	38	903

Source: Statement referred to in reply to part (a to c) of Lok Sabha starred question NO. 35 for 19.07.2016. Showing number of communal incidents, persons killed/injured therein in 2016 (upto May)

For the sake of analysis in this study we refer only to the aforesaid newspapers and we compare it with newspaper reports of communal violence in 2015.

According to the data from the aforesaid newspapers, in the year 2016, there were 62 incidents of communal violence as compared to 47 incidents in 2015. In 2016, 8 deaths were reported in the newspapers against 15 deaths reported in the same newspapers in 2015. 435 injuries were reported in 2015 whereas the number of injuries reported in 2016 is 676. 323 arrests were reported in 2015 in comparison to 823 arrests reported in 2016.

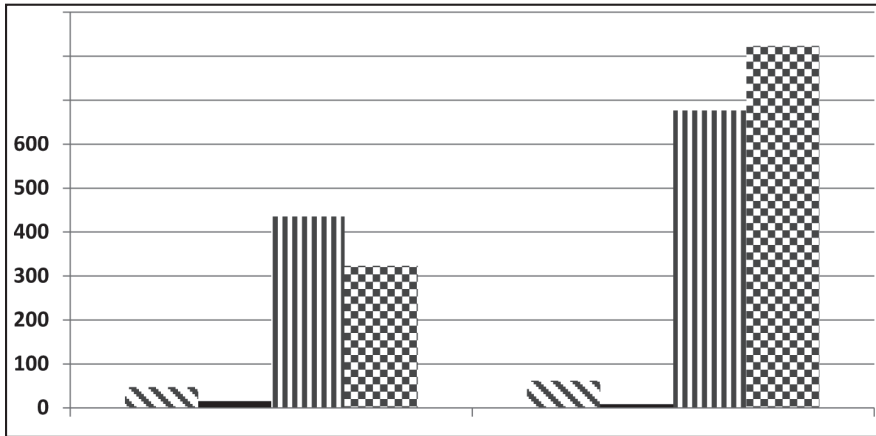
Communal violence 2016: Salient trends

Highest incidents of communal violence in 2016 were reported from the poll bound state of Uttar Pradesh (18 out of 62 incidents), followed by Bihar (10), Maharashtra (8), Jharkhand (6) and Madhya Pradesh (5). These five states made up for nearly 76% of total incidents of violence reported in 2016.

State wise break up of number of communal incidents:

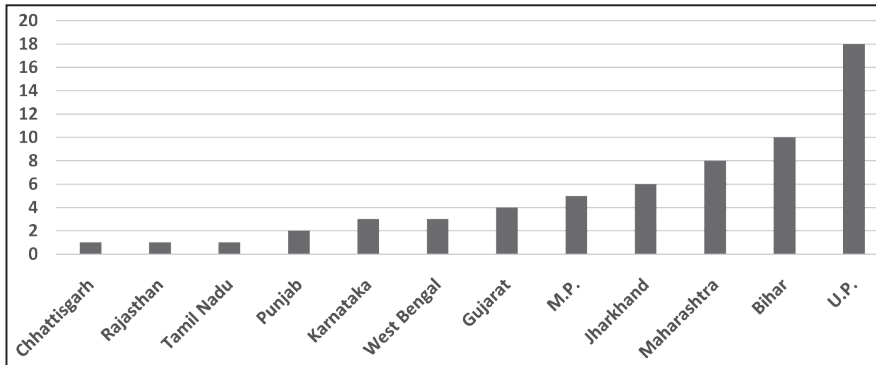
Prominent scholars including Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer and Ashutosh Varshney described communal

Comparison between number of Communal Violence Incidents, Deaths, Injuries and Persons Arrested in 2015 and 2016



violence primarily as an urban phenomenon. We observe communal violence increasingly spreading to rural areas as well. The data in 2016 shows that out of 62 incidents of communal violence, 18 incidents took place in rural areas.

of communal violence were reported from states ruled by BJP which made up for 50% of the states where communal violence took place. 4.8% incidents of communal violence were reported from Karnataka ruled by Congress. Congress rules



In 2016, Punjab witnessed communal violence for the first time after the Khalistan related extremism was neutralized. This time it was conflict between a section of Muslim and Hindu communities. The local Sikhs were in support of the Muslims. West Bengal is witnessing steady rise in communal violence after near riot free regime during the Left Front rule (24, 16 and 27 in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively according to Home Ministry data for those years).

8% of the states where communal violence was reported. Lastly, 54.8% incidents were reported from states ruled by parties other than Congress

Regime wise analysis of the data shows that almost 40.3% of incidents

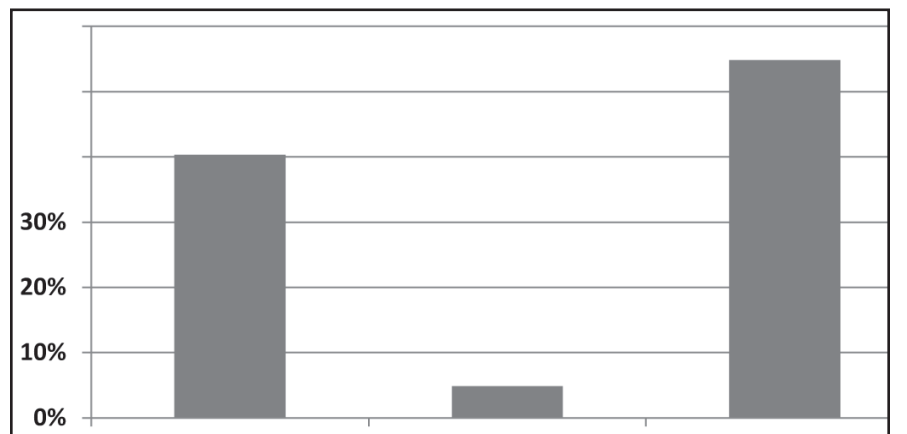
and BJP and they ruled in 42% of states where incidents of communal violence were reported.

Regime wise comparison of number of incidents of communal violence

The major triggers of communal violence in 2016 have been festivals like Muharram and Durga Puja. The second major trigger of violence was social media. While posts in social media were used as triggers in 7 cases of incidents of communal violence, it was used as a platform and tool of mobilization in other incidents too like Peda in Bijnor, UP.

The response of the police during communal violence has been wanting. The police took preventive action only in 3 out of 62 incidents reported. The police failed to respond effectively in BJP as well as non BJP/Congress ruled states.

Growing incidents of communal violence is increasingly normalizing violence in the society. Citizens are becoming indifferent to communal violence. In such a scenario and taking into consideration the above trends, it can be gauged and predicted that communal violence as a phenomenon in the society will continue and there is no end to it in immediate future or short term.



Communal violence analysis

As mentioned earlier, the states that have reported the highest incidents of communal violence are UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Together they account for 47 out of 62 incidents of communal violence, constituting 75.81% of total incidents of communal violence.

Uttar Pradesh is slated for Assembly elections in 2017. It has been generally observed by many social scientists that impending elections and political mobilization strategies tend to be along caste and communal fault lines contributing to communal polarization and communal violence.

Bihar has witnessed increasing incidents of communal violence after coalition of JD(U) and BJP split in 2013. Maharashtra which falls in the West zone has been always prone to communal riots.

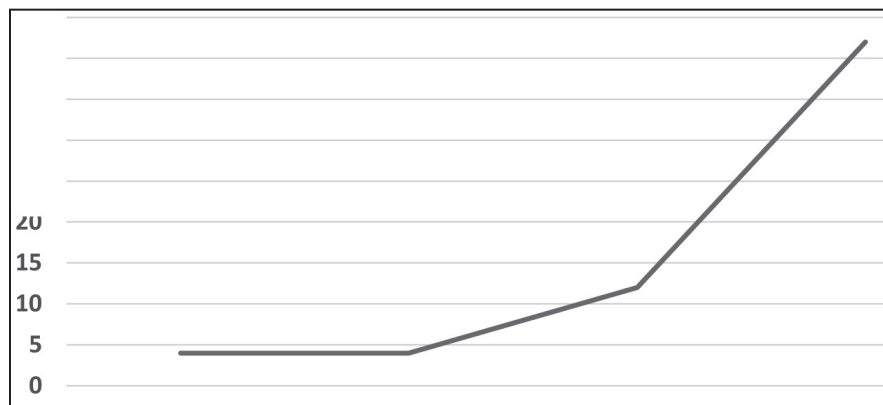
Communal violence in 2016 claimed 8 lives. 7 out of the 8 deceased were Muslims and the community of the remaining one deceased was not specified.

Zone wise analysis

Zone wise analysis shows that the North zone of the country has reported highest incidents of violence – 42 incidents were reported in the North zone. West zone reported 12 incidents, while South and East zone each reported 4 incidents. North zone includes Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab and Rajasthan. The West zone consists of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The South zone comprises of states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka while the East zone comprises of the states of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. The North and West zone which

is generally referred to as the cow belt for higher reverence of cows has traditionally been the hot site of communal violence.

Zone wise breakup of incidents of communal violence



Triggers of communal violence:

A number of communal incidents took place because of the clash of Muharram and Durga Puja being on the same day. Stone pelting and tensions were experienced during the processions. Festivals and desecration of places of worship and sacred symbols were exploited to trigger communal violence. In Deoband, UP, locals found vandalised idols in a temple on 27th July. Suspect belonging to the Muslim community was caught and beaten up by locals before he was handed over to the police. Officers claimed Sadik appeared to be mentally-challenged. Though the gates of a religious structure of his community was found damaged late at night, police acted proactively and repaired the gates in the night itself and the situation was under control. In Shahabad, Karnataka, a youth called Shiva posted an inflammatory post on facebook against the Muslim community and was arrested for the same. Next day a Dussehra cut out was found desecrated. Rama Sene and VHP tried to exploit this incident to fan communal violence. The Muslims

were being blamed for desecration and hurting the sentiments of the Hindus. This misinformation was spread to apparently secure the release of Shiva. Later it was found that some Hindu youth had

desecrated the Dussehra cut off. The police arrested 5 Hindus and one Muslim in this case and prevented riots on a large scale.

Festival processions and Social Media were used as trigger events of communal violence. Social media posts triggered off 7 incidents of communal violence. Derogatory posts about Prophet Mohammad or Hindu Gods/Goddesses or other community were circulated on social media like facebook and whatsapp which triggered off violence. In one such instance in Sagar situated in Madhya Pradesh, a nephew of an RSS member was found guilty of posting objectionable post. One Muslim youth lost his life and 3 were injured in the violence that ensued in Ilambazar in West Bengal. 21 incidents took place during festivals of Durga puja, Muharrum, Ganpati procession, Hanuman jayanti and Eid-e- Miladun. Festival related incidents were reported highest in UP (8) followed by Bihar (4), Jharkhand (3), Maharashtra, West Bengal and Karnataka reporting two each.

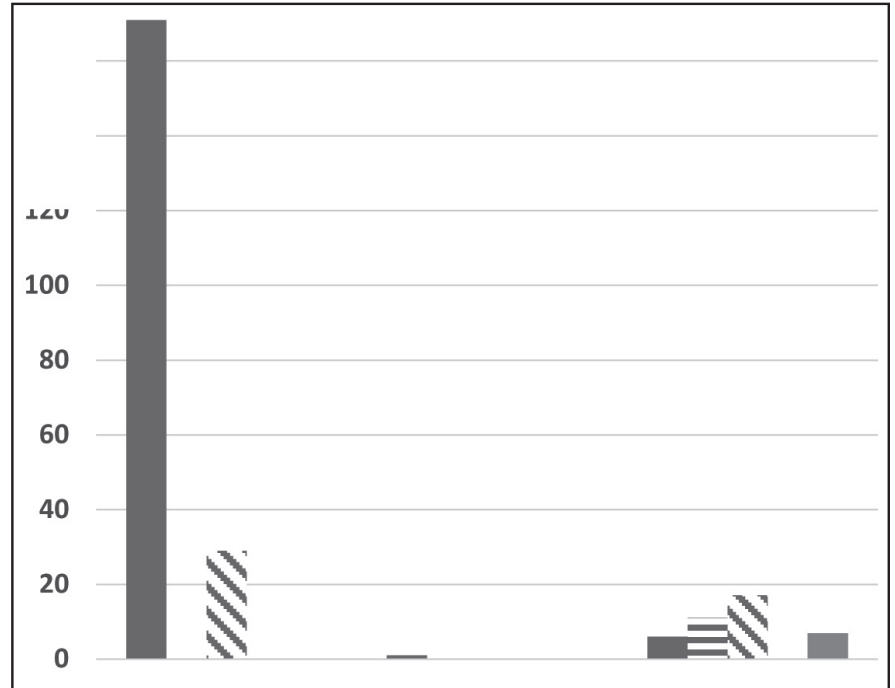
Losses and damages suffered in communal violence

Muslims suffered more in terms of deaths, injury and damage of property. They also suffered more in terms of coercive force used by the state as a riot control measure, post riot arrests, and launching of prosecutions. Out of 62 incidents, in 12 incidents religion wise disaggregated data of arrests was available. In these 12 incidents, 178 arrested were Muslims and 75 were Hindus.

In the case of injuries, religion wise disaggregated data was available in five incidents. In these five incidents, 46 injured were Muslims and 11 were Hindus. In terms of deaths, religion wise disaggregated data was available in 4 incidents. 7 deaths were those of Muslims. In the case of damage to properties, disaggregated data was available in 3 incidents for vehicles, 6 belonged to Muslims and none to Hindus. In the cases of houses attacked, disaggregated data was available in three incidents – 1 house belonged to Hindu and 67 belonged to Muslims. Disaggregated data was available in 3 incidents for shops attacked – 3 houses belonged to Hindus and 56 belonged to Muslims. These figures strike one as odd since the arrests indicate that the Muslims are perpetrators in the communal violence. But if this was the case, then the victims ought to have been the Hindus which should have reflected in the figures related to the number of deaths, injuries, houses/ shops/ vehicles attacked. But the figures tell a different story where major loss has been borne by the Muslims. Communal violence is a double whammy for the Muslim community as targets of violence as well as the consequent police actions. That is

why there is no effective deterrence against communal violence.

Regime wise comparison of arrests, injuries and deaths of Hindus and Muslims

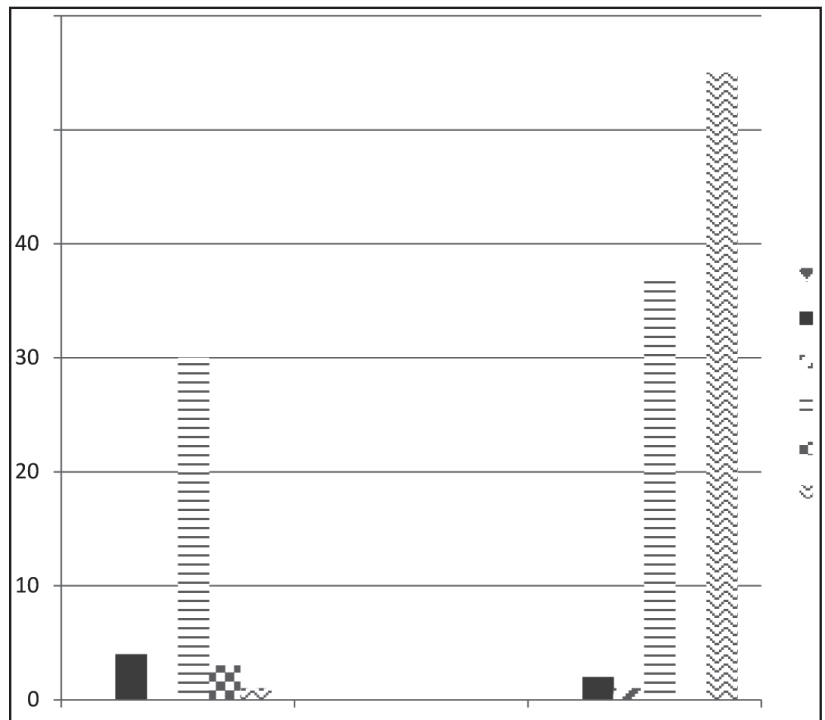


Regime wise analysis:

6 out of 12 states where communal violence was reported are under BJP rule, one under Congress and 5 under other parties.

Regime wise comparison of property – vehicles, houses and shops attacked of Hindus and Muslims

40.3% of incidents of communal violence were reported from states ruled by BJP comprising of 26% of the total population. 4.8%



incidents of communal violence were reported in states ruled by Congress which constitute for 3% of the total population. 54.8% incidents were reported from states ruled by parties other than Congress and BJP comprising of 72% of the population.

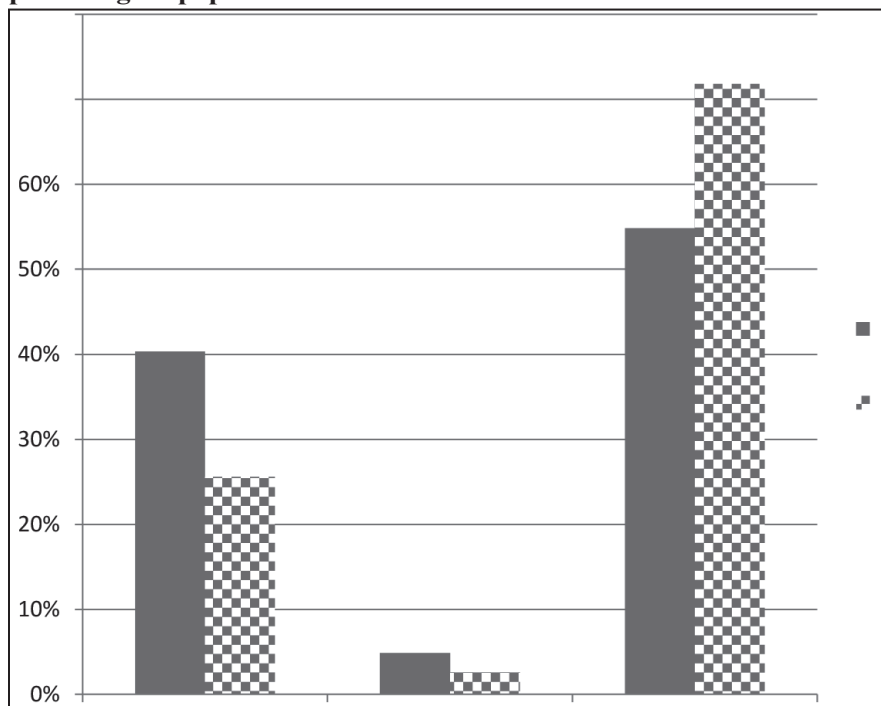
Regime wise comparison of percentage of incidents and percentage of population of states:

It has been observed from the data and number of incidents reported that in BJP ruled states, there is low intensity communal violence. There are no deaths but higher number of injuries (446) in 25 incidents. The number of deaths is low so as to not attract undue media attention or criticism from international organizations but communal violence is allowed to brew sub radar. This sub radar communal

the perpetrators didn't anticipate punitive action against them.

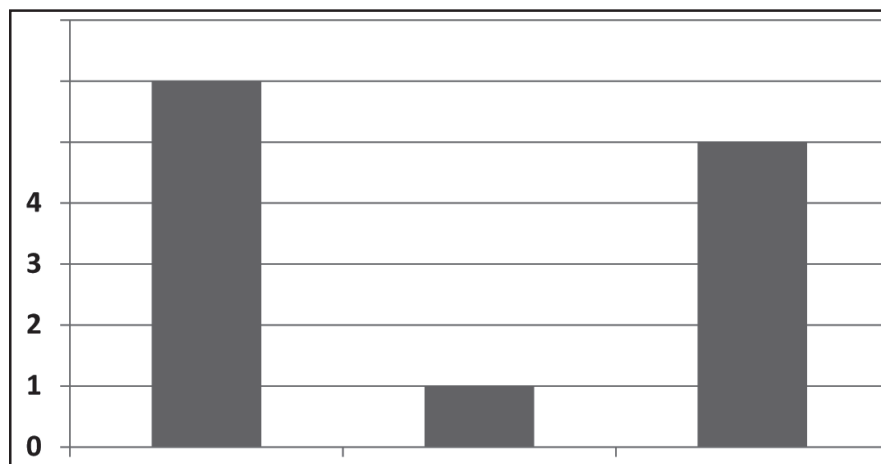
The Congress government in Karnataka was successful in preventing a riot in Shahabad where one Muslim and five Hindus were arrested (referred to above). In 2015, the media reported three incidents of communal violence in Karnataka and in 2016 also this number has remained the same suggesting no increase in the number of communal incidents.

The role of non-BJP and non-Congress governments has been distressing. The Samajwadi Party government in UP has failed to check communal violence though electoral calculations should require it to prevent communal violence. Communal violence benefits BJP as seen in 2014 general elections post-Muzzafarnagar riots. However the role of the Hindu nationalist actors can't be ruled out given the hate speeches. The Samajwadi party led government in spite of booking persons allegedly involved in communal violence under the National Security Act and giving compensation to survivors of communal violence has by and large failed to prevent or contain communal violence. It was able to avert one incident of communal violence in Shahjahanpur due to active intervention of the police.



Number of states ruled by BJP, Congress and others where incidents of communal violence took place

violence is used to impress upon the Muslims that they are second class citizens. The higher number of incidents is also because that



The Mamta Banerjee led government in West Bengal has also failed to arrest communal violence which has undermined the secular Bengali identity and helped emergence of a stronger Hindu identity amongst the Hindus in West Bengal. The failure to check communal violence can be attributed to either the lack of intention to prevent or contain

communal violence or the ability to prevent/ contain it. However the BJP stands to benefit from the communal violence in West Bengal due to the polarization it achieved. Bihar government prevented one riot in Bettiah.

How were riots dealt with?

Ruling regimes are able to exert tight control on the state police as they determine postings/ transfers and promotions of the police personnel. There is little incentive to the police to act independently and uphold law and order even when it goes against the political interests of the ruling party. The police action (or inaction) during riots is largely determined either by their own biases and prejudicial attitudes or due to political pressure exerted. It is important to examine the role of police at three different stages of communal violence – prevention, control during riots and post riot actions. We here examine the role of police at all three stages in BJP, Congress and non-BJP/non-Congress ruled states.

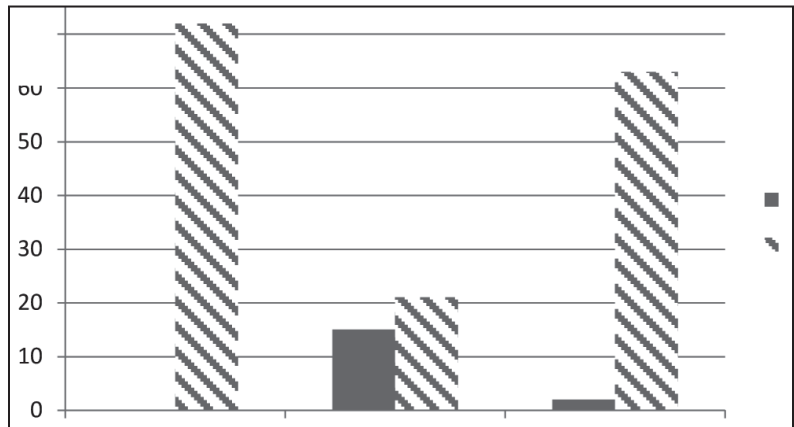
The police were able to prevent only 3 incidents of communal violence and all three states were ruled by non-BJP governed states (Bihar, Karnataka and UP).

At the stage of riot control, the action of police has been inadequate in all states except Karnataka. The observation is based on comparison of religion wise arrests and victim community. In BJP ruled states, religion wise disaggregated data is available in 5 incidents. Out of 189 people arrested in the BJP ruled states for which religion wise disaggregated data is available, 18 arrested were Hindus and 171 arrested were Muslims even though the victims were by and large

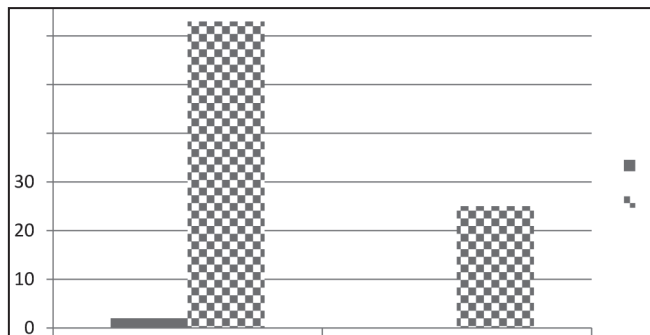
Muslims (see the graphs). In case of states ruled by the non BJP and non Congress governments, religion wise disaggregated data is available in 6 incidents. There were 52 arrests of Hindus (51 from UP alone) and 6 arrests of Muslims. The victim community in these riots was Muslim.

70 police personnel were also injured during the riots – 12 each in Umerkhed and Nandurbar. In all, 27 police personnel were injured in Maharashtra. 14 police personnel were injured in Khodadadpur (UP).

Comparison between number of arrested from Hindu and Muslim community from the three areas of Malkapur, Nandurbar and Umarkhed.



Comparison between number of arrested and injured from Hindu and Muslim community in Umarkhed



In Peda in Bijnore, the police though didn't respond in a timely manner which allowed the communal violence to take place, the police later arrested 23 Hindus. National Security Act was invoked against the

BJP ruled Maharashtra thus reports highest number of injuries of the police.

Maharashtra police has also arrested the highest number of Muslims – 156 (Badlapur 21, Umerkhed 63 and Malkapur 72) out of 179 Muslims arrested in all the communal riots. In Umerkhed for which religion wise disaggregated data is available, 25 Muslims were injured whereas no Hindus were killed or injured whereas 4 houses were attacked whose community is not specified.

accused 2 accused. In other incidents too, UP Government has invoked draconian law – NSA. However that has not proved to be a deterrent as high number of communal violence persists.

Ten Years of Sachar Committee Report

On the completion of 10 years of the Justice Sachar Committee Report, Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS), Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and Khudai Khidmatgar organized a national seminar in New Delhi on the 22nd of December 2016. The purpose of the seminar was to find out how much work had been done according to the committee's recommendation. The president of the Socialist Party, Dr Prem Singh introduced the idea of the seminar saying that this would be the first in a series. In this first seminar on the subject scholars and representatives of Muslim organizations have been called as speakers. Representatives of various political parties would also be called later. So that they are able to tell what extent the recommendations have been implemented by their governments at the level of the states and centre.

Addressing the inaugural session, veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar referring to the report said that this report had done the job of unveiling the truth. Muslims should get their rights. Today the condition of Muslims has gone from bad to worse. They are not being treated well. Earlier politics was not linked to religion. But today religion dominates politics. As per the Constitution, all citizens are equal. We all need to look into our hearts to see what kind of society we really want. The Sachar Committee report is as relevant today as it ever was.

Prof. T. K. Oommen, who had been a member of the Sachar Committee, said that this report is a well known historic document. In this report, through the instance of the Muslim

community, one gets a glimpse of the entire Indian society. A person needs not just food to live on, but also equality, security, recognition and respect. Today, even those in minority communities who have enough resources, are not accorded the respect they are entitled to as per the provisions of the Constitution. when we talk of security we must remember that violence is not merely physical, but also structural and symbolic. Muslims often have to face such sort of violence. For instance, calling them 'beef eaters' is a living example of psychological and mental violence. A Muslim is regarded with suspicion. Though inequities are often seen in societies, but inequities resulting from being born in a specific community must be seen as a serious problem.

Syed Mahmood Zafar, who was appointed OSD by the government in Sachar Committee, in his power-point presentation told that Muslims in India are 14.2 percent, who are 73 percent of the total minorities. Article 46 has provisions for special care of weaker sections. According to Sachar Committee report, Muslim society is rather backward on social, economic and educational parameters, and their level has been falling since 2006. Only 10 percent of the Committee's recommendation, have been implemented so far. A big factor in this is the bare minimum representation of Muslims in administrative positions.

Maulana Mahmood Madni, general secretary of Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, said that there is an increasing trust deficit against Muslims in society. They are socially isolated. Being a Muslim today has become a

sign of terror. We must pay attention to the education of Muslim children and youth, so must the media and government.

The chair of the second session, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty said that all dispossessed communities including minorities must be systematically studied and worked with. If everyone continues to work separately, engaging piecemeal with issues at random, it will not lead to systematic, consolidated work. If one looks at newspapers, books and magazines, very little information is available on the social, economic and cultural conditions of Muslims. The rights of minority communities must be regarded carefully. Violence rises when the rights of minorities are threatened. When rights are assured, then through due representation, social change comes about.

Dr. Salim Engineer, general secretary of Jamat E Islami Hind said that many recommendations came before the Sachar Committee report, but this is a different and special report, it is realistic, and work has been done at ground level. what is the reason that despite such a widely debated report, no change is happening in the real conditions of minorities. The reason is the duplicitousness and lack of commitment on the part of governments and political parties. In Indian jails, majority of inmates are of minority communities, out of which 85 % are Muslims. 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' is an emotional cliché, reality is quite the opposite. the country is moving from democracy towards fascism. The identity of this nation is due to its diversity and multiplicity, not due to 'Hindu nationalism'.

Senior journalist Qurban Ali said that this report has always been accused of Muslim appeasement. Madhu Limaye addressing a public meeting had asked, where is Muslim appeasement happening? Has it happened at social, economic, cultural and educational levels? If your mentality is discriminatory, you cannot do good work. This discrimination happens not only at the social but governmental level also. He reminded that the government circular of 1950, which said that Muslims should not be appointed to sensitive positions, has still not been changed.

Former minister Manishankar Iyer said that the accusation of appeasement stems from a wrong mindset. When the Hindu personal law exists, then there ought to be no objection to Muslim personal law. Diversity is the identity of India. The motive behind uniform civil code is not equality of all, but destruction of the Muslim identity. He accepted that even the Congress governments did not do enough work on the Sachar Committee recommendations. However, these recommendations ought to be implemented.

Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind's secretary, Hakimuddin Qasmi said that Muslims should take initiative and join everyone in the struggle for rights. They should reject the mentality of fear and pessimism. There are other communities in India too that are discriminated against. The discussion on Sachar Committee's recommendations should continue. He said that people should not work with the feeling of revenge or of defeating anyone else. All deprived groups must come together to fight for the progress of their communities and the nation.

(Contd. on Page 11)

Our traditions have always celebrated the 'argumentative' Indian not the 'intolerant' Indian.

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the 77th session of Indian History Congress at Thiruvananthapuram on December 29, 2016. Speaking on the occasion, the President said an objective pursuit of history requires an impartial mind of a judge and not the mind of an advocate. We must keep our eyes open for unfamiliar ideas and be ready to consider a range of different inferences or assumptions. This necessarily bars intolerance of contrary opinions or judgments. There has been an unfortunate tendency in our country from time to time to take umbrage at the expression of any view perceived to be hostile to our social or cultural institutions, past or present.

Similarly, critical appraisals of our heroes and national icons of the past have been met with hostility and sometimes even violence. The freedom to doubt, disagree and dispute intellectually must be protected as an essential pillar of our democracy. Nothing should lie outside the realm of reason, and therefore of discussion and argument. Such freedom is vital for progress in any field, especially a calling and a craft like history.

The President said it is his firm conviction that India's pluralism and social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity are our greatest strength. Our traditions have always celebrated the 'argumentative' Indian not the 'intolerant' Indian. Multiple views, thoughts and philosophies have competed with each other peacefully for centuries

in our country and freedom of speech is one of the most important fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution. He said the Indian History Congress has a creditable record of standing up for freedom of expression and asking historians to be faithful to the cause of reason. It has often taken cudgels against distortions of history. The President expressed hope the Indian History Congress will continue to remain alert and vigilant in the cause of an objective study of history.

Excerpts from the speech by the President of India:

"We must keep in mind that there is no conflict or contradiction between the promotion of regional history and the pursuit of the history of our country as a whole. Indeed, the more we know about our regions, the more we enrich the history of the whole country. My first Master's degree is in the subject of History. Kolkata, where I studied, has been home to some of our great historians like Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Professor R. C. Majumdar, Professor N. K. Sinha, Professor D. C. Sircar, Professor B. N. Mukherjee and others. They doubtless wrote on Bengal but their eyes were also set on India as a whole. Professor N. K. Sinha authored a detailed work on the economic history of colonial Bengal. Yet, he also compiled the standard biography of the famous Haidar Ali of Mysore, since he held Haider Ali's resistance to the expansion of British power in India near to his heart. This larger concern for the history of the whole of India was shared by prominent historians from

other parts of the country as well. The great authority on South Indian history S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar published important studies of the Guptas and Gurjaras of Northern India.

Whether we focus on regional or national history, what is needed the most in our approach to History is that we should be as objective as possible. This is of course true with respect to all subjects of enquiry and academic activities. Behind many professions of impartiality may lie deeply rooted sentiments of prejudice or an innate sense of superiority.

It is useful in this regard to recall Edward Said's influential work of 1978, *Orientalism*, whether he critically scrutinized the claims to objectivity of writing in the west on Asian culture and history. It will be unfair to deny that western orientalists introduced a broader conception of history and a more critical attitude towards historical evidence than our own traditional analysts. 'Orientalists' deciphered our early scripts, they discovered Ashoka for us and tracked as well as translated an enormous amount of source material. They deserve our gratitude for all the valuable work they have done.

However, Edward Said's work serves as a warning against the intrusion of personal prejudice into historical interpretation. In my view, every branch of knowledge, whether it be one of the so-called exact sciences or belongs to the spheres of humanities and social sciences, prospers only when clinical objectivity is maintained. It is often the case in history that evidence is either so scarce that the room for speculation is extremely wide,

or is so massive that the historian is unable to explore more than a small part of the available data. Personal proclivities of scholars such as loyalties to nation, region, religion, etc. can influence their choice when evidence suggests not a single occurrence but a range of possibilities.

How should one guard oneself against temptation in such a situation? I would venture to recommend that reason and moderation alone should be our guide. It is natural to love one's country and see as much glory in its past as one can detect. But patriotism should not result in blinkered approaches to interpreting history or a compromise with truth in order to justify an argument of choice. No society is perfect and history must be also seen as a guide on what went wrong and what were the contradictions, deficiencies and weaknesses of the past. The study of history will be of use to us in shaping our conduct today only if undertaken with objectivity and my impression is that mainstream Indian historiography has been quite conscious of this responsibility.

An objective pursuit of History, such as our best historians have attempted, requires an impartial mind of a judge and not the mind of an advocate. We must keep our eyes open for unfamiliar ideas and be ready to consider a range of different inferences or assumptions. This necessarily bars intolerance of contrary opinions or judgments. There has been an unfortunate tendency in our country from time to time to take umbrage at the expression of any view perceived to be hostile to our social or cultural institutions, past or present. Similarly, critical appraisals of our heroes and national icons of the past have been met

with hostility and sometimes even violence. The freedom to doubt, disagree and dispute intellectually must be protected as an essential pillar of one democracy.

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It is my firm conviction that India's pluralism and social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity are our greatest strength. Our traditions have always celebrated the 'argumentative' Indian not the 'intolerant' Indian. Multiple views, thoughts and philosophies have competed with each other peacefully for centuries in our country and freedom of speech is one of the most important fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution."

– Qurban Ali

(Contd. from Page 10)

Giving the concluding remarks at the end of the seminar, Dr. Prem Singh said the Sachar Committee report doesn't merely give statistics, but also guiding principles of what constitutes a civilized society, and how India should conduct itself vis-a-vis the rest of the contemporary world. Very little work and too many promises have happened in response to this committee's recommendations. We should have progressed towards an egalitarian, democratic and secular society, but the results are the opposite. Why is it that those who sided with the British during the freedom struggle have found acceptance not only within politics but also in society?

(Contd. on Page 14)

Weapon of mass digitisation

Aseem Shrivastava

One of the least noticed features of the introduction of economic reforms in India 25 years ago was the manner in which addressing a short-term payments crisis on the country's external accounts became a pretext for the government to introduce - without any debate befitting a supposedly democratic society - sweeping, long-term changes.

One need not be a votary of the license-permit raj to have observed the stealthy manner in which international financial institutions dictated the key policy shifts of the next decade of what (inappropriately) came to be called "liberalisation" ('corporatisation' would be a more accurate description). It permanently changed the very character of Indian economy and society, not to forget the ongoing devastation of the country's ecology.

Unemployment remains huge, inequalities have risen alarmingly in this past generation and, ominously, over 400,000 farmers have committed suicide - the last fallout being a direct consequence of the open-economy agriculture dictated by the agreements under WTO.

Meanwhile, more than 4,000 multinational corporations are doing lucrative business in India today. Whatever else they may have achieved, the stealth reforms since 1991 have certainly gold-plated their way.

Digital coercion: stealth reforms 2.0

PM Narendra Modi's recent demonetisation call - shrouded in

high executive secrecy - is deeply reminiscent of the manner in which the reform era began in 1991.

Its long-term significance in terms of digitising the Indian economy in the global corporate interest should not be underestimated. Its far-reaching implications are likely to last much longer than the man who brought it about.

Those running the larger world have a keen grasp of how policies favourable to their interests can be enacted through Indian leaders, ever conscious of their global ratings, no less than of their domestic popularity.

It is slowly dawning on a few waking heads that Modi has not acted as a cashless solipsist in a country that runs mostly on cash.

There are forces much more powerful than him who have successfully utilised his impatient political opportunism, his high office and his inflated popular image to push through the demonetisation of currency notes of the highest denominations, ostensibly aimed at removing black money, a shortage of cash in the country.

Their aim? To nudge, and shove where necessary, Indians well beyond the aspirational classes to end their digital deprivation and begin making payments for their transactions electronically.

According to research conducted by the Boston Consulting Group there is an annual jackpot of \$500 billion (a quarter of India's GDP) waiting to be made within the next

five years in the digital payments industry. But this is only if millions can be persuaded to abandon cash as the preferred mode of daily transactions.

Even if the top half of the Indian population can be drawn into the digital net, there are big fortunes to be made. The bottom half can be ignored, unless they become politically restless and vocal.

What lies beneath?

Events of big consequence in history are polysemic in their significance. Whatever his own motivations might have been, in effect, Modi has been prompted by the globally-agile digital finance companies to demonetise and drain the liquidity out of the banks (damaging banking as we have known it), effectively compelling hundreds of millions to go digital.

The recapitalisation of Indian banks is temporary and incidental. Indian banking is all set for a disruption. The digital disruption of banking is as inevitable as of media and retail have been in the past.

Digital payments are a possible threat to traditional banking everywhere now (as this McKinsey report makes clear).

Once digital payments banks have taken over, banking would reach almost every Indian in the next decade (or so we are told) and the mobile would have become a virtual ATM. Airtel will go where ICICI cannot.

Who makes the most?

A handsome share of this digital booty is likely to accrue to the already wealthy. Two days after the announcement of demonetisation on 8 November, an important business event took place.

Jio Payments Bank, a “first-of-its-kind” joint PPP venture between Reliance Industries and State Bank of India, was incorporated. It aimed to marry Jio’s mobile subscriber base and SBI’s vast national database to build a formidable distribution network and grow into what is likely to be one of India’s largest companies in the future. Reliance has already invested over \$20 billion in 4G infrastructure. It is obviously quite sure of making good on the huge investment.

Jio Payments Bank is one of the several other banks slated to occupy the digital payments platform in India. Others in the Fintech game with Jio are Airtel Payments Bank, Paytm Payments Bank, India Post Payments Bank, NSDL Payments Bank, Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank, Fino PayTech, and Vodafone m-pesa. These entities have globally dispersed ownerships, though their promoters are Indian.

Recently, IT billionaire Nandan Nilekani, one of the architects of Aadhaar, and now one of Modi’s consultants, drew attention to the merits of the digital transformation of banking by pointing to the key breakthrough of a ‘unified payment interface’ (UPI) launched by RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan before he left his job. UPI greatly simplifies the transfer of money by consumers. Nilekani argues that this will “shift the business models in banking from low-volume, high-value, high-cost and high fees, to high-volume, low-value, low-cost and no fees”.

There is a strong constituency both in the corporate sector and the government which believes it thus has the “solution” to financial exclusion. The expected windfall of profits is incidental, of course.

Go digital india

Modi has always been a digital enthusiast. With the creation of more than 250 million Jan Dhan bank accounts for the hitherto financially excluded, and its huge promotion of the Aadhaar card (a creation of the UPA government before him) as a means for accessing financial services and the transfer of subsidies - all that the Modi government thinks it now needs in order to push the Indian economy towards cashlessness is a mobile-mediated digital payment system. To its thinking, Jan Dhan and Aadhaar-linked mobile payment (JAM) will achieve the desired goal of digital villages - where mobiles are already available on EMIs. Just like most of India skipped land-line telephones to acquire mobiles, it is believed that there is no longer any need for physical bank branches across the country. Mobile phones will be enough.

Small wonder then, that the government’s Niti Aayog has been cooking up schemes to financially “incentivise” digital payments in grassroots India, long accustomed to cash. The prime minister’s pro-poor rhetoric at his public rallies notwithstanding, it is perfectly clear what this government’s actual priorities are. If some of the poor can also be seen to benefit, all the merrier.

Cashlessness (“less-cash” for the time being) has from the beginning been the unsteady long-term goal

of the plank of policies of which demonetisation is likely to be the first. The full digitisation of the economy is the greater goal. The process may take 10-20 years in all, but the globally-agile plutocrats have made a daring start in (a napping) India.

‘Black money’ (or busting terrorist financial plans) was just the excuse/pretext to usher in digital coercion. It is hardly the main goal. Cashlessness will make even plastic obsolete. In addition to working as a virtual ATM, the mobile will work as a debit (and in favourable circumstances in the future, a credit) card too. What Modi and the digital payments artists in India are doing is completely in line with the recent World Bank line for developing countries). A World Bank Press Release approvingly quotes the CEO of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: “Governments have to take the lead and drive digital financial development forward... We need governments to establish the vision, the digital platforms and the regulatory assurance to pull the hundreds of millions of currently excluded people into full participation in the modern economy.” (Bill Gates has himself offered an enthusiastic endorsement of demonetisation).

And governments are doing just that.

Is this really about black money?

Nobody - beginning with the previous Governor of the RBI - with any knowledge or experience ever believed that demonetisation would put an end to black money, even temporarily. The very fact that - half-way into the 50 days the prime minister had asked for - most of the demonetised currency was already back in bank deposits, is a tribute to

the resilience of laundering habits in the country. If the isolation of black money was the main goal of demonetisation, as the government has repeatedly been telling the people, it is failing miserably. It is the drive towards a cashless economy which is likely to outlast the hunt for black money (which can resume its journey after a gap with the help of the new currency notes).

The assumption, all along, is that digitising the economy would enable a full record of transactions, robbing the cash-driven parallel economy of its informal, invisible power. Formalisation of economy in this manner, we are told, will somehow make human economic behaviour more honest. In fact, a claim could be made quite convincingly that digitisation might ultimately greatly increase the scale and impenetrability of the black economy. Technology is not known to impart a conscience to human beings, somehow rendering them more honest, even if it sometimes appears to make cheating difficult for small thieves in the short-run.

In a time of digital opacity, the risks are particularly high. Don't believe this author, just go and speak to regulators anywhere who have to deal with the mounting menace of offshore banking where astronomical fortunes casually evade the hawk eye of governments across the world. The sums involved make the black money the prime minister has gone after in his stentorian moral crusade seem like bashful pennies.

Changing goal posts

In fact, it is worth asking him why he has so far failed to take any action against the large unaccounted fortunes hidden in offshore accounts,

which appear to be the final destination of much of the wealth spirited away from the country. Unsurprisingly, the frequency with which the prime minister has mentioned "black money" or "fake notes" has declined sharply if one tracks his speeches through the month of November. At the same time, the objective of moving India towards "cashless" digital payments has been heard much more frequently in his speeches. The popular appeal of demonetisation - and the reason why Modi Sarkaar still survives despite the criminal disruption of the Indian economy - rests on the government's claim that it will put an end to black money in the country.

(Contd. from Page 11)

The communalism which came with the British; which was limited to some pockets of cities, has now spread to small towns and villages, even to tribal areas as well. How did it so happen that despite all the institutions being in the hands of secular minded people such a lot of space is taken up by communal forces? We need to be self-critical too. By way of the new economic policies adopted in 1991, neo-imperialism was imposed on the country. The current conditions are a result of that. The opponents of RSS keep repeating its old agenda. Whereas it has a brand new agenda of destroying ideology through technology. When we work together with a fresh perspective on practical and ideological level, only then will we evolve an egalitarian, civil society. He put forward a resolution on behalf of the seminar which was unanimously accepted. The resolution calls for de-reservation of Muslim majority Vidhan Sabha seats and the constitution of an Equal Opportunity Commission.

If things had been presented to the public the other way around, and the government had been up front about the objective of achieving a cashless India (the removal of black money being but a secondary goal), there is little doubt that the policy would have been immediately unpopular.

As things are laid out, it will take a while for the public to see through the rhetoric of patriotism. This is how stealth reforms are meant to take effect. Meanwhile, just like in 1991, the economy is subject to *fait accompli* policy-making, digital coercion being a necessary part of the bargain.

—(PNN)

The speakers were welcomed by Dr. Ashwani Kumar in the beginning of the seminar and Faisal Khan delivered the vote of thanks at the end. The first session was conducted by SYS national general secretary Bandana Pandey and the second session was conducted by Dr. Hiranya Himkar.

Niraj, President SYS

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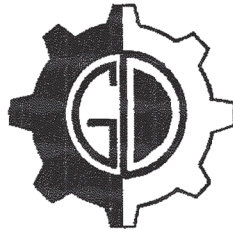
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दर्जा, गुणवत्ता आणि विश्वासाहता म्हणजेच अपना बाजार

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आपले सहकारी

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कार्याध्यक्ष	उपकार्याध्यक्ष	एक्झिक्युटिव्ह कमिटी सदस्य	मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी

संचालक :- भारती शिरसाट, शिवाजी गावंड, विश्वनाथ मलुष्टे, अश्विन उपाध्याय, अंजना सावंत, नरेंद्र कदम, रमाकांत साळुंखे, बाळा राऊळ, निलेश वैद्य, नरेंद्र भुर्के, उमेश फाटक, मनिषा डुबळे, नितिन अणोराव, जगदीश नलावडे

Republic Day, sovereignty and the youth

Prem Singh

The Constitution of India was adopted on 26th January of 1950 and we entered the world stage as a sovereign republic. Ever since, 26 January is celebrated as the Republic Day, a celebration of our sovereignty. Vibrant tableaux of various states and departments are part of the parade. But predominantly it is a celebration of the display of military prowess. On careful observation you will find that after the adoption of the new economic policies in 1991—that is after the ruling classes compromised the economic sovereignty of the nation—the celebration of Republic Day has become more and more extravagant. During the past three decades, as political sovereignty got compromised along with economic sovereignty, the celebratory extravaganza of Republic Day on Rajpath reached its zenith.

The question is whether our sovereignty has also come of age with the coming of age of these exhibitionist celebrations? A quick look at the decisions taken in the wake of the neoliberal order makes it clear that the ruling classes have derailed governments from the axis of the Constitution, which embodies our sovereignty; and instead mounted them on the axis of neoliberalist institutions of global capital order like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation, etc. These agreements and decisions have been taken at the behest of global capitalist economic institutions to further the interests of national and international corporate houses, multinational companies and the likes. The current leadership which claims that nothing has been done in the last 70 years, has shown remarkable promptness in compromising national sovereignty in just two and a half years of office. They have no concept of either freedom or of the sacrifices made by people in the struggle to achieve freedom for the country, hence they do not care if sovereignty is lost. This is also the problem with Narasimha Rao (the then prime minister), Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi. Which is why they turned the party that won the country's freedom into the party which pawned its freedom.

The ruling class presents military power as the symbol of the nation's sovereign power. But it is a false reassurance given that now there is 100% foreign direct investment in Defense, and the concessions have been

given to America to interfere in our defence apparatus. Governments, especially the current government, whips up nationalistic hysteria to mislead the people, so that they are unable to see or comprehend the treason against constitutional sovereignty. The nationalist sentiment is usually whipped up against Pakistan, the country the Indian army has always had the wherewithall to defeat. Several thousand square kms of Indian territory is under Chinese control. The ruling classes never invokes nationalism for a military solution to that. All in all, the spectacle parade at the Republic Day has become a comprehensive exercise by the ruling classes, its civil society and the common masses to fill the void resulting from the loss of sovereignty. The more the neoliberal noose tightens around sovereignty, the more extravagant will be this display. Jingoistic nationalism will get more jingoistic.

This situation is tremendously knotted and depressing. But it also presents an opportunity to salvage and strengthen the sovereignty achieved after a long struggle. Especially to the young. The youth in India do not come from any one domain. There are distinct economic, social and educational domains. Across all these three domains, there is a huge army of educated, semi-educated and uneducated unemployed youth. The youth have different perspectives regarding the nation and their place in it. They don't necessarily even have the same point of view about the neoliberal assault on national sovereignty. Most though, want to see India as a superpower. Some indeed believe that it already is one.

The youth must understand that a nation which cedes its sovereignty can never become a superpower. They can attempt the difficult visualization that in the neoliberal order, private enterprises will also have their tableaux in the Republic Day parade in future. The 100 per cent foreign/ private investment in Defense will also have an imprint on the parade. They must think if it is acceptable to them? Will they want a share in the neo-imperialist/neoliberal nation? Or will they carry out their responsibilities in the sovereign Indian nation? The nation's sovereignty can only be saved if the nation's youth resolve to save it with new preparedness and understanding.

Fascism: a mindset, essentially anti-democratic

Gauhar Raza

The plethora of literature that has been produced, and is still being written, on the various aspects of fascism, presents a montage that is difficult to comprehend by a cursory scanning. Historians tell us that fascism as an ideology and practice grew in Mussolini's Italy. National Fascist Party ruled Italy from 1922 to 1943 under the leadership of Benito Mussolini. Until the end of Second World War, that is, for the next two years, Republican Fascist Party was in power in Italy. The core of Italian Fascism was constituted by 'military citizenship'. In the name of nationalism, it mobilised every Italian citizen for World War I by brutally crushing the idea of liberal democracy. Though fascism has its roots in the First World War and in Italy, most of the post-World War II, literature pegs around Adolf Hitler, German Fascism and the Second World War¹. The reason for this is not very difficult to understand.

During this period similar developments were taking place in Germany. Hitler (a fiery public speaker, full of hate for Jews and Marxists), in July 1921, assumed leadership of German Workers Party and soon renamed it as National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP), popularly known as Nazi Party. Hitler prepared a new highly toxic political concoction, by adding anti-semantic hatred and racism to Italian Fascism. It is this concoction that is known as German Fascism. This brand of fascism ignited Second World War II, and gave birth to Concentration Camps, invented Gas Chambers that produced Holocaust which killed more than 11 million.

The association between fascism and Hitler's Germany is strong because it revealed itself in the most vicious, brutal and ferocious form in that country. It engulfed almost the entire globe and all spheres of human life. The enormity and expanse of its impact could be judged by direct involvement of more than 100 million citizens of planet earth. Entire Europe, large parts of Asia, Africa and America were sucked into war. The estimated cost of fascism, in terms of individual human life, varies somewhere between 50 to 85 million people. No one knows the exact numbers.

Since the brutality unleashed by fascism was unprecedented therefore the response of intellectuals, artists, poets, historians, social scientist, filmmakers and

writers has also been equally strong. Even after sixty years it remains a subject matter for scholarly as well as public debate for two reasons. Firstly, the Second World War is etched as an ugly scar on human memory and refuses to fade away. Secondly, the fascist consciousness keeps surfacing in various parts of globe, at what would be called smaller scale, in post-WWII era, and therefore revisiting the horrific experiences becomes important. Put together almost all aspects of fascism have been explored by the best minds during the past sixty three years, yet it has been difficult to come up with a definition which truly represents the horror unleashed by fascism.

Marriam-Webster dictionary defines fascism as 'a political philosophy, movement, or regime (as that of the fascist) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition'. As expected the class character of a fascist regime is missing from the Webster dictionary. Georgi Dimitrov, celebrated Bulgarian communist gives quite a comprehensive definition in terms of its class character. He, in a report presented at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (1939) wrote, 'Fascism is an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, the most chauvinistic, the most imperialistic elements of the financial capital... It is an organized massacre of the working class and the revolutionary slice of peasantry and intelligentsia. Fascism in its foreign policy is the most brutal kind of chauvinism, which cultivates zoological hatred against other peoples.' Leon Trotsky later in 1944, gave another definition of fascism, 'The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.'

Intellectuals like John T Flynn, Ernest Nolte, Umberto Eco, Emilio Gentile, Roger Griffin, have tried to define it in terms of economic, social, political and cultural characteristics, yet a comprehensive definition evades encompassing all aspects of fascism. The evasive character is amply clear by the number of important characteristic features which different scholars assign to fascism. These vary from a few to more than ten.

Umberto Eco, in his article 'Ur-Fascism' published in *The New York Reviews of Book*, lists 14 features of fascism. While pointing out that the word fascism has been used to label and characterise various totalitarian regimes and movements across the world, Eco points out that 'historical priority does not seem to me a sufficient reason to explain why the word fascism became a synecdoche, that is, a word that could be used for different totalitarian movements. This is not because fascism contained in itself, so to speak in their quintessential state, all the elements of any later form of totalitarianism. On the contrary, fascism had no quintessence. Fascism was a fuzzy totalitarianism, a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions.' The contradictions, which are left unresolved, are propagated with the confidence that people will not be able to see through them. If an agency, (political organisation, individual intellectual, citizen or civil society) points out these contradictions, then instead of accepting the anomaly and trying to correct it, the fascists hold those who point it out responsible for it, persecute them, if possible violently annihilate them.

Fascism as a process

Let us look at the assertion of Eco. He considers fascism as 'fuzzy totalitarianism', 'a collage of philosophical and political ideas' and 'a beehive of contradictions'. He points out that 'it does not 'contain... all the elements of any later forms of totalitarianism'. This is where I disagree with him. Eco's assertion does not consider Italian, German or later forms of fascism as a thought process but looks at it as a finished product, which blurs the vision. The nature, duration and scale of oppressive regimes that came to power in various parts of the globe post-WWII, were different, which essentially means that the finished product was wrapped up in seemingly unlike packages. This forces scholars and politicians to create a large number of categories for classifying oppressive regimes, such as 'dictatorship', 'authoritarian', 'military dictatorship', 'despotic', 'autocratic' 'oligarchy', 'totalitarian', etc.

From the point of view of resistance movements it was important to develop these categories for identification of fraternal groups and mobilisation of various sections of society. On the other hand imperialists also needed these new categories for simple reason that if these regimes were categorised as 'Fascist' then they would have been obliged to oppose and isolate them. The horror of WWII had resulted in an international moral consensus to collectively punish Italian, German and Japanese Fascists. It was a moral obligation of every

nation state and individual citizen to identify, report and help in punishing those who participated in 'project fascism' after WWII. Social, political, literary, military and economic structures build in fascist countries were demolished by applying external forces. How could same set of rules be not applied to a country or a movement designated as 'fascist'.

Not designating various oppressive governments as 'fascists', in post-WWII, helped the imperialist forces to be selective in their relationship towards these regimes. For example many oppressive regimes came to power with active help from imperialist countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. 'Mobutu Sese Seko', a dictator who with the help of Belgian support came to power by overthrowing democratically elected Patrice Lumumba, was supported by the imperialist countries, including United States. Similarly, In Chile Alende's elected government was overthrown with the active support of CIA and Augusto Pinochet was installed as the dictator by USA. Though all such regimes unleashed terror and horror which Germany had witnessed, they could not have been categorised as 'fascist governments' because they were shamelessly installed and supported by the imperialist countries.

Human history is also history of competing, often diametrically opposite, ideas. Peace and Violence, freedom and control, materialism or physicalism and idealism (these terms are used here as in philosophy categories), religion and atheism, etc., have always been part of human consciousness since the advent of civilisation. Evidence shows that often these contradictory ideas peacefully co-exist in the thought structure of a common human being. In other words the thought structure of common citizen, when mapped, is composed of contradictory ideas and value systems. To operate in a given society or collective, depending on the context a citizen invokes an idea and when the context changes very different set of ideas may be invoked by the same person. This transposition happens with ease and may appear to an individual or even collective as natural. We experience it happening around us all the time, at individual, national and at international level. The votaries of peace and harmony turn violent swiftly. In a poem Bertolt Brecht points out this contradiction: after the election in Germany, he wrote 'they voted in favour of fascism, because they believed in democracy'.

Fascism is rooted in an urge to control life and behaviour of other human beings, therefore it is

essentially anti-individual freedom and violent as an idea. As a practice the idea takes various shapes, it may reveal itself in self-inflictions, violent interpersonal relationships, reinforcing patriarchal family and social values, undemocratic movements, oppressive governments or a full-blown fascist government. In most societies the idea may remain dormant within a predominantly democratic thought structure or prevalent among the marginalised group or at the periphery of the political arena.

There have always been forces in every society which believe that human problems can only be solved when citizen's way of life and behaviour are strictly controlled, not through consensus but by force. This as discussed earlier takes various shapes in society. However, scholars have proposed to categorise societies based on 'stages of revolution'. In the recent past index of democracy has been created and 167 countries have been mapped on a scale of 1 to 10. Fascist thought threatens both, the liberal democracy and revolutionary consciousness, therefore those who subscribe to anti-fascist ideas must be vigilant. Scholars and thinkers, in any society, must keep assessing the level of propagation and absorption of fascist ideas, and continuously devise strategies of intervention to counter them. History tells us that waiting for end product (fascism) is always disastrous and the costs of reverting back to a civilised society are very high.

Indian context

There is nothing natural about India being a parliamentary democracy. After independence ideas of peace, liberty, freedom, brotherhood, unity in diversity, secularism, scientific temper succeeded over hatred, control, casteism, communalism, regionalism and violence. However, the breeding ground for sprouting fascist consciousness did not wither away. Especially after Gandhi's murder by the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha workers, the reaction was so intense that they were pushed to the periphery of political and social consciousness.

In India Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Hindu Mahasabha which have organisationally represented fascist thoughts are more than ninety years old. There are many other organisations which have been instrumental in propagating fascist ideas but these two organisations stand alone in terms of their consistency, perseverance and shameless self-proclamation of being fascist. Golwalkar's book which remains manifesto of RSS even today and has not been condemned by it even after the organisation developed relationship with Zionist organisations. He in 1939 wrote 'To keep up the purity

of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races - the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.⁷² In this book of 148 pages Golwalkar refers to Germany and Germans 25 times. On the whole book is extremely violent and presents a blue print of how fascism could be adapted to Indian conditions. The same is true for a relatively long book 'Bunch of Thoughts' which is an Indianised version of Hitler's book 'Mein Kampf'.

In the past ninety years we have witnessed their expansion and retreat many a times. The communal riots that preceded and followed the demise of British Raj in India, gave these forces opportunity to propagate their ideology. They ignited, orchestrated and participated in communal riots. Muslim religious and communalists, portrayed as enemies, were in reality, their close allies. They committed a blunder by killing Gandhi, following which RSS was banned by the nascent Indian state. But more importantly, shocked public reacted very sharply and accused RSS members as killers of Gandhi. Post-Gandhi, communal riots, which they engineered in various parts of the country, kept RSS and its political wing Jan Sangh, alive but only at the margins of dominant national consciousness and national political arena.

Emergency, imposed on India by Indira Gandhi, in nineteen seventies, gave them credibility, and its aftermath brought them to centre stage. Their participation in Government ensured placement of many fascist individuals within the government machinery. Carriers of fascist viruses were now well placed especially in education sector, judiciary and media. Advani's Rath Yatra which culminated in demolition of a hitherto unknown mosque was an act which succeeded in communalising large sections of society. The entire nation was plunged into frenzy and violence. The fascist 'Heroes' to whom Eco refers in their 'impatience' to serve the cause of Hindutva, sent 'other people to death'. The country came to a grinding halt which continued for fifteen days. However, majority did not approve of the actual demolition and the violence that followed it.

For next ten years, we witnessed relentless attack on minorities. Rise of regionalism and attacks on dalits synchronises with these developments. These are the vehicles for propagating fascist idea. The next turning point was 2002 carnage in Gujarat.

Today they have captured state power and are operating within the confines of parliamentary democracy. There are still spaces left to counter fascist thoughts, future may not offer such luxury in future.

(Endnotes)

1. Word History: It is fitting that the name of an authoritarian political movement like Fascism, founded in 1919 by Benito Mussolini, should come from the name of a symbol of authority. The Italian name of the movement, fascismo, is derived from fascio, "bundle, (political) group," but also refers to the movement's emblem, the
2. fascies, a bundle of rods bound around a projecting axehead that was carried before an ancient Roman magistrate by an attendant as a symbol of authority and power. The name of Mussolini's group of revolutionaries was soon used for similar nationalistic movements in other countries that sought to gain power through violence and ruthlessness, such as National Socialism.
2. Golwalkar MS.(1939), We or Our Nationhood Defined, Bharak Publications, pp 87-88, also available on file:///C:/Users/GAUHAR/Desktop/We-or-Our-Nationhood-Defined-Shri-M-S-Golwalkar.pdf

Western Railway Employees Union

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

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

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

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

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

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

(R.C. Sharma)

President

(J.R. Bhosale)

General Secretary

Is the world leaning towards right?

Abhijit Vaidya

‘The most surprising event of this political era is what hasn’t happened. The world has not turned left. Given the financial crisis, widening inequality, the unpopularity of the right’s stances on social issues and immigration, you would have thought that progressive parties would be cruising from win to win. But, instead, right-leaning parties are doing well.’ David Brooks has written this bitter truth in May 2015 in *New York Times*. At that time both the houses of US Congress were ruled by Republicans though a Democrat, Barack Obama, was the President. Once a socialist country Israel had gone surprisingly into the hands of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud Party, David Cameron’s Conservative Party had come in power in UK. Oldest Investment Company on Wall Street, Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy heralding a financial disaster on the world. This clearly showed the limitations of right wing economic policies of free economy. And even then right wing political parties got success after success and captured 26 European countries out of 39 and 30 countries from the Anglo sphere out of 43. This fact raises a serious question whether the world is leaning towards right? Social Register is an annual and its 52nd issue was dedicated to ‘The Politics of the Right’, last year.

Actually the 21st century world with its scientific modernity and communication network should become more and more rational, free from the clutches of religions, blurring the boundaries between the nations. The modern world should be free from exploitation and inequality, should march towards peace and non-violence should reach the ultimate destination of humanity. But in reality the world has started a retrograde journey towards religious fanaticism, violence, over-aggressive nationalism, political irrationalism and immorality. Rise of Modi, in our country and Trump in America are indicators of this fact. Modi is a face of Hindu fanatic politics marching towards their century-old dream of Hindu Nation and Trump is a face of superficial, characterless capitalism marching towards their dream of white racial supremacy. Why is this happening?

David Brooks has analyzed this phenomenon. He says that, over the past few years, left-of-center economic policy has moved from opportunity progressivism

to redistributionist progressivism. Opportunity progressivism is associated with Bill Clinton and Tony Blair in the 1990s. This tendency actively uses government power to give people access to markets, through support for community colleges, infrastructure and training programs and the like, but it doesn’t interfere that much in the market and it hesitates before raising taxes. This tendency has been politically successful. Clinton and Blair had long terms. Redistributionist progressivism more aggressively raises taxes to shift money down the income scale, opposes trade treaties and meddles more in the marketplace.

Politics of the right talks about aggressive nationalism, uses systematic glorification of traditions and culture of the nation, uses race, caste or religion for inflaming the emotions and sentiments of its people. It rejects pluralism, inclusive politics and secularism. It first creates feeling of insecurity in the minds of the people. It impresses on their minds superiority of their religion or race or singular culture. Then projects itself as the savior of all these. It talks about prosperity rather than equality. It vociferously convinces the people that their ideology only can make their country a superpower and world leader. It creates a virtual world and a feeling of dejavu and makes people forget their basic needs of life.

Globalization and neo-liberalism have created unprecedented economic inequality and unemployment in the world. Our ex-governor of Reserve Bank, Dr Subbarao has said that decision to usher in the policy of globalization was the first destructive decision (second being the demonetization). So the reaction of the world against these should have been opposite and the world should have started leaning towards left. But surprisingly world is reacting in opposite way. Globalization widened the gap between the rich and the poor, but it also started blurring the national ethos and identities of many social groups. People think that Left politics talks about too plural a society, it accepts immigrants, it talks about a welfare economy but depends too much on public sector even if it becomes a white elephant, it talks about tax hikes, it encourages trade unions and too rigid labor laws, it talks about sustainable development and clean environment but ultimately loses momentum

for development, it talks about equality but hardly about prosperity, it talks about national integration but is apathetic towards nationalism. Naturally people start finding politics of the right more acceptable as they think that right wing economic policies insist on small profitable public enterprises, they encourage industrialization and production, they are more flexible towards labor laws, they oppose immigrants thus securing the interests of the locals. This is why even worker class, once with the left, started leaning towards right. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, England, Germany, Netherland, Poland, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania - all these countries have leaned towards right. The only countries which are still left are Sweden, Greece, Italy, France, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Albania, and Slovenia. Fall of trade unions and rise in self-employment are also factors responsible for the rise of the right so is the increasing geriatric population. As people grow older they start leaning towards right. But the younger generation is also leaning towards right because they think the right only can generate employment and can achieve development. Right politics always supports capitalism and market economy which only pushes world towards economic crisis. Tim Wigmore, an eminent writer of *New Statesman* says that "One would think the world undergoing economic crisis would lean towards left but has leaned towards right instead." He thinks that, "One big factor is that the centre-left has not been able to answer the question of what it exists for when there is no money left. As management of the economy has become a much more important issue, right-wing parties have benefited because they "are often labeled better economic managers", says Andrew Little, leader of the New Zealand Labor Party. Thomas Hofer, an Austrian political consultant, says: "In times of crises, conservatives might be trusted more, as they are seen to keep an eye on a balanced budget. When there's growth, social democrats are – or were – trusted to spread the wealth."

Globalization has given rise to new wealthy middle class which is afraid that ideas of economic equality of the left would make them lose their newly acquired financial status, industrialists are afraid that they would not be able to use natural resources as per their wishes as left politics is environment protectionist. Workers are afraid that they will not get opportunity in jobs as left accepts immigration. Common man is afraid about the security of the nation as the left talks about cuts in military expenses. People do not realize that wars are the

need of imperialistic mentality and arms manufacturers. Left talk about gender equality. But even country like America found it difficult to accept Hillary. Left talks about secularism but people are still under tremendous influence of religions. In a country like India left talks about annihilation of caste but caste is becoming a new found identity strengthening the caste system. Jason Wilson has said that, "Most right governments are not popular. They have not grabbed power on their ideology but have thrived on the weaknesses of the Left. Left lack leadership and right have taken advantage of this." Left does not allow leadership to grow from within their ranks, tend to import leadership but right nourishes leadership. Left lack in the ability to project or define their ultimate goals.

On this background, victory of left in Latin America is remarkable. Left leaders in these countries insisted for basic economic justice and generation of wealth. In a capitalist country like America where communism was an enemy and socialist was an abusive word, Kshama Sawant could win Seattle Municipal Council taking up the issue of minimum wages and Bernie Sanders could reach Presidential intra-party finals taking up the issues of economic inequality and unemployment, both declaring themselves Democratic Socialists. Fall of the world towards right wing politics is moral degradation. This is a fall towards capitalism, inequality, unemployment, racism, communalism, caste based politics, nationalism, imperialism, war mongering, fascism and violence. Politics of the right stands for all this. Left politics can only counter this fall. But left does not mean dictatorial communism, left means democratic socialism. Fall of left in Russia and China has created negative impact on the minds of the people. Left in both these countries has many shades of right in their ways of functioning. To succeed, democratic socialism has to shed rigidity and frigidity, has to become more fluid and flexible. Basic human nature is greedy, believes in competitive spirit for achieving success, does not believe in equality, can easily nourish animosity and hatred, can fall prey to violence. Changing the basic human nature is a big spiritual challenge. Political ideology cannot wait for spiritual transformations of the people. At the same time spirituality may not go every time in right direction for the humanity, religions have failed to achieve this over centuries. So left has to acquire a modern form considering the fault lines of basic human nature, problems of the modern world and changing references. It will have to preserve nationalist spirit avoiding

(Contd. on Page 11)

Need for a law to ensure Right to Shelter

Bilal Khan

A shelter is a basic human need but due to the increased commodification of this basic service, housing is becoming unaffordable to each one of us. Urban poor suffers the most due to this unaffordability. The absence of an adequate housing forces a poor family to live in an informal settlement devoid of all basic services like proper sanitation, clean water supply, electricity, ventilation, open spaces and so on. The booming real estate backed by black money has furthered this commodification and unaffordability. Mumbai's 50% population lives in slum due to inability to buy a house.

Only tall claims and figures are being thrown before people but the actual benefits do not seem to be reaching the needy under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Housing For All (PMAY) scheme. Even the full implementation of the scheme will not be able to give 'house to all' as the guidelines of the schemes has provided for setting up of a 'cut-off-date' to provide the benefit. Similarly, there is provision for sanctioning of loans to buy houses under PMAY but there exists a section of the society who cannot even pay the minimum EMI. There is hardly any city where there are homeless shelters available as per the norms set under the National Urban Livelihood Mission. So, a seasonal migrant coming to a city as a daily wage earner, due to unavailability of a shelter is forced to live on footpaths. The problem of housing just cannot be eradicated by a scheme which can merely serve as a *jumla* rather than a real solution. For a practical solution there has to be a practical policy.

Even in the age of 'Housing For All' scheme, eviction without rehabilitation has become the order of the day. It is more frequent in places where 'smart cities' are planned. Evictions might be considered a mechanical job but the misery which is followed post-eviction can only be expressed by a victim. "If there is no home, there is no life. Home is everything. Without a home, 'right to life' has no meaning. Without a shelter, you are left open to face the extreme weather - the burning heat, freezing cold, storms and rains and with a life in jeopardy", says Santosh Thorat, a slum resident from Annabhau Sathenagar, Mumbai and also a member of Matang community, one of the most backward communities of the country. He had come to Mumbai city in search of work from Jalna district of Marathwada region in

Maharashtra. He initially worked as a construction worker and later found a job as a home guard constable. Santosh as constable, became part of the massive eviction drive that took place in the year 2005 which was carried out by the Maharashtra government in an effort to transform Mumbai into another 'Shanghai'. His job was to provide protection to the municipal authorities who were demolishing the slums from the angry public which was opposing the demolition. The government basically wanted to make Mumbai, a slum-free city by simply demolishing the houses of poor living in informal settlements. However, Santosh resigned from the job the same day when bulldozers steered for his house in Sathenagar slum, in opposition to the action being taken by the municipal authorities. I think he probably would have understood the nature of difficulties he was going to face after becoming homeless to which he was indifferent until his own house came to be brought down.

Evictions occur by simply branding all the poor residents of a slum as 'encroachers'. This is a commonly used legal term by the government authorities and the judiciary. However, we can only brand anybody as an encroacher if one is occupying a piece of land with an objective to earn benefit out of it but not one who is living on that piece of land out of compulsion and not by choice. Those living in slums are mostly engaged in unprotected unorganised sector backing the economy of the nation but unfortunately their hard work is not given due recognition. The rising 'GDP' has the unrecognised efforts of the toilers from the unorganised sector. The 'Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008', provides for housing, education, old age homes, insurance, skill development, provident fund and funeral assistance. However, poor implementation of the Act, increases the vulnerability of poor section of the society against all forms of exploitation. This is not to say that the Act can ensure total social security. Experts have gone to an extent of regarding this Act as a toothless one given its inadequate provisions. But I think that the full implementation of the Act in the present form may provide some respite and efforts must continue to improve the Act.

I know a single woman in a slum in Mumbai. She is 60, living all alone in her shack. Her house may be

demolished anytime because the Forest Department wants to take back the land in possession of slum dwellers. When her house is demolished, she has no other place to take shelter in but to face all forms of difficulties at this old age. Similarly, children living in this community would lose their schooling because of the difficulty created due to broken houses. Also, because of the same reason, the livelihood of the inhabitants of this slum is going to be affected. This is the same story in each slum whenever there is an eviction. The worst scenario is when the evictions happen during heavy rains, in the chilling winters and sometimes the resisting inhabitants of the slum lose lives including the small children while facing the atrocities committed by the authorities to crush the protest.

I contacted Irfan Ali Khan, a colleague in a slum, asking for a quote for this article to just provide the readers the reality, direct from the sufferer. "I am handicapped with crippled legs. In a span of twelve years I have seen multiple evictions of our *basti* (informal settlement or a slum). Every time I have to helplessly see all my belonging along with my house getting destroyed by the municipal authorities and making entire population of the *basti* homeless in front of my eyes only to be reminded, being a cripple and poor without a house who can't do anything to save his house just because I am handicapped and government does nothing to ensure and protect my housing right". He is only 28 years old with two children and a resident of an informal settlement called Adarsh Nagar in Shivaji Nagar, Mumbai.

To the surprise of all of us, there is no law or policy that would protect persons like Santosh, that 60 years old single woman, or Irfan or many poor children living as squatters all across the country under a constant threat of eviction. This is not a new finding. This has been discussed and talked about several times. The Supreme Court and various High Courts have on several occasions stated that 'right to adequate shelter' is part and parcel of 'right to life'. Denial of a shelter or making someone

forcibly homeless, jeopardises one's life which clearly violates 'right to life' guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The Government of India has also ratified, 'housing right' as a basic human right in Universal Declaration of Basic Human Rights and the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights but has not done anything to ensure it in full spirit.

So far any attempt to evict a slum has faced people's resistance. Sometime it works and sometime it doesn't. There is a need to move away from fire fighting mode for the housing rights movements/organisations and work towards a more sustainable legislative solution. There is undisputably a long-felt need for a statutory law recognising the human right to housing, which is an integral part of the constitutional right to life. With the growing influence of the capitalist markets and the increasing bias and indifference of the bureaucracy, political class and even the judiciary towards the poor and all those fighting for their rights, it is certainly going to become that much more difficult to even garner temporary 'respite' during eviction drives in the absence of a legal remedy.

This calls for a national legislation to protect and ensure 'right to shelter'. This would ensure a minimum shelter to each needy citizen of the country who cannot afford to buy or rent a house and live a dignified life with the provision of all the basic amenities of life. This would also mean a full stop to atrocities committed on the poor homeless families during eviction just because they are homeless and living under a temporary shack to provide themselves a shelter. A bench comprising of Chief Justice of Delhi High Court and Justice Dr. S. Murlidhar best explains the eviction phase when it states that "what very often is overlooked is that when a family living in a Jhuggi (slum) is forcibly evicted, each member loses a bundle of rights – the right to livelihood, to shelter, to health, to education, to access to civic amenities and public transport and above all, the right to live with dignity".

(Contd. from Page 9)

instigator spirit even while marching towards world order and humanity, has to encourage generation of wealth while talking about equality, has to find employment opportunities in revolutions of modern science, has to move towards development while preserving the environmental balance, will have to invent Spinning Wheel for 21st century rather than getting stuck up with Mahatma Gandhi's Charakha, will have to improve basic infrastructure while relinquishing the thirst of the masses

for the modern living, will have to create welfare state without loss making public sector, will have to provide modern means for communications and technologies, will have to guard national security through diplomacy. This modern Avatar of Democratic Socialism has to be attractive enough to be acceptable to masses. Youth all over the world should try to invent Modern Avatar of Democratic Socialism. But one thing is sure that it only can stop fall of the world towards right!

Dalits on the cross roads of Independent India

Martin Macwan

Since there are no two opinions in the country about the existence of the caste system in all its discriminatory manifestations today can we conclude that the law has reached its limits to contain caste based discrimination? Or is there space for the argument that had the reservation based on social identity been introduced in higher judiciary, the judicial institutions would have made better impact on the core subject of fractured identity of its citizens into Dalits and non-Dalits, the higher caste and the lower caste and the forward and backward?

The immediate reactions would un-favor the argument with supporting evidence that inability of the law to deepen its impact on social evils cannot be confined to 'Caste' alone since it equally applies to the issues of growing violence against women and the poor in general. True. However, the argument itself is validated that the social change requires something more than the law.

Intellectuals may have diverse opinions on the subject but over the years I have come to hear from almost all victims of caste discrimination over and again that the law has not been able to kindle a ray of hope in their battered lives. The State for them is alien, not theirs. It has taken me years to understand the unshakable and growing many folds the faith of the poor and the marginalized in general in the invisible god of destiny. The fate and destiny, however irrational they may be, gives them hope as compared to the State and Law giving despair. It is ironical that the religion of belief bounding Dalits in psychological slavery over several centuries has been the source of hope.

It is a common practice though not supported by any law of land for many courts to suggest the victims of caste atrocities, the possibility of an amicable settlement at the commencement of a trial in total disregard of the spirit of law. During one of the training program of sensitizing session judges having the charge of 'Atrocity' cases where I was invited as a speaker at the National Judicial Academy; I heard a senior Judge saying: "Actually we do not need law in this country. If everyone walked on the path of the Vedas and the Puranas, there would be justice".

The year was 1995. The police had wrongfully confined a Dalit youth over a stolen bicycle found in his possession in Gujarat. The youth had purchased it for Rs. 200. What followed was the physical torture tearing apart the back skin and dark bruises on the body. The youth was unable to stand. The police had personified victim's younger brother before the court. I had filed a petition on behalf of my organization seeking arrest of the police in Gujarat High Court. The High Court was very disturbed to see the photographs of injuries on the deceased and sought to know from the public prosecutor defending the police, what action would the State take had the victim been the police?

The prosecutor had replied which I cannot forget after many years; 'The law differs from person to person'. I was less surprised to see the prosecutor continuing in the office but was definitely surprised to see him elevated on the bench in next few months, as the honorable judge of a high court. I was equally surprised by a Dalit medical professional who had noted injuries on the body of the victim and the history of police atrocity had testified before the court that his remarks on the case papers was a 'slip of the pen'.

The recent incident of public flogging of Dalit youth before the police station and in the presence of the mocking police by the cow vigilantes is one of many such cases where the police has been either the mute spectator or the conspirator, a reason for the fast and uninterrupted growth of such private armies taking law in their hand without authority. The Chief Minister promised speedy Justice to the victims at Una, as was done in earlier incident of Thangadh where police had shot down three youth. In latter case the State has filed a summary report with interesting new finding though not convincing. The firearms had fired accidentally!

How does all these, the failure to get legal justice, the nexus between the State and the perpetrators of the crime having political patronage, the widening gap between those who have and those who don't, affect the minds of the Dalit youth who are continuously exposed to the unruly scenes on the streets of Kashmir, or the bombings in the middle east or the black youth using the guns to shoot the police offices in USA?

One of the most serious findings of Navsarjan study, 'Understanding Untouchability' to measure the prevalence of 98 forms of caste discrimination in Gujarat was that in 54% village public schools Dalit Children have been seated separately during the mid-day meal. Which direction these children will end to in few years when they will grow adults? Will education hold any hope for social transformation or will it become one more avenue of frustrating despair?

With all criticism offered to RSS today it must be accepted that had it radically taken up the mission of cleaning Hinduism of the evils of caste system such as

Untouchability, it would not have grown to its present status. The earlier Christian church too cooperated with the caste system to widespread itself by converting Brahmins into Christians and showing contempt towards the untouchables as Hindus.

India has been walking unfortunately on the path of becoming confederation of castes. There seems to be limited options for Dalits in India for their 'own' independence. They have to create their own avenues of hope within their own segregation. Reservation offers them a 'special status' but not 'equal' status.

न्याय्य हक्क मिळवून घेण्यासाठी आणि समस्यांची दाद लावून घेण्यासाठी
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अध्यक्ष

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सर्वश्री एस्. आर. यादव
निवृत्ती धुमाल

मधुकर भोंडवे
व्यंकटेश स्वामी

बबन मेटे

राजाराम शिंदे
मो. अली ज. अहमद

सचिव

श्रीमती कल्पना देसाई
खजिनदार

श्री. जगन्नाथ मोरे
संयुक्त खजिनदार

Present time and role of the socialist youths

Nishikant Mohapatra

We are in a difficult time. There is a government at the centre which is determined to finish the unfinished agenda of the Sangha Parivar. Instead of the federal character of the country and the cherished multiculturalism that has thrived through ages, the Sanghis want unitary, authoritarian India. The majoritarian idea cherishes to use in an era of minority subjugation, medieval traditional male dominated orthodoxy, caste entrenched social order and promotion of corporate interests. To achieve these unfinished agenda of the Sanghis the government under Narendra Modi has started its mission of complete dominance. The way it is trying to bypass the state governments through centrally sponsored schemes and directly coordinating with the district administration is quite worrisome. Even in states like Uttarakhand, Nagaland, West Bengal and Delhi it has tried to harass and unsettle the state governments through handpicked Governors against the clear mandate to the ruling dispensations there. It has surpassed all previous governments in infringing the autonomy of constitutionally vital institutions.

The Modi government is assiduously assaulting all the independent institutions of the country and in the process degrading the status of these institutions. It is also a peculiar time when the intelligentsia and paid media are proactively allying with this design for destruction. We have witnessed the Planning Commission being rechristened as Niti Ayoga without any clear mandate regarding its role. Similarly instead of repeated pleas by the Supreme Court, the present government is stalling the appointments of the High Court judges on the pretext of unsuitability and demands a larger say of the government in these appointments nullifying in essence the role of the collegium of the Supreme Court. Even in case of BCCI versus Lodha Committee, BCCI President Anurag Thakur, an MP from BJP defied the directions of the Supreme Court till he was kicked out of the Board by the Supreme Court. Again notwithstanding the desired autonomy of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Modi government has appointed to it an ad hoc director Rakesh Asthana, who was investigating the Godhra riot case and is known to be very close Gujarat cadre IPS officer to Modi. Not only the present government is trying to manage the Planning Commission, Supreme Court, CBI and other agencies, but also it is trying to drive the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the financial controller of the country as per its whims. It has been proved during the demonetisation episode that the autonomy of the RBI is severely compromised and it has become an appendage of the Prime minister's Office (PMO). Even in the name of Surgical Strike it has tried to politicise the Indian Army and has cornered the achievement of the army as that of BJP.

Modi government has not stopped at hampering federalism and killing the autonomy of institutions. It is hell bent upon dividing the society on the basis of caste and religion. The murder of Akhlaq in the name of cow protection and the mob punishment of dalit brothers in Gujrat as well as suicide of dalit Ph.D student Vemula at Central University, Hyderabad points to the fact that Sanghis are let loose. Even the vilification of students of Jawaharlal Nehru University and the subsequent blatant arrest of student leaders proves that the Modi government is targeting all spheres of freedom, learning and institutions where there is scope for dissent. The tactics is to brand any criticism of present government's policies and programmes as antinational activity. BJP leaders like Sadhvi Rutumbhara, Yogi Adityanath as well as Bajaranga Dal, Sriram Sena, Gosuraksha Dal, etc. have become the prominent mascots of the social unrest that has started with the government's patronage. Even the increasing attack on personal freedom and opinion through social media has been mostly attributed to BJP. Whether it is trolling after Karina Kapoor's son named Taimur or Irfan's son named Imran or of Amir Khan's intolerance statement, everywhere you will find a nefarious design to vitiate the social fabric through hatred and rumour by the Sanghis. The state's silent support is obvious.

Not only the federal character, institutional autonomy, cultural pluralism and social fabric is under stress due to Modi's authoritarianism but also the economy of the country has faced unparalleled challenges under the present dispensation. Modi government has written off more than one lakh crore rupees of corporate loans and has ensured a free passage for the King Fisher boss Vijay Mallya. It is working overtime to bring benefits to corporate giants like Ambanis and Adanis. It has become synonymous with corporate interest. At the same time

the policies and programmes of Modi government are killing the farmers, labourers, small industries, pretty businessmen, youths and the middle class. During demonetisation of 1000 and 500 currencies alone there were more than 150 deaths of the poor and farmers, and more than 4 lakh labourers lost their jobs. Farmers were compelled for distressed sale as the market lacked cash and were left with no option but to suffer. With a slowing down economy it is predicted that the poor will further suffer.

Role of the socialist youths

In this context, the questions for the socialist youths are very sharp and focused. What will be their role in challenging the divisive forces? What can they do to defeat the fascist political forces? How can they effectively communicate in the emerging communication paradigm dominated by social media? How can socialist youths come out of dogmatic positioning on socialism and ensure mass mobilization of the public? How can effectively they defend the interests of the poor and the downtrodden vis-à-vis the corporate and state onslaught?

Socialism in Indian discourse at different times as propounded by Subhas Chandra Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia had a profound impact on the politics of the country. Whether it is Dalit empowerment, gender equality, social safety network schemes, educational inclusion, nationalization of banks or constitutional guarantee for cultural and religious independence, everywhere we find the imprint of socialist thought. But of late socialism has become a term of abuse as the products of the socialist movement failed to live up to the expectations. Mulayam Singh Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan and Laloo Prasad Yadav and leaders who were the products of the socialist movement of the country degenerated to such an extent that the public carried a sorry picture of the socialist ideology. They are more famous for family politics and Gundaraj than governance. Later on so-called socialists also became synonymous with corruption and political opportunism. Therefore, to claim that “we are socialists” is not going to be the solution for declining socialist movement and thought. The youths who look forward towards socialism as a way of life i.e. “society first” have to work hard to get demonstrative results. Symposiums, seminars, youth camps, token demonstration, ideological write ups, flags and badges apart, they have to emerge as a viable alternative force in the socio-political discourse of the country. We are witnessing a tendency of socialists to amalgamate all kinds of forces depending upon

their convenience, availability and leisure rather than determined effort and action plan to build up socialist India. We are happy to enlist a number of institutions, individuals and movements on our platform to showcase that we are increasing by leap and bound. Big names and spent forces having little space for emerging ideas, having no fire for meeting the ambition of the new generation and maneuvering over old tools cannot resurrect socialist movement any more.

Arvind Kejriwal, the founder of Aam Aadmi Party has demonstrated how in a short period the youths can bring in organizational skills and can fight the entrenched forces. Similarly, there still are some socialist leaders although in their 90s have demonstrated how youths can be mobilized across the country towards the socialist values and can carry on the baton of socialism to the next generation. The underlying fact is that there should be a design to build up an independent, organised socialist force and simultaneously there should be efforts to co-opt socio-political forces as practicing tools of socialism. The present governments of Delhi and Bihar can be put in the co-opted category. Nevertheless, an independent socialist movement is the need of the hour. Some youths should take the charge and strive hard to build up an all-India socialist movement.

The movement while aggressively working on organization building must take on the fascist forces head on. It should use all the modern tools of communication as well as social media effectively to counter the mainstream paid media. Even legal recourse on certain matters should be pursued. In a complex game where the fascist and corporate agents are playing all kinds of dirty games, misinformation, slander and stories, we will have to be very careful in our approach. We have to use various tools and enlist support of professionals from different fields to be successful in countering the propaganda and to spread the socialist outlook among the new generation. Public funding and support must be revitalized to make the socialist struggle sustainable. So not only the traditional, recognised Dhoti-Kurta leader but also the common youth with a passion for change should be the face of the new socialist movement. The present time requires the socialist youths to recalibrate their strategy as the leader of new socialist movement in terms of organization building and effective intervention in the fast changing socio-political paradigm. You can take inspiration from the glorious past of the socialist movement but the future has to be shaped in the context of the emerging challenges.

Challenges to idea of India

Ram Puniyani

During the campaign for general elections 2014, the then Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi stated that he was born in a Hindu family and that he is a nationalist. So he is a Hindu nationalist⁽¹⁾. This was a very overt statement of the BJP-RSS about the type of nationalism which they envisage and around which they will build the country. During last close to three years this agenda is being unfolded in various policies of the government. Their intent came in the form of pronouncements of the leaders of BJP and associated organizations of RSS (to be called RSS combine, RC), these came out openly in their utterings. Giriraj Singh, who is currently a Minister in the Government, said that all those who don't vote for Modi should go to Pakistan.⁽²⁾ Another present Minister Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti made the binary distinction between Ramjade ki Sarkar (BJP) and Haramjade (illegitimate) (referring to non-BJP formations).⁽³⁾ These are just the samples, from the trend of utterances which went on becoming increasingly intimidating during last couple of years. The voices dissenting from the policies of the Modi sarkar, started being labeled as 'anti-national'.

Social space: emotive issues

The social space was already having the presence of issues like love Jihad and Ghar Wapasi.⁽⁴⁾ Any inter-religious marriage where the boy is a Muslim and the girl is a Hindu is derogatorily referred to as love jihad and is criticized and opposed. The issue of Ghar Wapasi, where the claim is that the conversions took place in India forcibly and so there is a need to bring back these Muslims and Christian converts to Hindu fold had already been there. 'Hate speech' is the hallmark of the RC, making derogatory comments about religious minorities. These issues were made more assertive. The issue of beef eating, cow slaughter became one more identity issue to be brought to the fore. The build up around this issue led to the incident of Dadri where one Mohamed Akhlaq was lynched by the mob. Further continuation of this trend manifested in the incident of Una where dalits were tied to the SUV and mercilessly beaten on the charge of killing a cow.⁽⁵⁾ The overall attack on freedom of expression fed the atmosphere of intolerance forcing many leading lights of the country to return their well earned honors. They

included literary giants, scientists and film makers. Even such tall personalities were looked down by RC and it was alleged that they were doing it for political reasons or for money.⁽⁶⁾

The overall structure of government started being controlled by the Prime Minister, taking charge of the total power, reducing the cabinet to the role of a puppet. The authoritarianism came to supplement the communal politics. The educational institutions' autonomy came under big hammer and incompetent people started being appointed as the head of the institutions like in FTII, ICHR and in different Universities the ones owing allegiance to ideology of RC started being appointed despite the lack of serious academic contribution by them. The case of JNU, HCU and IIT Madras in particular shows the total violation of the norms of academic autonomy being replaced by the control by MHRD and labeling the student leaders as 'anti-national'. This is what led to the forced suicide of Rohith Vemula and arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar and his colleagues of JUNSU⁽⁷⁾ The academic curriculum is being refashioned under the guidance of RSS, turning the educational system to the Hindu nationalism, to the imagined 'glorious past' as central core of the curriculum.

The emotive issues like 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', singing of national anthem in Cinema houses came to the fore. The prime minister is promoting Gita as the national book by gifting it to overseas' dignitaries, while External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj has overtly demanded it being declared as the national book.⁽⁸⁾ This is gross violation of our Constitution where there is equal respect for all religions and state is not to be guided by religion. The national icons like Nehru are being sidelined while some of those who were not part of freedom movement and did not subscribe to Indian Nationalism, like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee are being brought to the fore. Now a political situation has come about where due to patronage from the top the workers of RC are becoming more aggressive and assertive. In a very clear way the issues related to identity are coming to the fore while the issues pertaining to livelihood of people like those related to food, shelter, employment, health, agriculture and plight of the poor are being put on the margins of the society.⁽⁹⁾

Social welfare undermined

One recalls that the dominance of issues related to identity is not new. Issues of identity have been coming to the front from 1980s, with Ram Temple movement, the identity issues are being made more important and being brought to the fore. They are no more marginal as they are hogging central space. During this period there has been a see saw battle with BJP-RSS forcing the identity issues to the fore while the other political parties in some way have tried a bit to keep up the material-welfares issues as an a part of their agenda. Tough not very satisfactory still the UPA during last ten years was forced to bring in the provisions like 'Right to information', 'Right to food', 'Right to Education' and 'Right to health'. We can clearly see the correlation of the votaries of Indian nationalism articulating, though still weakly, the issues of living versus the emphasis on identity issue, issues, which also create emotions-hysteria, by the practitioners of Hindu nationalism.

Nationalisms

Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism both emerged during the freedom movement, during colonial period. The British colonizers were out to plunder the world, including India. They enslaved India by and by. They unleashed the social changes leading to modernization, Industrialization and introduction of modern education. These upcoming classes, industrialists, workers and modern educated classes were the base of Indian nationalism. In different countries, particularly in Europe with coming modern changes the new classes overthrew the rule of old classes of landlords-kings and the feudal values into the dustbin of history. The rule of feudal classes of landlords was given legitimacy by the clerical elements of the society. This legitimacy was given by the institutions of religion - Church, Maulanas, Acharyas - who were hand in glove with the feudal powers. Since these latter classes were not abolished, the continuation of these classes led to the rise of politics in the guise of religion, nationalism in the name of religion; Muslim nationalism and Hindu nationalism.

Broadly the rising Indian nationalism was represented by various streams like that of Bhagat Singh-Socialists, the ones who focused on economic justice, Jotirao Phule and B. R. Ambedkar, striving for social justice and the stream leading national movement like Maulana Azad, Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress, the stream which united India as a nation. This rising streams focused on freedom from colonial powers, issues of justice and rights of citizens.⁽¹⁰⁾ They

envisioned a future where all had equal rights and all got justice. This formed the base of freedom movement of India which got articulated in the Constitution of India. Here religion became a personal matter and many of the leaders of this stream, like Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad harped on morality of religions. Others like Phule and Ambedkar struggled against unjust social norms imposed in the garb of religion. Still the likes of Bhagat Singh focused on the suppression of rights of the working masses. Here the identity of religion was not a matter of importance at all. Some from these streams were very religious but not running after rituals. They respected morality of all religions, like Gandhi and Azad. This is the nationalism which was supported by broad masses of India; these people were the central part of the freedom movement. Freedom movement was yet another ground which deepened the bonds of amity between people of different religions.

The ones coming from the declining sections like the landlords-kings threw up the organization which later went on to culminate in the formation of Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and still later around the ideology of Hindu nationalism, RSS. While the initiators of this stream were elite landlords and kings, later a section of educated and upper castes came to lead these movements. These are the ones which articulated Muslim nationalism and Hindu nationalism. They were not concerned with the humanistic teachings and aspects of religions but highlighted only the identity aspects of religion. These were the streams which picked up the communal historiography, looking at history through the prism of king's religion, introduced by British and started spreading hate against the 'other' religious community. This is what formed the basis of communal violence. They also took up identity issues like holy cow and dirty pig, among others. They harped on the glorious past and not only kept aloof from the national movement for independence but also kept creating a glorious past hiding the earlier darkness of caste atrocities and subjugation of women prevalent at that time. The central concern of these political tendencies was to retain their social-political-economic hegemony. For them the rights of the average people were never the concern and the question of rights of dalits, workers, women were not the issue. The citizenship and empowerment was the focus. Essentially theirs was the attempt to keep up their social superiority of upper caste male under the guise of religion, in newer circumstances. Identity issues as practiced by these streams are a cover for bringing back the status quo of feudal times. While the

Indian nationalists believed in geographical nationalism, inclusive values, the Muslim and Hindu nationalists were exclusive in their approach. Hindu nationalists talked of culture as the basis of nation.

Post-Independence

After independence the Muslims nationalists mainly migrated to Pakistan, leaving ineffectual remnants here. The Hindu nationalist RSS, after one of its Swayamasevak assassinated the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, went into slight decline for few years⁽¹¹⁾ It came up later and got legitimacy particularly after it joined Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) led movement and since then has been going from strength to strength. It raised the issue of beef and 'Indianization of Muslims' earlier also. Meanwhile its progeny and predecessor of present BJP, Bhartiya Jan Sangh, came up to oppose cooperative model of farming and public sector enterprises. It was pro-America right from the word go. In 1980s RSS-BJP hit their goldmine in the form of Ram Temple movement, which began in the aftermath of Shah Bano controversy and picked up steam with Mandal commission being implemented. The rath yatra and demolition of Babri Mosque by these formations was the major attack on Indian nationalism and violence accompanying this it polarized the society deep down.⁽¹²⁾

With this BJP became the major player in the electoral arena, grabbing the power in 1996 and then in 1998. Opportunism of many opposition parties was and is the weak link as they allied with the Hindu nationalists, and helped them come to power. The last elections (2014) have been a major mark on the history of the country as this time; backed by Corporate resources and RSS manpower; Modi could get 31% of votes and 282 (over 50%) of seats in Lok Sabha giving them full control on the levers of power. The RSS progeny has been working all through last close to a century, communalizing the social space through various educational/cultural mechanisms. It has also been spreading hatred against minorities through these channels. With BJP becoming the major party ruling the centre they have got unlimited access to various conduits through which their agenda of Hindu nation is being brought in. The policies of the central government coupled with intensified RC work is a major threat to the idea of India as it developed through freedom movement, as outlined in Indian Constitution⁽¹³⁾

Centre of power

In the last few years RC has done a clever game by strengthening the popular opinion against secular parties.

It first used the JP movement to get legitimacy. It has been piggy back riding on Anna Hazare-Ramdev and Kejriwal movements to broaden its reach. It also rode on the back of agitation around Nirbhaya to further the electoral prospects of BJP.

There are multiple doubts about various secular parties. These have been well exploited by RC in conjunction with opportunist parties and leaders to increase its grip on society. The battle today is not between Hindus and Muslims or Christians, The battle is to undermine the idea of secular democratic India. The assault is by Hindu nationalism of RSS combine led, by Narendra Modi. The assault is against the idea of India, which came up as a part of national movement and is enshrined in Indian Constitution. The politics, which kept opposing Indian nationalism and kept aloof from freedom movement, the politics of RC, the notion of Hindu nation is now trying to grab the driving seat.

Path ahead

For all those believing in secular democratic values, these are trying times. As a ray of hope in these dark times, last couple of years has seen the movements which came up in the wake of Modi Sarkar's blatant Hindu nationalist politics. These movements are the ones which came up around Rohith Vemula's suicide, around Kanhaiyya Kumar's arrest and in the aftermath of Una atrocity. The latter is best represented by Jignesh Mevani and other young leaders demanding land rights for dalits.⁽¹⁴⁾ These movements are a great hope for democracy, for the inclusive idea of India. What is heartening is that some political parties are becoming aware of the dangers of Hindu nationalist politics. Many of these parties are coming together and are making electoral understanding despite their inflated egos and opportunism. There is need to cultivate and promote social and political platforms for promoting secularism and democracy. The ongoing social movements for land rights, wages, social and gender justice need to be stepped up by creating a alliances which can take their common issues and unite the large section of society for their rights and dignity. There is an urgent need to remind us of the 'Secular-Democratic Idea of India', and strive for the values which were the dream of national movement.

Foot Notes

1. http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/yes-i-am-a-hindu-nationalist-narendra-modi_861777.html
2. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/Those-opposed-to-Narendra-Modi-should-go-to-Pakistan-BJP-leader>

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Reclaiming Swami Vivekananda from the RSS

Neeraj Jain

Ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power at the Centre in 2014, the RSS, that controls the BJP, and the dozens of fundamentalist outfits spawned by it, have been pushing ahead their communal agenda with great speed. The declared intention of the RSS is to subvert India's democracy and secular structure and transform India culturally, politically and socially into a Hindu Rashtra, based on the *Manusmriti* and the caste system.

According to the Anthropological Society of India, Indian population comprises of more than 4,000 distinct communities, marked by differences in customs, language, caste, religious beliefs, cuisine, location, and what have you. The RSS believes that despite these diversities, 80% of the Indian people are Hindus. And so the RSS has created a network of thousands of front organisations—together called the Sangh Parivar—to cater to as many of these different diversities as possible, with the aim of creating a cultural homogeneity out of this ocean of diversities, and thereby 'Hinduising' them. This is the essence of *Hindutva*, the political ideology of the RSS—welding the overwhelming majority of the Indian people together as Hindus, so that they can be mobilised towards transforming secular and democratic India into a Hindu Rashtra. Note that *Hindutva* is not identical with Hinduism; the former is a political ideology, the latter a religion.

The RSS in fact believes that India has always been a Hindu Rashtra. One of the important tools, being used by the RSS for its propaganda to convince people that India has always been a Hindu Rashtra, is to appropriate well-known figures from Indian history and project them as defenders of Hinduism. It has done this with Shivaji, and is attempting to do this with Dr. Ambedkar. An important historical figure whom it has been able to successfully project as a *Hindutva* icon is Swami Vivekananda, so much so that even many progressive people believe him to be so.

However, contrary to RSS propaganda, Vivekananda was not a traditional Hindu monk. He was a modern ascetic with a scientific and materialist outlook. He was a bitter critic of the caste system. He was also thoroughly

secular. In fact, in 1896 Vivekananda even proclaimed himself a socialist.

At a time when a spectre of fascism looms over the country, at such a time, it is important to spread Vivekananda's true thoughts and ideas among the people, who stood for ideals exactly opposite to those of the Hindu fundamentalist forces. This essay has been inspired by the writings of Dr. Dattaprasad Dabholkar, where he has brought forth the true thoughts of Swami Vivekananda.

Scientific and Rational Vivekananda

Led by the Prime Minister himself, the BJP has been promoting the most unscientific and irrational values among the people. Speaking at a function in Mumbai on 25 October 2014, PM Modi declared: "If we think a little more, we realise that Mahabharat says Karna was not born from his mother's womb. This means that genetic science was present at that time. That is why Karna could be born outside his mother's womb." He then went on to make another astounding claim: "We worship Lord Ganesh. There must have been some plastic surgeon at that time who got an elephant's head on the body of a human being and began the practice of plastic surgery."¹

The school textbooks in RSS-run schools have promoted bigotry and religious fanaticism for decades; the coming to power of the BJP at the Centre and several states since the 1990s has given the RSS the opportunity to spread its ideology within the government school and college network too. The MHRD has even launched a program to promote the teaching of astrology and vaastu in universities.²

Even the Indian Science Congress has been reduced to a "circus", to quote Indian-born Nobel laureate Venkatraman Ramakrishnan.³ In January 2015, at the 102nd session of the Indian Science Congress, several members of the BJP government led a session on ancient Indian science and claimed that thousands of years ago, Indians had built planes that could fly not just on earth but between planets.⁴ The following year, at the 103rd Indian Science Congress, among the invitees was Akhilesh K. Pandey, chairman, Madhya Pradesh

Private University Regulatory Commission, who was to present a paper that touched upon the powers of Lord Shiva of providing purified water to human beings. But the Lord was not pleased; Akhilesh Pandey suffered an unfortunate accident on a staircase and could not present his paper. But the attendees got an opportunity to listen to a lecture by additional commissioner of Kanpur, Rajeev Sharma, who presented a paper about blowing the shankh being the best preventive measure for psycho-somatic disorders.⁵

Vivekananda, on the other hand, was an exceptionally scientific saint, way ahead of his times. He was unequivocal in saying:

*“We do not recognise such a thing as miracles. . . . Most of the strange things which are done in India and reported in the foreign papers are sleight-of-hand tricks or hypnotic illusions. They are not the performances of the wise men.”*⁶

In a letter to Kidi (Singaravelu Mudaliar) on 30 November 1894, he wrote:

*Miracles “do not prove anything. Matter does not prove Spirit. What connection is there between the existence of God, Soul, or immortality, and the working of miracles? . . . Do not disturb your head with metaphysical nonsense, and do not disturb others by your bigotry.”*⁷

Likewise, he was unambiguous in debunking astrology.

*“You will find that astrology and all these mystical things are generally signs of a weak mind; therefore as soon as they are becoming prominent in our minds, we should see a physician, take good food and rest.”*⁸

Quoting the Buddha, Vivekananda goes so far as to say that those who propagate such rubbish are actually cunning people who do so because they have made this a source of their livelihood:

*“Those that get a living by calculation of the stars by such art and other lying tricks are to be avoided.”*⁹

In the same way, Vivekananda calls upon people not to believe in ghosts and superstitions. In a hard-hitting talk delivered at the Triplicane Literary Society, Madras, on 9 February 1897, he says:

*We have to weed out “the hundreds of superstitions that we have been hugging to our breasts for centuries. . . . Mystery mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness. These are always signs of degradation and of death. . . . Shame on humanity that strong men should spend their time on these superstitions, spend all their time in inventing allegories to explain the most rotten superstitions . . .”*¹⁰

Blaming the Brahmins for the spread of superstitions among the masses, Vivekananda charged that they had a vested interest in keeping the masses steeped in backwardness so as to savagely exploit them. In a letter to Haridas Viharidas Desai on 22 August 1892, he wrote:

*“The people . . . have for their religion a certain bundle of local superstitions about eating, drinking, and bathing, and that is about the whole of their religion. Poor fellows! Whatever the rascally and wily priests teach them—all sorts of mummery and tomfoolery as the very gist of the Vedas and Hinduism (mind you, neither these rascals of priests nor their forefathers have so much as seen a volume of the Vedas for the last 400 generations)—they follow and degrade themselves. Lord help them from the Rākshasas in the shape of the Brahmins of the Kaliyuga.”*¹¹

Vivekananda called upon the people to give up blind faith and believe in reason. In a talk on 24 May 1896 he said:

*“Why was reason given us if we have to believe? Is it not tremendously blasphemous to believe against reason? What right have we not to use the greatest gift that God has given to us? I am sure God will pardon a man who will use his reason and cannot believe, rather than a man who believes blindly instead of using the faculties He has given him. He simply degrades his nature and goes down to the level of the beasts—degrades his senses and dies.”*¹²

He asked his listeners not to believe blindly in any scripture. During his lectures, he would often say:

*“Do not believe in a thing because you have read about it in a book. Do not believe in a thing because another man has said it was true. Do not believe in words because they are hallowed by tradition. Find out the truth for yourself. Reason it out. That is realisation.”*¹³

By stressing that unless the country is freed from the fetters of superstitions, rituals and traditions, freedom will have no meaning, Vivekananda bestowed a new dimension to the country's freedom struggle. He was thus calling for a cultural renaissance. In a letter to his friend Shashi (Swami Ramakrishnananda) on 19 March 1894, he wrote:

*"We, as a nation, have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses."*¹⁴

Vivekananda on the Caste System

The RSS is a firm believer in the caste system. It upholds the *Manusmriti*, the law code of ancient India, which unequivocally defines the four main castes, lays down their duties and obligations, and frames the whole system of rules and regulations by which the Brahmans sought to perpetuate an organised caste-system in subordination to themselves. The second Sarsanghchalak (Supreme Leader) of the RSS, Guru Golwalkar, in his *Bunch of Thoughts*, upholds the *Purush Sukta* of the *Rigveda* (wherein for the first time in Vedic literature the four varnas are mentioned and justified) that says: Brahmin is the head, King the hands, Vaishya the thighs and Shudra the feet. He goes on to write that:

*"The people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e., the Hindu People, is our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of 'nation' and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage."*¹⁵

In other words, the RSS does not believe in equality, and believes in resurrecting all the traditional hierarchies of the past. And so, unsurprisingly, four days after the Indian Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, an editorial in the RSS organ *Organiser* complained:

*In our constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.*¹⁶

This also explains why the BJP/RSS have no qualms about appointing Y. Sudershan Rao, a little-known

historian with no publication in peer-reviewed journals, as Chairman of the prestigious Indian Council of Historical Research. Rao is a long-time believer of the Sangh Parivar's Hindutva agenda, openly proclaims himself as a Hindu and a Brahmin, and is a known votary of the caste system. In a blog-article written by him, he writes: "The (caste) system was working well in ancient times and we do not find any complaint from any quarters against it." He goes on to argue that the rigidity and distortions that crept into it were the result of Muslim invasions and subsequent rule.¹⁷ As if to rub more salt into the wounds of Dalits, on 3 January 2017, PM Modi himself awarded Apparao Podile, the Vice Chancellor of Hyderabad Central University, the man responsible for the institutional murder of the brilliant Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula and a criminal accused under SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, with "Millenium Plaque of Honour" at the Indian National Science Congress event held at Tirupathi a few days ago.

In stark contrast to these apologists of the caste system, Vivekananda was very conscious of its injustices. On 28 December 1893 he wrote to Haripada Mitra:

*"If anybody is born of a low caste in our country, he is gone for ever, there is no hope for him. Why? What a tyranny it is! . . . How many people really weep for the sorrows and sufferings of the millions of poor in India? . . . We do not touch them, we avoid their company! Are we men? Those thousands of Brâhmanas—what are they doing for the low, down-trodden masses of India? 'Don't touch', 'Don't touch', is the only phrase that plays upon their lips!"*¹⁸

While traversing the country as a wandering Sanyasi between 1890 and 1893, Vivekananda had closely observed the terrible poverty in which millions of people were living, and its close relationship to religious backwardness and exploitation by Brahmin sadhus. Deeply disturbed by it, he wrote about it to his friends and disciples in words that spew fire as from a smouldering volcano.

*"A country where millions of people live on flowers of the Mohuâ plant, and a million or two of Sadhus and a hundred million or so of Brahmans suck the blood out of these poor people, without even the least effort for their amelioration—is that a country or hell? Is that a religion, or the devil's dance?"*¹⁹

More than British colonisation, Vivekananda held the caste system responsible for India's appalling poverty

and degradation. In February 1897, soon after his return to India from a hugely successful trip to America and Europe, he spoke at Kumbakonam, a village in Tamil Nadu, 160 miles from Madras and a stronghold of Brahmin fundamentalists:

*“Ay, my friends, I must tell you a few harsh truths . . . (It is) not the English (but) we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation . . . Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country underfoot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so much so, that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves . . . Not only so, but I also find that all sorts of most demoniacal and brutal arguments, culled from the crude ideas of hereditary transmission and other such gibberish . . . are brought forward in order to brutalise and tyrannise over the poor all the more.”*²⁰

In fact, he wrote:

*“India’s doom was sealed the very day they invented the word mlechcha and stopped from communion with others.”*²¹

In a letter written to his disciples on 24 January 1894, Vivekananda went even further and implicitly called for bringing down the caste system:

*“My idea is to bring to the door of the meanest, the poorest, the noble ideas that the human race has developed both in and out of India, and let them think for themselves. . . . ‘Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth, and well-being.’ Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down. Caste or no caste, creed or no creed, any man, or class, or caste, or nation, or institution which bars the power of free thought and action of an individual—even so long as that power does not injure others—is devilish and must go down.”*²²

In a letter to Alasinga written on 9 April 1894, he expressed the hope that,

*A day will come “when there will be one caste.”*²³

Vivekananda on religion

The most important formula used by the RSS for its project of uniting the Hindus is borrowed from the

Nazis—just like the Nazis sought to unite the German nation against the Jews, the RSS is seeking to unite the Hindus against an imagined enemy, the minorities, especially the Muslims and Christians. To fill the Hindus with hatred against Muslims and Christians, it has, for decades, been spreading malicious propaganda against the minorities and their religions. Since the coming to power of the BJP, various BJP-RSS leaders including Pravin Togadia, Subramaniam Swami, Giriraj Singh, Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti, Sadhvi Prachi, Sakshi Maharaj, Yogi Adityanath and many others have been spewing venom on Muslims and Christians, and not one has been prosecuted for their hate speeches. The leader of Dharm Jagran Manch, a known RSS front, has in fact declared on national television news channels that his organization had set a 2021 deadline to cleanse India of “alien Islam and Christianity.”²⁴

Vivekananda’s views on religion are completely opposed to the propaganda of Hindu fundamentalists. Today they are able to project a false image of Vivekananda and use him to spread their doctrine of hatred towards other religions, because people are unaware of Vivekananda’s real views. Vivekananda preached respect and dignity for all religions:

*“What is needed is a fellow-feeling between the different types of religion, seeing that they all stand or fall together; a fellow-feeling which springs from mutual esteem and mutual respect.”*²⁵

He held that all religions are equal, holding the same ideals,

*“The ideal of all religions . . . is same—the attaining of liberty and cessation of misery.”*²⁶

Vivekananda treads where Hindu fundamentalists wouldn’t dare. He called Mohammed “the Messenger of equality” and the “Prophet . . . of the brotherhood of man.”²⁷ In a letter to Mohammed Sarfaraz Husain written on 10 June 1898, he wrote:

*“ . . . if ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone.”*²⁸

In contrast to RSS propaganda distorting medieval Indian history to describe it as a period when Hindus and Muslims were continually at war with each other, and thus attempting to portray Muslims as ‘historical enemies’ of Hindus, Vivekananda emphasised that if

this country is to progress, if India in the future is to rise “glorious and invincible”, there must not only be cooperation among all religions, but their confluence. In the above mentioned letter to Sarfaraz Husain, he further wrote:

*“I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. . . . For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.”*²⁹

Conscious of India’s syncretic culture, he observed in a letter to his Madras disciples on 19 November 1894 that the Hindus had learnt several elements of “material civilisation”, such as wearing tailor-made clothes and food hygiene, from the Mohammedans.³⁰

Vivekananda on religious conversions

Vivekananda warned people against religious fundamentalists’ attempts to propagate all kinds of myths and divide Hindus and Muslims. One such false propaganda is about forcible conversions. Vivekananda exposed the falsity of this propaganda in at least two letters, whose essence is: In this country, *religious conversions have not taken place because of atrocities by Christians and Muslims, but because of atrocities by the upper castes.*

*“If a Bhangī comes to anybody as a Bhangī, he would be shunned as the plague; but no sooner does he get a cupful of water poured upon his head with some mutterings of prayers by a Pādri, and get a coat on his back, no matter how threadbare, and come into the room of the most orthodox Hindu—I don’t see the man who then dare refuse him a chair and a hearty shake of the hands! Irony can go no further. . . . In Travancore, the most priest-ridden country in India—where every bit of land is owned by the Brahmins . . . nearly one-fourth has become Christian! And I cannot blame them . . .”*³¹

*“Why amongst the poor of India so many are Mohammedans? It is nonsense to say, they were converted by the sword. It was to gain their liberty from the . . . zemindars and from the . . . priest, and as a consequence you find in Bengal there are more Mohammedans than Hindus amongst the cultivators, because there were so many zemindars there. Who thinks of raising these sunken downtrodden millions?”*³²

Today the RSS and its affiliates pursue a vicious campaign of low-intensity but sustained violence against Muslims and Christians to terrorise and intimidate them, so that they either convert ‘back’ to Hinduism or internalise their subordinate status and accept that they are living in India at the mercy of the ‘Hindu majority’. The teachings of Vivekananda stand completely opposite to all that the Sangh Parivar stands for. He denounced forcible conversions as well as re-conversions, like the current ‘Ghar Wapsi’ campaign of the Sangh Parivar:

*“The man who is frightened into religion has no religion at all.”*³³

The Swami has nothing in common with Hindu fundamentalists. One of his disciples, Swami Akhandananda, was building an orphanage in Bengal. Vivekananda wrote to him saying:

“Admit boys of all religions—Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian . . .”

and further advised,

*“. . . but never tamper with their religion. The only thing you will have to do is to make separate arrangements for their food etc.”*³⁴

Vivekananda: the secular saint

The RSS has never believed in secularism, a fundamental principle of the Indian Constitution. Golwalkar makes it clear in his writings that the RSS considers Indian nation as only for Hindus, and others can only stay on in India as second-grade citizens:

*The foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen’s rights.*³⁵

Vivekananda on the other hand preached complete equality and dignity for all religions. He berated this attitude of ‘tolerance’ towards other communities in scathing words, calling it ‘blasphemy’:

“Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live?”³⁶

And so, he went on to say:

“Our watchword, then, will be acceptance (and not toleration) . . . I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian’s church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law.”³⁷

Vivekananda on food fascism

Vivekananda was a very rational and humane saint, thoroughly committed to the upliftment of the people. He states: “Instead of cowsheds, be concerned about how people live.” A disciple of Swami Vivekananda recorded the following incident related to the Swami in his diary.

Once an enthusiastic preacher belonging to the society for protection of cows came for an interview with Swamiji. After inquiring about the object of the society, its source of income and how much money it has collected, “Swamiji commenced the following conversation with the preacher. Swamiji: ‘A terrible famine has now broken out in Central India. The Indian Government has published a death-roll of nine lakhs of starved people. Has your society done anything to render help in this time of famine?’ . . . Preacher: ‘This famine broke out as a result of men’s Karma, their sins. It is a case of ‘like Karma, like fruit.’ Hearing the words of the preacher, sparks of fire, as it were, scintillated in Swamiji’s large eyes; his face became flushed. But he suppressed his feelings and said: ‘. . . If you make a plea of Karma by saying that men die through their Karma, then . . . with regard to your cause also, it can be said—the mother-cows through their own Karma fall into the hands of the butchers and die, and we need not do anything in the matter.’ The preacher was a little abashed and said: ‘Yes, what you say is true, but the Shâstras say that the cow is our mother.’ Swamiji smilingly said, ‘Yes, that the cow is our mother, I understand: who else could give birth to such accomplished children?’ . . . The preacher went away after saluting Swamiji. Then Swamiji began to speak to us: ‘What words, these, forsooth! Says he that men are dying by reason of

their Karma, so what avails doing any kindness to them! This is decisive proof that the country has gone to rack and ruin! . . . Those who are men and yet have no feeling in the heart for man, well, are such to be counted as men at all?’”³⁸

Vivekananda criticised the imposition of religious values of one community on others. At this time when religious fanatics have launched a violent campaign to force the vegetarian eating habits of the Brahmin minority on the entire people, especially Muslims, it is important to recall Vivekananda’s wise words:

“We leave everybody free to know, select, and follow whatever suits and helps him. Thus, for example, eating meat may help one, eating fruit another. Each is welcome to his own peculiarity, but he has no right to criticise the conduct of others . . . much less to insist that others should follow his way... The terrible mistake of religion was to interfere in social matters. . . What we want is that religion should not be a social reformer. . . What business had the priests to interfere (to the misery of millions of human beings) in every social matter?”³⁹

Vivekananda stood firmly against religious fundamentalism, and expressed his deep anguish at the communal divisions, violence and bloodshed unleashed by fundamentalist forces on society. He said:

“Though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.”⁴⁰

Vivekananda’s views are completely antithetical to the fundamentalists who, through the RSS and its offshoots, pursue a vicious offensive to undermine the Indian Constitution, destroy the country’s secular fabric and convert India into a Hindu Rashtra. Three decades before the RSS’s formation, when the monster of religious nationalism was hardly born, this far-sighted Swami gave the call:

“All sect ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God and think that every other is wrong is a superstition that should belong to the past. All such ideas must be abandoned.”⁴¹

Socialist Vivekananda

Not only does Vivekananda have nothing in common with the RSS and Hindu fundamentalists, he in fact goes on to declare himself a socialist in 1896. As we see below, it was not a statement made on the spur of the moment, but a well-thought out assertion.

For three years from 1890 to 1893, Vivekananda roamed about the country travelling on foot, on horseback and by rail, smoking chillum with sweepers, staying amidst the poor in slum shanties, lodging with a Muslim lawyer in Mount Abu, spending time with Tilak in Gaikwad Wada and with the Maharaja of Khetri as a guest in his palace. During these three years, he did not engage in religious studies. Instead, he tried to understand the conditions of the people. He expressed his deep distress in moving letters to his friends and disciples.

In a letter from New York on 19 November 1894, he wrote to his Madras disciples:

“I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven! Pooh! India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. No priestcraft, no social tyranny! More bread, more opportunity for everybody!”⁴²

Upliftment of the masses does not mean providing them only bread and education, but also the restoration of their dignity as human beings. Vivekananda was aware of this. In a letter to Haridas Viharidas Desai on 20 June 1894, he wrote:

“The real nation who live in cottage have forgotten their manhood, their individuality. Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussulman, or Christian, they have come to think that they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket. They are to be given back their lost individuality.”⁴³

But bringing the masses out of their dismal conditions, instilling confidence in them, giving them back their lost individuality and dignity, was not an easy task. Vivekananda expresses his anguish and frustration in a

letter to Alasinga Perumal:

“I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor. I see what they call the poor of this country, and how many there are who feel for them! . . . Who feels there for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out?”⁴⁴

After pondering for two more years, in a letter to Mary Hale (a close friend) on 1 November 1896, he finally declared:

“I am a socialist.”⁴⁵

It was 1896 and Vivekananda was 33 years old. This personal declaration was not made on a sudden whim, but after much experience and deep thought. Earlier he had spent three years travelling across India, intimately imbibing the people’s poverty and backwardness. Then he had spent three years travelling in the Western world. While several things about the West impressed him, he also grasped the limitations of the liberal democracy in America and Europe:

“The wealth and power of a country are in the hands of a few men who do not work but manipulate the work of the millions of human beings. By this power they can deluge the whole earth with blood. Religion and all things are under their feet; they rule and stand supreme. The Western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All those things that you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty and parliaments—are but jokes.”⁴⁶

After several years of contemplation, Vivekananda arrived at the conclusion that socialism was the answer to India’s poverty and backwardness. In his letter to Mary Hale, Vivekananda wrote of the strengths of socialism, that there would be equality in society, material conditions of the poor will improve, and there would be great spread of education. But while declaring himself a socialist, Vivekananda did not claim it to be a perfect system, for it could lead to a “lowering of culture”, and perhaps “extraordinary geniuses will be less”.⁴⁷ Elsewhere,⁴⁸ he says that it may lead to the sacrifice of individual freedoms. Nevertheless, he wrote:

“I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried. . . .”⁴⁹

Vivekananda envisioned that socialism would come not just in India but throughout the world, and that in every country the working people, whom he called the ‘Shudras’, would build socialist movements and bring the new order into reality:

*“A time will come when the Shudras of every country, with their inborn Shudra nature and habits—not becoming in essence Vaishya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Shudras—will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world . . . Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.”*⁵⁰

Like all socialists, Vivekananda had full faith in the masses. He believed that they, and not the upper classes, would transform society:

*“Let New India arise . . . out of the peasants’ cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer’s shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.”*⁵¹

He placed faith in the masses because their sufferings had given them the fortitude, the energy and the patience to bring about this transformation:

*“These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years; suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the world; give them only half a piece of bread, and the whole world will not be big enough to contain their energy; they are endowed with the inexhaustible vitality of a Raktabija.”*⁵²

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Maulana's warning

Kuldip Nayar

It is hard to believe that the government financed Khadi Board printed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's picture in the familiar pose of Mahatma Gandhi sitting behind the *charkha*, spinning the yarn, without PMO's permission. Probably somebody at the lower level allowed the Board to go ahead. The furor in the public was so strong that the contradiction was inevitable.

Even then PMO was not as strong as it should have been. In fact, a stern warning should have been issued there and then so that such examples of indiscretion do not go unpunished in future. This might have chastened those who, on one pretext or the other, violate the dignity of Republic, not realizing that they are insulting themselves.

Only the other day, the standing of people was made mandatory when the national anthem was played. People still do not respect the order and open the doors of cinemas even though they are bolted from inside. They think that it was a government's order which they did not have to obey.

They do not seem to realize that the national anthem and the Republic's flag are sacred because they represent the nation's honour and sovereignty. People would have to realize themselves that no order or law can instill patriotism. It is their own feelings which should assert whenever the choice is between what benefits the nation and what benefits an individual or a party.

Gandhiji himself was conscious of people's feelings. As I wrote earlier he stopped his prayer meeting when someone objected to the recitation of Quran. He resumed it only when the person concerned withdrew his opposition. Gandhiji was, however, more successful in Kolkata where the then Chief Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy had declared the Muslim League's action plan in response to the Congress Satyagrah.

The action plan turned into a massacre of Hindus and Sikhs with the government's connivance. There was retaliation, taking the lives of thousands. Gandhiji went to Kolkatta and asked the people to give him their weapons. Even the most affected ones surrendered the arms within 24 hours. Lord Mountbatten, who was

then the governor general, remarked that the armed forces were of little consequence and one man force had done the job.

India has traversed a long way since then. It has less faith in pluralism than before. The border drawn on the basis of religion has diluted secularism. But the fault is that of Congress, not that of Muslim League which had demanded from day one the grouping of Muslim majority provinces into a separate, sovereign Islamic state. The Congress which represented secular ethos is itself going away from its ideals.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a tall Muslim leader, had warned the Muslims that if they did not feel safe in the undivided India where they could say that though less in number they were equal share holders in post-independent India fortunes. But the Muslims, were then riding a high horse and were bent upon of having even a 'moth eaten Pakistan. They have inherited a country which is bound to discriminate between Muslims and others. In fact, the living condition, whatever their number, is pitiable. There are forced conversions and of non-Muslim marrying to Muslim boys.

The Maulana's warning has come true. Roughly 18 crore Muslims have practically no say in the governance of the country. Their plight, as the Sachar report on Indian Muslim said that was worse than that of dalits. Politically, they have ceased to matter. Nor do they assert themselves lest the Hindu chauvinism should take a still more virulent shape.

However, the Muslims are themselves hardening their position. The Kashmiris are already behaving as if they are independent. At the time of accession, the popular leader Sheikh Abdullah had supported the Maharaja because he was fighting against the tribals including regular troops. It is a different story that he opposed New Delhi when it went beyond the three subjects, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications.

Chief Minister Mahbooba Mufti has been criticized by the Kashmiris for having met Prime Minister
(Contd. on Page 30)

Responding to Kashmir today

Suresh Khairnar

The Bandh in Kashmir is more than six months old. Suffering there for common men and women is untold. When the central and state governments are apparently insensitive to this problem, it is the responsibility of Indian civil society to respond to this situation and make effort to revoke the Bandh that has brought life to a grinding halt. Taking the onus upon itself, Rashtrīya Seva Dal is organizing a nationwide drive for conscientious response. Part of the drive is to create awareness among the educated opinion makers. With this purpose, RSD is organizing 'Chalo Kashmir' campaign on March 23. It is planning to take Indian opinion makers to Kashmir to see and understand Kashmir issue at first hand.

Twenty three years old self-declared Hisbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani was shot dead in an encounter by security forces for his separatist activity, on July 08, 2016. Burhan Wani had left his home when he was nineteen to join HM. Over the next four years he used social media to reach the nook and corner of the Kashmir Valley with his 'freedom' message. The popularity of him and his fan following can be gauged by the fact that he was known in the valley as 'Face book Boy' and 'youth icon'. One wonders how this boy who was 'ruling the hearts of the young' in the Valley posting all the time 'objectionable messages' remained unnoticed by the government machinery. Political analysts smell conspiracy. Government got to know and killed him overnight. The killing of the 'youth icon' provoked a Valley-wide protest, thousands of youth came on to street, fomenting unrest all over with youngsters indulging in stone pelting. The police had to resort to counterattack.

This unrest led to statewide total bandh: shops, schools, public transport, bank, ATM, postal and courier service... every public system is closed for the last six months. Six news papers were banned without any enquiry, every electronic network is jammed; no mobile, no internet... the only communication possible is BSNL post paid; life is paralyzed. And it has been the situation for the last 180 days.

In their attempt to maintain law and order, police had to arrest those on the street, fire with pellet gun on

the rioters. Pellet gun, claimed to be harmless gun, is invented by Israel army to wield it against the protesting Palestinians. Despite strong condemnation from human rights organizations for its lethality, India has chosen to avail of, and use, it, for the first time, against the Valley masses. Indiscriminate firing by the security forces resulted in over 100 men and women dead, ten thousand severely injured, four thousand by pellet guns of which a thousand individuals lost their eye sight permanently; 15000 people are arrested in these days and incarcerated indefinitely. Majority of the victims are below the age of 30 and a sizable number of them are children less than 15 years old. Among the pellet gun injured, there were children as young as 5 years and people as old as 80 years.

Killing and inflicting permanent injury including ocular impairment has immortalized the bitter memory of the Bandh and 'attack by security forces' which locals call as 'defense atrocity'.

Separatist ideologues in the valley draw a parallel between Jallianwala bagh and Kashmir Bandh, not so much for its lethal effect on the victims, as much as it gave a fillip to the campaign for 'freedom'. The separatist campaign hitherto was a sporadic movement of a selected few. Six months' bandh has made it a thorough fare peoples' movement. Never before the Valley people were together in their fight for political rights as much as they are now. In order to tease Indians, anti India slogan and pro-pak wall writings are heard and seen everywhere.

This bandh is unprecedented in many ways. In the post-independent India, 180 days of total state wide Bandh is unheard of; the ubiquitous anti-India sentiment is a brand new phenomenon even for the Valley people. This brutally handled bandh has solidified the call for 'freedom' into a hitherto unheard of consensual demand.

As the solidarity expression from general public mounts, more people come on to street without fear, and since they are general public, without weapons. It slowly turns into a passive resistance.

To worsen the situation a number of communal organizations in the mainland propose revoking of Article 370, to fill the Valley with non-Valley people and make the Valley natives a minority in their own land and weaken separatists' percentage there. Such mindless persons are unaware of the fact that their voices indeed jeopardize the scope for restoring relationship between Delhi and Srinagar.

It appears, that those demanding suppression of public unrest in the Valley, are blinded by their hyper-nationalistic fervor. They are unable to realize that Valley means a community of one crore people and not just a land filled with nature's bounty to grab it. If we learn to embrace our people, instead of their land to appropriate by all means, we may do a great service to unified India.

Our Prime Minister speaks openly in support of the right to freedom for the people of Baluchistan; perhaps

he is conscious that through his utterance he is covertly expressing his solidarity to similar claimants in our backyard too.

Sadly Indian media, barring few, have maintained studied indifference. Quite a few of them blatantly twisted the fact, especially the electronic media. Their far-from-fact reporting is proved to be a grave disservice to the cause of national integration, as it resulted in the valley people losing whatever little faith they had in Indian media.

Having realized the urgency of civil response to this vexing problem, Rashtra Seva Dal, proposes that a people's audit ought to be conducted over the 'Valley situation' and a fair report be placed before the people of India. As a beginning, RSD is organizing a people's visit to Valley to study the situation and the mind of the masses and report back to the people.

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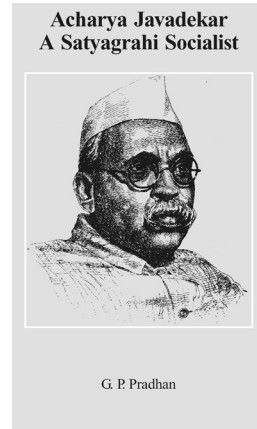
(Contd. from Page 28)

Narendra Modi, who they said, was the 'Hindus' leader'. They conventionally forget that he is India's Prime Minister. Whether they support his views or not - many do not in India - is not relevant because he came to power after winning the 262 seats in the 540-member Lok Sabha.

The example of Zaira Wasim from Kashmir is before us. She acted admirably in a film and, as Amir Khan, director and producer, said in a message that she was brilliant. But the pressure of separatists in the Valley was so much that she had to say in a TV interview that she was 'ashamed' of what she done, disowning her role in the film. Her message was poignant: Girls should not follow her example as if she was telling them about the ordeals she had gone through.

That means that those who are wanting to establish the separate, sovereign Islamic Republic in the Valley are far from satisfied. They know that their opponent was the Indian army. But they go on fighting to register Kashmir's demand for independence. I found them, when I went to Srinagar, relentless.

New Delhi would have to talk to the separatists and see if they could accept real autonomy within India, asking them that India would not spread itself beyond the three subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications.



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Just 8 men own same wealth as half the world

Eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity, according to a new report published.

Oxfam's report, 'An economy for the 99 percent', shows that the gap between rich and poor is far greater than had been feared. It details how big business and the super-rich are fuelling the inequality crisis by dodging taxes, driving down wages and using their power to influence politics. It calls for a fundamental change in the way we manage our economies so that they work for all people, and not just a fortunate few.

New and better data on the distribution of global wealth – particularly in India and China – indicates that the poorest half of the world has less wealth than had been previously thought. Had this new data been available last year, it would have shown that nine billionaires owned the same wealth as the poorest half of the planet, and not 62, as Oxfam calculated at the time.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, said:

“It is obscene for so much wealth to be held in the hands of so few when 1 in 10 people survive on less than \$2 a day. Inequality is trapping hundreds of millions in poverty; it is fracturing our societies and undermining democracy.

“Across the world, people are being left behind. Their wages are stagnating yet corporate bosses take home million dollar bonuses; their health and education services are cut while corporations and the super-rich dodge their taxes; their voices are ignored as governments sing to the tune of big business and a wealthy elite.”

Oxfam's report shows how our broken economies are funnelling wealth to a rich elite at the expense of the poorest in society, the majority of whom are women. The richest are accumulating wealth at such an astonishing rate that the world could see its first trillionaire in just 25 years. To put this figure in perspective – you would need to spend \$1 million every day for 2738 years to spend \$1 trillion.

Public anger with inequality is already creating political shockwaves across the globe. Inequality has been cited as a significant factor in the election of Donald Trump in the US, the election of President

Duterte in the Philippines, and Brexit in the UK.

Seven out of 10 people live in a country that has seen a rise in inequality in the last 30 years. Between 1988 and 2011 the incomes of the poorest 10 percent increased by just \$65 per person, while the incomes of the richest 1 percent grew by \$11,800 per person – 182 times as much.

Women, who are often employed in low pay sectors, face high levels of discrimination in the work place, and who take on a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work often find themselves at the bottom of the pile. On current trends it will take 170 years for women to be paid the same as men.

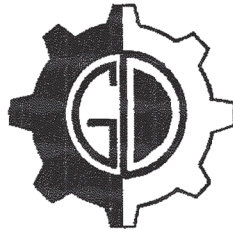
'An Economy for the 99 percent' also reveals how big business and the super-rich are fuelling the inequality crisis. It shows how, in order to maximize returns to their wealthy shareholders, big corporations are dodging taxes, driving down wages for their workers and the prices paid to producers, and investing less in their business.

Oxfam interviewed women working in a garment factory in Vietnam who work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week and still struggle to get by on the \$1 an hour they earn producing clothes for some of the world's biggest fashion brands. The CEOs of these companies are some of the highest paid people in the world. Corporate tax dodging costs poor countries at least \$100 billion every year. This is enough money to provide an education for the 124 million children who aren't in school and fund healthcare interventions that could prevent the deaths of at least six million children every year.

The report outlines how the super-rich use a network of tax havens to avoid paying their fair share of tax and an army of wealth managers to secure returns on their investments that would not be available to ordinary savers. Contrary to popular belief, many of the super-rich are not 'self-made'. Oxfam analysis shows over half the world's billionaires either inherited their wealth or accumulated it through industries which are prone to corruption and cronyism.

It also demonstrates how big business and the super-rich use their money and connections to ensure government policy works for them. For example, billionaires in Brazil have sought to influence elections and successfully lobbied for a reduction in tax bills while oil corporations in Nigeria have managed to secure generous tax breaks.

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The meaning of being Gandhi

Sandeep Pandey

A controversy erupted recently when Narendra Modi's photo appeared behind the Charkha in a calendar of Khadi and Village Industries Commission where people are used to seeing Mahatma Gandhi. Some Modi supporters are asking why was there no controversy when Modi used broom, also a symbol taken from Gandhi, for his Swachh Bharat campaign. After all, Gandhi spectacles appear on all Swachh Bharat publicity material.

Gandhi has no monopoly over either broom or charkha. Everybody has a right to get themselves photographed with either of the items. And if Narendra Modi has started considering Mahatma as his ideal what can be better than this? He also travelled in the train from which Gandhi was thrown out in South Africa to the famous Phoenix settlement when he visited South Africa last year. Narendra Modi's mother organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh does not have a very kind view of Gandhi and in fact their ideology is responsible for Gandhi's assassination. If Narendra Modi has understood the importance of Gandhi and can help change the opinion of RSS about Gandhi it would indeed be a great thing.

The fact is that if there is one man most people in the world associate India's identity with, it is Gandhi. There are probably more followers of Gautam Buddha but Buddhists and the world doesn't view Gautam Buddha as being restricted to India alone. However, Gandhi has been a source of inspiration for struggles all over the world where the marginalised are fighting the powerful for their basic rights. Some environment movements also draw their inspiration from Gandhi.

But Narendra Modi must understand that by being photographed with broom and charkha people will not start viewing him like they do Gandhi. Gandhi's influence on people has been due to the values he represents, the values which he lived in his life – and died for. In Gandhi's ashrams cleanliness was keenly observed and all people used to clean toilets. People were supposed to wear khadi from the yarn that they spun on the charkha. The philosophy of behind the spinning on Charkha was to use local material to produce items of daily need for people using technology which would provide jobs to people, that is Swaraj. The global experience has shown that the neoliberal economic policies that Narendra Modi is implementing

have increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Gandhi gave importance to local resources, Modi is attracted by foreign investment.

But broom and charkha are material items. Gandhi is not known for these items alone. He has a place in people's heart because of the values of truth and non-violence that he espoused and the tool of satyagraha that he gave to the world. The path of truth is difficult and long. There is no scope for compromises or short cuts to achieve success. There is no glamour in this path. One has to appear as s/he is without resorting to exaggeration. One can't hide one's shortcomings.

Non-violence is a natural state for human beings. But human beings use violence to serve their vested interests. Probably every ruler has had to use violence to some degree. But one who believes in non-violence doesn't terrorize people nor create an atmosphere of fear. S(he) doesn't talk about war and weapons. Nobody is considered an enemy. The best way to eliminate an enemy is to make friends with him/her. Gandhi's relationship with the British should be remembered. He did not consider any individual his enemy but resolutely fought the empire. This is why the British also had a respect for him.

Gandhi was for Hindu-Muslim unity. But during Narendra Modi's rule the distance between the two communities has widened. When the right wing activists carried out their attacks, the government by not restraining the miscreants extended its support to them. When the country achieved independence Gandhi was trying to douse the communal fire in Noakhali whereas

(Contd. on Page 4)

Judicial conundrum: the prudent way out

M. G. Devasahayam

Amidst the intense cry and cacophony over 'demonetisation', grievous governance wounds that are bleeding the nation are getting side-lined. Most important among them is the Central Government-Supreme Court impasse on the appointment of High Court judges.

For quite some time the Central government and Supreme Court Collegium have been locking horns on this issue. The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has been blaming the government for not doing enough for appointing judges with the Union Law Minister responding with a counter accusation. The bone of contention is the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) which will be the Rule governing appointment of judges. Strange as it may seem India's higher judiciary, which adjudicates every law and rule in the country, is itself functioning without any rule! The Supreme Court, in a judgment, struck down government's proposal to set up a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) for appointment of high court and supreme court judges. Since the judgment, the government and the Collegium have not been able to draft the MoP.

This is because of sharp differences of opinion between the two on many issues:

1) **Seniority and Merit:** Government wants the criteria of seniority, merit and integrity while promoting a HC judge to the SC. Collegium says the criteria of seniority, subject to merit and

integrity, would be followed.

2) **Power to reject candidates:** Government proposes to retain power for rejection of candidates recommended on grounds of national security/public interest. Collegium is opposed to this, saying it amounts to interference in its functioning.

3) **Writing down Reasons:** Government wants that in case a senior Judge is being overlooked for elevation to the Supreme Court, the reasons for the same be recorded in writing and the views of all five judges of the Collegium must be made known to the government. Collegium says this will be counter-productive and could affect the concerned person's future career as well as duties as judge.

4) **Binding Recommendation:** As per the existing system, Collegium's recommendations can be sent back but if it reiterates the same, it is binding on the President. Government says three important judgments of 1993, 1998 and 2015 on appointment of judges do not give absolute powers to the Collegium. Instead, they ask for "participatory consultative process at the highest level".

5) **Three-judge Quota:** Government proposed that up to three judges may be appointed from the Bar or from distinguished jurists with proven track records. And that all judges of the Supreme Court should be open to recommend names for these postings. Collegium

is not in agreement and says this does not fall within the framework of the Constitutional provisions.

6) Consultative Mechanism: Government proposes to set up a committee to assist the Collegium in evaluation of candidates. It wants two retired judges of the SC and an eminent person/jurist to be jointly nominated by the CJI and the government. Collegium feels this is not necessary.

7) Candidates' Database: Government proposes a secretariat under the law ministry that maintains a database of judges, schedules Collegium meetings, maintains records and receives recommendations and complaints related to judges' postings. Collegium is okay with the idea of secretariat so long as the forming and functioning of it is left to the CJI and it should be under the ambit of the Registrar of the Supreme Court.

This is the ongoing 'tug-of-war'. Subsequent to the Collegium recently brushing aside Central Government's objections to 43 candidates and reiterating all the names for appointment as judges this has turned in to slanging match between the two high constitutional entities. Tensions continue to flare with both sides-Union Law Minister and CJI-cautioning each other against crossing the *'lakshmanrekha'*. The former rubbed it in by stating that while high courts had shown "great courage" during the Emergency, Supreme Court had failed the people by endorsing it. The unsavoury Collegium Vs NJAC spectacle is not going to end soon. Because, not only the sitting judges but also the retired heavy weights of higher judiciary are leaning in favour of the former and have conveyed the same in a Memorandum sent to the

CJI. Signatories included former Supreme Court judges and High Court Chief Justices.

The senior-most among them, Justice Kuldip Singh, former Supreme Court Judge had this to say: "There is no alternative (to Collegium). It's fool proof, if it is transparent and accountable. You see, the judges know who all are good and fit for appointment as sub-judges, high court judges, and even Supreme Court judges. The judges are the best selectors." This contention needs to be taken with several pinches of salt!

One of the signatories-Justice Manmohan Singh Liberhan (former CJ of Madras and Andhra High Courts)-however cautioned that this unbridled power assumed by the Collegium should not make Supreme Court a "second sovereign", because in a democracy people alone are sovereign. He concedes that the collegium system was not much of a success and tongue-in-cheek admits that true transparency would lead to loss of respect for judiciary! Indeed, as the adage goes: "Familiarity breeds contempt."

Proponents of NJAC argue that selection to the higher judiciary must be made by a full-time (not ex-officio) body, which is independent of the government and the judiciary and which goes about the selection in a rational and transparent manner. The business of selecting hundreds of judges in a year to the higher judiciary, if done properly, would require at least a thousand candidates to be considered and comparatively evaluated over multidimensional criteria in a fair and rational manner. This would require a full-time body, which could totally devote itself to this process, with professional support.

There also needs to be transparency in the selection to prevent arbitrariness or nepotism. Minimum transparency would require that the criteria for selection of judges and standard of evaluation of candidates be made known and names of shortlisted/selected candidates announced before appointment, so that those who have relevant information about the candidate can send it to the appointing authority. Basic criteria to judge the competence of a candidate should include integrity, competence, judicial temperament, common sense and sensitivity towards the problems of the common man, among others. A system modelled on the British Judicial Appointments Commission, which follows a method to evaluate candidates based on predetermined and set criteria, could be suitable for this.

So, the tussle is between an ex-officio group called Collegium and a fulltime Commission, both non-constitutional entities. Hence the crisis and the conundrum that has happened due to a historical blunder. At the time of Independence there were two All India Services (AIS)-Indian Civil Service (ICS) and Indian Police (IP). ICS was doubling as civil servants and judges. Since Constitution of India brought in separation of powers between executive and judiciary this arrangement was no longer tenable.

Accordingly, Article 312 of the Constitution mandated Parliament to create one or more AIS. Due to intense efforts by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Home Ministry, two of them were promptly covenanted in the Constitution itself: "The services known at the commencement of this Constitution as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and

the Indian Police Service (IPS) shall be deemed to be services created by Parliament under this article.” [312(2)] But BR Ambedkar, the Law Minister allowed the matter to drift and frittered away the opportunity. So, till date there is no Indian Judicial Service (IJS) since Parliament empowered to enact a law for the purpose has failed to do so.

This perhaps is the main reason why there is such crisis in judiciary and huge number of vacancies. Creation of IJS keeps cropping up off and on. In 2010, three eminent jurists—Justice MN Venkatachaliah, Justice JS Verma, Justice VR Krishna Iyer—examined the issue in some length and opined thus: “We agree with the urgent need to constitute the IJS as envisaged by Article 312 of the Constitution of India, at par with the other All India services like the IAS. to attract the best available talent at the threshold for the subordinate judiciary, which is at the cutting edge of the justice delivery system to improve its quality. Moreover, the subordinate judiciary is important feeder-line for appointments to the High Court. The general reluctance of competent lawyers to join the Bench even at the higher levels adds an additional urgency to the problem. IJS will, in due course of time, also help to improve the quality of the High Courts.”

Various law commissions (1st, 8th, and 11th) had also suggested the creation of IJS. Even the Supreme Court, in two of its judgments in 1991 and 1993, had endorsed the setting up of IJS. Yet it is mysterious that this Service has not materialised. In November, 2012, a Committee of Secretaries chaired by the Cabinet Secretary had approved a “comprehensive proposal” for creation of the service. At the

time, 18 high courts out of 24 had responded to the proposal, and most of them had opposed it.

It looks as if the decades old plan of setting up IJS is again in the limelight. This is evident from a note prepared by the Law Ministry’s justice department in September, 2016: “The matter has been discussed at the highest level in the government and the judiciary. It has been decided that the Honourable Chief Justice of India would convene a meeting of the Chief Justices of the High Courts to arrive at a consensus on formation of IJS.” In the present surcharged atmosphere, it will be interesting to see how CJI and the High Courts react to the proposal which, according to sources, has been significantly tweaked to convince the judiciary that it would remain free of government control. This can be achieved by making Supreme Court as cadre-controlling authority for the IJS.

Though the Constitution has placed “Justice, social, economic and political” at the epicentre of India’s democratic governance, for the people at large this has become a rare, time-consuming and costly ‘commodity’ to access. And the way courts and judges are functioning things are going from bad to worse. This cannot be countenanced and a solution has to be found. The sooner, the better because higher judiciary cannot be a rule-less entity in perpetuity!

All things considered, the best long-term solution for this sensitive and vexatious issue is to abide by the constitutional scheme of things and establish the IJS with appropriate rules and regulations without any further loss of time. In the interim, judiciary can adopt the extant All-India Service Rules with suitable modifications. This seems to be the

prudent way out of the deepening morass and brooks no delay.

(Contd. from Page 2)

during Narendra Modi’s government in Gujarat communal riots went on unrestrained for three days in 2002. Will Modi accept responsibility for this?

Narendra Modi says he has sacrificed his family life for his public life. But Gandhi showed how one can include family in public life. Even though his family members were opposed to some of his ways he tried his best to take them along.

Every step of Gandhi was taken keeping in consideration the poor. The policies of Narendra Modi government are benefitting the rich more than the poor. In fact, the poor are increasingly feeling more insecure in his regime.

Without making the values espoused by Gandhi part of his own life if Modi tries to superficially use Gandhi for enhancement of his image it would not help. Gandhi had no ambition for political power. He ruled people’s hearts and still continues to do so. People show respect to a person in power only so long as s(he) is in power. Once the person leaves power people tend to forget him/her.

Whatever Gandhi did was part of his holistic view of life. As part of some management thinking we can’t adopt some of his things while leaving out the rest. If Modi wants to be seen as endorsing the philosophy of charkha he can’t be helping his friend Ambani to set up a defence business venture. If leaders and workers of his party continue to bully people and make inappropriate comments unhindered, Modi can’t be viewed as a world leader.

Electoral process is a secular activity

Ram Puniyani

The word secularism has been brought to disrepute during last few decades. Secularism stands in India for equal respect for all religions and the principle that the state policies will not be dictated by religions. This is the central theme of Indian constitution. Its flawed practice by ruling parties has been used as a pretext by communal elements to downgrade it and the very principles of secularism itself have been questioned. The Supreme Court seven bench judgment that electoral process is a secular activity comes as a big relief for all those who uphold the underlying currents of justice inherent in the values of pluralism. The judgment says that India is a Secular State; elections in a secular state must not violate Principles of Secularism. It states that the Misuse of Religion for Political ends --violation of Section 123 of the Representation of People's Act amounts to a corrupt practice under Indian election law, and further that the onus of preserving the sanctity and purity of the election Process lies not just with the candidate contesting the election, but his/her agent, the manifesto on which he/she contests.

The judgment states that the function of an elected representative must be secular in both outlook and practice as these values also emphasize that there should be affirmative action for the religious minorities; this is as well the part ingrained in the values of justice, which forms the foundation of secular democracies. This judgment gives a new rejuvenating strength to the inherent principles of secularism which the founding fathers of Indian Constitution envisaged.

The judgment has been welcomed by many political streams, including the one's which have been questioning the secular values and which have built their electoral strength on the identity issues of religion. While it has shown the path for plural India, the India where the dignity and rights of all are respected at the same time, at the same time many challenges also need to be envisaged in the practice of this verdict.

The whole exercise which brought in this judgment began with the interventions which wanted the court to revisit the notorious 'Hindutva Judgment' of 1995, associated with the name of Justice Varma. That judgment held that Hinduism-Hindutva is multifarious, diverse, 'difficult to define' so it is a 'way of life'. The confusions on which that judgment was based are due to the very nature of Hinduism, where there is no single prophet and diverse and conflicting religious traditions prevailing in this area have been brought under the umbrella of Hinduism. Still all said and done Hinduism is a religion by all theological and sociological considerations, as it has holy books, rituals, clergy, Gods-Goddesses and most other parameters for calling it a religion. This time the Court has not opined on this crucial aspect of the 1995 judgment, which needs to be revisited and revised keeping in mind its perception as a religion among the millions of Hindus.

Not addressing this issue has left the ground open for the section of communalists to continue to appeal in the name of Hinduism-

Hindutva and to escape being punished under provisions of people's representation act. This discrepancy is not welcome as the major communal streams can merrily indulge in the use of religion for electoral ground and at the same time to escape the penal provisions of law. Secondly, use of "religions' identify" has been the ground on which violence and polarization has been taking place. Take for example the issue of Ram Temple or beef; it gives a clear communal message. The use of this for political mobilization has been the major phenomenon over last over three decades. The Court verdict has nothing to say on these types of issues, which are an appeal to mobilize the community in the name of religion. This political abuse of religion's identity for electoral power is antithetical to secular values. How does the country get over these emotive issues which create a political malpractice in a deeper sense? Unless these are addressed the political tendencies will keep finding more and more ground to appeal in the name of religion, though this appeal will be more subtle but will be having the same outcome.

One recalls that before the general elections of 2014, Narendra Modi In one of his speeches in Mumbai said that 'I am born in a Hindu family: I am a nationalist, so I am a Hindu nationalist'. Massive hoardings were put up all over Mumbai to give this message. Will it come under corrupt practice or not? The hate speeches like the ones' of AkbarUddin Owaisi and the

large section of RSS combine like Yogi Adityanath, Pravin Togadia, Sadhvi Nirnajan Jyoti and their ilk is a deeper appeal to the religion of the electorate. Should it amount to corrupt electoral practice or not? There is a lot of symbolism which gives the message of religion, like using Islamic symbols by some, and using Hindu symbols, Hindu gods and goddesses in the posters of the candidates. Some candidates have been comparing themselves to that god or goddesses, where will we put such a practice? Some time ago, UP BJP Chief K P Maurya was shown posing as Lord Krishna facing the Kauravas of Yadav family were put up, how does one let it pass if elections and politics are secular enterprise?

On the other side will come the issues related to the marginalized sections of society. Demands for the neglected poor deprived sections may be related to caste or religion. Since the beginning of republic some communities have remained disadvantaged or victimized due to multiple factors. Adivasis, Dalits and religious minorities do fall in this category. There are enough reports showing the plight of these sections, Sachar Committee report being one example. These sectional demands fall under the category of 'affirmative action', which is integral part of the secular democratic nature of our Constitution. They cannot be labeled as an appeal to religion or caste in any way.

While Supreme Court has shown the way, overcoming the existing lacuna in the practice of secular values need to be restored in the society, and that will pave the way for justice and peace in the real sense.

Rohingyas: the boatmen of the East

Mrinal K. Biswas

In a queer turn of events repression-fighting Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is looking the other way when her country's persecuted Rohingyas are deserting Myanmar under duress.

Boatmen of the East are the Rohingyas of Myanmar. They are fleeing the country by sea. If fortune favours their illegal, highly hazardous voyage the persecuted Rakhine provincials can touch the coastal lines of Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and even the Indonesian islands to seek refuge. Surprisingly, India's Andamans islands still remain out of bounds for the unfortunate Rohingyas. How many unlucky boatmen will fail to reach their uncertain destinations is anybody's guess.

Their tragedy multiplies as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGD) vigorously prevents any crossborder entry of Rohingyas. Groups of them with great number of women and children were more than once pushed back into inhospitable Myanmar. In desperate moves some Rohingyas could sneak through land routes to go to far off areas like Jammu in India with a few of them joining extremist groups like Jamaitul Mujahidden Bangladesh (JMB) to operate in its secret arsenal-making bases in West Bengal with the pan-Islamic idea of creating a greater Muslim Bengal state. The latter's ISIS connection is not ruled out. Inside Myanmar, alleged Muslim militants attacked border posts reportedly inviting Burmese army reprisals

forcing displacement of 30,000 people. Unsheltered Rohingyas are desperately seeking escape routes.

Status-less minority

The Rohingyas are perhaps the world's most persecuted minority Muslim people of about 50 million Burmese population mostly living in the poorest north-west Myanmar's Rakhin province of 3 million inhabitants. About 140,000 Rohingyas in Rakhine live in ghetto-like camps but with government permission only. They are kept out of Myanmar's official list of 135 ethnic groups, hence denied citizenship and treated as Bangladeshi illegal immigrants. The hapless Rohingyas do not have rights to study, work, travel, marry, practice their religion and their access to health services are restricted.

The Rohingyas remain inferior to the step-sons and step-daughters of Myanmar despite living in that country for years. They have never been given any status of citizenship by the essentially Buddhist country of Burma, which the British annexed in 1937 to make it a British India province, and was ultimately given independence in January 1948, a few months after we got independence. Burma was later renamed Myanmar by recalling a piece of history.

The Rohingyas speak a Bengali dialect, are Muslims by faith, and are contemptuously called Bengalis because of their dark-skinned appearance by the fairer Buddhist Burmese population. As ill-luck would have it the Bangladesh people

also refuse to treat them as kindred spirits, though the Rohingyas originate from Bengal.

Bengali Muslims

History shows a Burmese ruler in the fifteenth century ceded some territory to the Bengal Sultan to make it the Muslim state of Arakan (which is now Rakhine) in which Muslim descendants' Burmese Kamein ethnic groups originated. What is established is the fact that after first Indo-Burma war of 1826 the British colonials annexed Arakan and brought in Bengali Muslim farm workers there. All their descendents and immigrants in Arakan were described as the Rohingyas of Rakhine province who made the Buddhist Rakhine population immensely suspicious of them. There was a Arakan massacre in 1942 giving up two unfortunate developments: The Burma Buddhists as a whole became extremely hostile to "alien" Rohingyas and a section of the Rohingyas began a Mujahidden rebellion for a separatist movement in 1948. Things became complicated as Rakhine Buddhists also launched an Arakanese independence movement sometime then.

In the midst of all these the Rohingya heads increased by Muslim immigrants from East Pakistan after Burma freed herself from the British rule in 1948 and a large number Bengali Muslims fleeing to Myanmar in the wake of 1971 Bangladesh liberation war. An estimated 1.23 million Rohingyas are found settled in Myanmar in 2013, most of them in Rakhine.

The military rulers of Myanmar thrust heavily on the Rohingyas when in the 1980s Gen. Ne Win enacted Burmese nationality law in 1982 which firmly denied Rohingyas

the citizenship rights. Since then officially stateless Rohingyas living "illegally" in Myanmar are targeted to be deported. The military and Buddhist attacks on the Rohingyas increased without any sign of abatement even after a kind of democracy sets in Myanmar in this early 21st century. In October 2012, in the wake of violent riots, President Thein Sein asked UN to resettle them in other countries. "We will take care of our own ethnic nationalities but Rohingyas who came to Burma illegally are not our ethnic nationality and we cannot accept them."

The most recent violent incident took place on October 9, 2016 when a militant Rohingya group made lethal attacks on the Burmese army resulting in severe counter-attacks as a consequence of which the Rohingyas are fleeing in whatever directions they can go. The clash toll was 17 Myanmar security personnel, at least 70 Rohingyas in village areas while Myanmar police arrested some 500 villagers on the border line of Bangladesh. But the attacks on the Rohingyas continue despite diplomatic interventions.

Long inhospitable Myanmar forced Rohingyas to flee in whatever directions they can go. According to the UN refugee agency, since 2012, estimated over 110,000 people dangerously left in flimsy boats from obscure Myanmar coastlines whose fearful movements are believed continuing.

While some others are clandestinely going into neighbouring Bangladesh and onwards.

The Rohingyas are noticed now. A few of them were found among

the illegal Mujahidden working at Khargagarh of West Bengal. J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti admitted that some 5,743 Rohingyas are living in shanties of Jammu while a few of them had been registered for various offences. Reports say that Rohingya Abdul said his persecuted community, forced out of Myanmar, sought refuge in Jammu's Narwal area to "live peacefully here and earn a decent living by working as labourers or do menial jobs.

Aung San shocker

The big question is what Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar foreign minister endowed with real power after a deal with the military junta following her National League of Democracy's emphatic poll victory in November 2015, is going to do with the Rohingya question. She is quite aware of the Buddhist and Military hostility of the Rohingyas. Even in the midst of growing international cry of human rights violations affecting the Rohingyas this Nobel Laureate said the Rohingyas are the Bengalis. It has to be seen whether they can be considered as citizens of Myanmar.

She also justified the measures taken against the Rohingyas as lawful. Herself suffered long under army rule Aung San Suu Kyi's statement astounded the liberal world. There is a suspicion that she is bound to take this stand because she is under some kind of political duress. The numerically large, politically strong Buddhist clergy once fought the military junta but now disfavours Aung San Suu Kyi for her being too soft on national issues. Her ambivalence has disappointed her very wide international supporters and human rights activists.

Aftermath of demonetisation

R. D. Prabhu

On the November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi suddenly declared demonetization of currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000. It was shocking news for the common man. The Prime Minister claimed that the decision was taken to route out corruption and black money. The Government having agencies like the CBI, Income Tax Department, etc. under their control are well aware of the possession of black money by capitalists did not touch for the last so many years but these agencies are now active to raid the houses of capitalists who were on their radar. But the common man is affected and is facing untold difficulties while withdrawing his hard earned money from his bank account, because of the government's restrictions on withdrawals. Even today the condition is critical in economic sphere.

The effects of demonetization were so grave that social and economic life of entire nation came to standstill. The Government alternatively introduced circulation of currency note of Rs 2000 but this added to the cash crunch. In the hands of common man when he goes to the market in order to purchase essential commodities merchants are selling goods on condition that the customer purchases substantial commodities, only then the merchant is willing to accept the Rs 2000. Thus, the common man faces difficulties to maintain his family in such economic curbs at the mercy of this democratically elected government. So it can be concluded here that the government denied right to life as

guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

After declaration of the decision of the demonetization of currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000, it was expected that the Parliament session would be stormy. But both the treasury benches and the opposition parties belied the hopes of voters. My submission is that though the smooth functioning of the Parliament is the responsibility of the government but at the same time it is also the responsibility of the opposition parties to respond it in democracy. I submit that in A democracy, dialogue and discussion is very important. Because in the democracy issues can be settled with discussions and in recently concluded sessions of the Parliament there were no discussions on this vital issue of demonetization. In this recently concluded session of the Parliament the country has lost precious time and huge public funds. In spite of this undemocratic behaviour, all the Members of Parliament will receive their salaries with usual allowance for NO WORK. But yet there is a ray of hope in this battle. From the press reports, it is observed that Shri Panda, an Hon'ble M.P of BJD declared that he would not accept his salary for the period the recently concluded session of the Parliament without transacting any business. I submit that all the MPs have misused their rights. The voters all over India voted their representatives to raise their grievances against the anti people policies, against injustice done by the government on the floor of the house. But unfortunately our

MPs lost this golden opportunity. The voters are not happy with the irresponsible behaviour of their representatives in both the houses of Parliament particularly with MPs in the Lok Sabha. I congratulate Shri Panda of BJD for his decision.

PM v/s Rahul Gandhi

After announcement of the decision of demonetization of high valued currency notes, Rahul Gandhi, MP and Vice President of Congress Party started attacking Narendra Modi, for making the common man suffer without any prior notice. This can be termed as Mini Emergency because very livelihood of poor man is at stake. As pointed out by Bhavna Vij Arora and Zia Haq in their article published in the OUTLOOK of 26th December 2016 issue title "Chance of Lightning or Just Thunder", that "Demonetization had provided him the fire power. A senior Congress leader says Rahul has a single point agenda – to leverage the public anger against demonetization that has created a cash crunch and become a cause of harassment to the common man specially those who survived on cash economy." Rahul Gandhi, a responsible leader of the Congress Party should take extra care while leveling charges of serious nature against any leader in public. He should not invite trouble for himself and the party. Rahul Gandhi must have thought that this is a golden opportunity to embarrass party in power but at the same time he should come prepared with home work and concrete evidences. The charges he levelled against the Prime

Minister Narendra Modi should be supported with valid evidences. Now Rahul Gandhi as MP should learn how to use various Constitutional methods in the Lok Sabha and for that purpose he should have command on language i.e. oratory skill. For that purpose he should go through the speeches of the first Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, veteran Parliamentarians such as Nath Path, Madhu Limaye, Madhu Dandavate, Somnath Chatterjee, Dr Lohia etc. At the same time he should remain present in the Lok Sabha whenever in session. But in short, Rahul Gandhi it seems is making attempts to attack the government on burning issues.

In this connection, I wish to reproduce a relevant extract from the article 'Cynicism over corruption charge against PM', by Anil Sharma published in the Free Press Journal (Mumbai) dated 26.12.2016 for information of all the readers of JANATA.

Now here is a Prime Minister who is waging war against corruption and black money. His single decision of demonetization ostensibly aimed at de-hoarding the black money that is with the corrupt, has brought untold miseries of millions of masses, ordinary citizens have been denied free access to their own money kept in banks. Millions have been forced to stand in queues in front of banks and ATM to get their own, only to be turned back after hours with cash signs. Does such a Prime Minister have the moral authority to unleash such pain on people when he is personally accused of corruption?"

It is stated that the cruel effect of this monetization is that number of people i.e. account holders have died while standing in queue for

(Contd. on Page 10)

People must speak out

Kuldip Nayar

When distinguished writers and artists return to the Academies the awards, which had been conferred on them, the question to ask is not why they did not do it earlier, say, at the testing time like the Emergency. Writers and artists are a sensitive lot. They react when they feel like and how they feel like.

It is, in fact, the duty of the government to find out why they felt that the situation had come to such a pass that they have no alternative except to return their award. Nayantara Sehgal, Jawaharlal Nehru's niece, who was the first to return the award, said that the space in the BJP government for dissent had shrunk. Many artists followed suit.

In a letter to the Academi authorities the Hindi poet Manmohan, while returning the award, maintained that the current trend of "curbing the voices of dissent and freedom of expression, which was evident in the recent murders of intellectual writers Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and M.M. Kalburgi" was disturbing.

"Indians have experienced to register protests. Several writers and artists have recently returned their Academi awards and prizes in protest against the prevailing situation. I am also returning the award to the Haryana Sahitya Akademi," the writer states in the letter.

Indeed, an atmosphere of communal polarization, hate crime, insecurity and violence is getting

denser in the country. Political leaders seem to be promoting or patronizing it. The government is only running down the artists and writers. Freedom of expression is the foundation on which the structure of democracy has been built. The entire building would come down crashing if it is tinkered with. Unfortunately, this is what is happening.

This feeling of suffocation has emerged after the advent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. There is fear to express a different point of view. One feels that the fanatic fringe in the Hindu community has become bold and has been indulging in acts, which are opposed to secularism, which instill fear in the minds of minorities.

The Dadri incident is too shameful to be even recalled. A Muslim youth was lynched because they had kept beef in their refrigerator. This was on the basis of rumours which were found to be factually incorrect.

Whether one should eat beef or not, is a matter of personal choice. The Supreme Court of India has also endorsed this viewpoint. Not many among the minorities eat it because of the accommodative culture the country has developed. For the same reason, the Hindus too do not take pork out of respect for the Muslims' belief. In fact, India has survived as a nation, despite its diversities, because it has respected the different sensitivities and identities. Otherwise, a vast country like India would have disintegrated long ago.

I recall in my brief stint as India's High Commissioner in London, the admiration which then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had for the country. She told me once that India was an example for the world - how the country had remained democratic and united despite the backwardness. She asked me once what reason I attributed to it. I told her that we in India did not think that things were either black or white but we saw a vast grey which we want expanding. This was our pluralism or secularism.

Unfortunately, the ideology of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party is the anti-thesis of pluralism. The party believes in polarization. Take the case of Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar's recent comments. His reported remarks to a national newspaper were that "Muslims can continue to live in this country, but they will have to give up eating beef" because "cow is an article of faith here."

No doubt, the remarks of Haryana chief minister triggered an outrage with the Congress calling it a sad day for Indian democracy and slamming for his "unconstitutional" observations. Yet, as was to be expected, the BJP leader said his words had been twisted. "I never made such a statement. But if the sentiments of anyone have been hurt with my words, I am ready to express my regret," said Khattar.

Understandably, the BJP dissociated itself from the views of Khattar saying that this was not the party's stand or view. Soon after the furor, Parliamentary Affairs Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu said that the views expressed by Khattar were not that of the party. "I will talk to him and will advise him. It is not correct to link anyone's eating habits to

religion. People have to keep in mind the sentiments of others and eating is a personal choice of people," he said.

But what surprised me the most was how Naidu disposed of the Dadri incident by passing on the buck to the state. He said that it was a law and order issue concerning Uttar Pradesh and chief minister Akhilesh Yadav and the Samajwadi Party should be questioned on it instead of putting the blame on the BJP-led government at the centre.

Similarly, on the issue of writers' protests over growing intolerance and returning their awards he said that it was a "systematic and malicious campaign against the government to divert its focus from development and to derail Prime Minister Modi's efforts of making India develop and progress further."

(Contd. from Page 9)

hours together for getting their hard earned money in bank. What about future of their families? The government should come forward to grant them compensation to lead them a respectable life in society. Otherwise the opposition parties should come forward and raise relief funds for welfare of those who have sacrificed their life in this anti-people struggle.

Finally, it is concluded that workers in unorganized sectors rely on cash to maintain their families and not on cashless methods. It is obvious the Prime Minister Modi is leading this country towards authoritarian rule and the opposition leaders are not using every opportunity to fight him. This is dangerous step for this democratic country. All the democratic forces must retaliate anti-people economic reforms.

I agree with Naidu on one point. Some of these writers, who are queuing up to return the awards, failed to react when the Emergency was imposed in the country or when the anti-Sikh riots took place following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. Over, 3,000 Sikhs were massacred in the aftermath of the incident in Delhi itself.

However, I cannot understand the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, all the time talks of an inclusive government. I wish he had spoken on the raging issues. Likewise, I also cannot fathom why the Sahitya Academi has kept mum on the issue. In a nation's history, there come certain occasions when people must speak out. If they don't, the nation is doomed to suffer.

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

by

Rohini Gawankar

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Wider consultation on river links badly needed

Bharat Dogra

The most worrying aspect of the National Interlinking of Rivers programme is that all the adverse opinions as well as concerns about disruptive impacts voiced by many well-informed and senior persons, including those who have occupied senior positions in the government in water, environment and related areas, have not led to the need for greater caution on the part of the Union government. The only factor that appears to act as some sort of restraining influence on the gung-ho spirit of the Union Ministry for Water Resources and River Development is in the form of objections and reservations expressed by several state governments. Despite this, however, the dominant official position remains one of marching ahead speedily with the highly controversial river-links programme.

For the record the National River Links (NLR) programme involves the linking of 37 rivers using 30 river links by creating a vast network of dams and 15000 km. canals. The authorities claim that this will increase irrigation and domestic water supply significantly, while also making substantial additions to hydel power generation. In fact huge additions of 34 gigawatts of electricity and 34 million hectares of irrigation have been promised. These figures were recently cited by the Union Water Resources and River Development Minister Uma Bharti in an interview. In this interview the Minister also said that the gigantic project's cost has now gone up to Rs. 11 lakh crore.

To raise the money she said we'll see how we can commercialise irrigation, try the PPP mode, or get the private sector involved.

On the time-frame the Minister said that the first project of Ken-Betwa link will be completed in seven years. The Daman Ganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi Narmada projects will also be completed in seven years. The fourth one Chambal-Kalsind is also likely to be completed within this period despite reservations of states. As for the other projects more time is needed for convincing states and completing studies but, the Minister added, "I can say with certainty that we can complete these projects in maximum 20 years." In addition, the minister said, "I have spoken with surface transport minister Nitin Gadkari and asked him to include the 31 inter-link river canals in the list of 101 inland waterways he is working on."

If this sounds mind-boggling it actually is. If all this actually happens, then this will be the biggest ever human-made changing of the geography and ecology of rivers to be carried out within such a narrow time span of two decades. If this project is estimated today at Rs. 11 lakh crore one can imagine what its final cost will be given the cost escalations normally associated with such projects.

What about the social and environmental costs? The issue of people displaced by dams and canals has always been a troubling one in

a densely populated country like India. Significantly the government authorities do not appear to have reliable information on this. In the interview quoted above when the minister was asked about the project affected people she said, "we are unable to calculate the numbers now, but don't look at the project-affected people, look at the benefits of this project." A figure of about 15 lakh people likely to be displaced and about one lakh hectare of forest likely to be submerged has often been mentioned as a rough and ready calculation, but this is likely to be an underestimate if we are careful to include all the indirect impacts as well (one million=10 lakhs).

Finding all the adverse impacts in a reliable way for such a gigantic programme involving the construction of hundreds of dams and related structures and many thousands of kms. of canals will be a complex exercise which will require a lot of expertise and time, but it appears from the way that time commitments are already set that the impact studies will be more of a formality and will not be accorded adequate importance in deciding about the various projects or sub-projects.

Perhaps the most vexing part of the entire project is that reliable estimates of deficits and surpluses are not available yet in most cases and hence the entire basis of the project is questionable from this point of view. Even in the very first and hence so far the most studied

project the Ken- Betwa project the official position on surplus and deficits areas has been questioned time and again.

There is a very clear need to make a distinction between the natural confluence of rivers and the forced human made linkages such as the ones being attempted in this project. The natural confluences of various rivers evolved over thousands or even lakhs of years in keeping with the overall geographic and topographical situations. The biodiversity of the river and nearby areas was thus well adjusted to this. However changing natural river flows for forced linkages are different and can play havoc with the bio-diversity of both rivers. Due to changed river paths and diversions, water availability including water recharge over vast areas can be adversely affected. Rivers may show resistance to the forced change in paths, in which case more destructive floods may be unleashed.

Hence some basic justifications of this very costly project are so questionable that it can easily land us in a terrible mess. A decade of its implementation at the speed being indicated now at the minister level will create a massive mess which will be difficult to repair, and an additional argument will be given then that as so much money has already been spent we have to somehow complete this project. So much before the situation reaches this stage, we should strive to create conditions in which better sense will prevail and at the very least an impartial review of the controversial project involving the best available talent on this subject can be obtained.

Relevance of Gandhi's holistic approach

Ravi Bhatia

Disparities, deprivation and discrimination around the world are too visible to be ignored in today's globalised world. These are of different types—economic, social, and educational and health related. While the rich have all the comforts in terms of housing, educational facilities, nutritious food and other necessary requirements of a good life, the poor and marginalized peoples are deprived of basic human rights and needs.

These marginalized populations exist in many parts — in Africa, Latin America and Asia, but disparities especially economic and social are not confined to these regions alone. Even USA perhaps the wealthiest country in the world, has large economic disparities as highlighted by their Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz. He writes 'American inequality didn't just happen. It was created'.

The reasons for the economic and social disparities are too complex to be adequately described in this small essay, but the political system and the capitalist, neo-liberal economies of these countries are dominant factors for the conditions prevailing in many parts of the world.

Poverty, discrimination and oppression in one form or another have existed in the world since prehistoric times. A hundred years back when Gandhi was on the scene in the Indian subcontinent (present day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), conditions of the

farmers and the countryside were deplorable. In his small 90 page booklet called *Hind Swaraj* that Gandhi wrote in 1908 while he was returning to South Africa from England, he has dwelt in a concise manner why India was poor and deprived.

He laid the blame squarely upon the British colonialism that had impoverished the country. He was against modern civilization that then prevailed in the world's richest country. England at that time not only exploited its various colonies but was exploitative within the country itself. Gandhi wrote that modern machinery had made life comfortable for the well to do populations of England at the expense of factory workers and miners who toiled in risky and unhygienic conditions. Even women were forced to work in these poor, unhealthy conditions.

For Gandhi, machinery was an instrument of exploitation and destitution of people especially in the Indian countryside since it displaced labour. He wrote in *Hind Swaraj* "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin".

As an example he wrote about the displacement of village weavers who could not compete with the cloth mills that manufactured cloth rather cheaply. While Manchester in England prospered due to its cloth mills, the Indian towns and villages that fabricated cloth by simple handlooms were adversely

affected and became impoverished.

Machinery was also affecting the Indian farmers who used to work with simple tools and their bullocks for ploughing their farmlands. Gandhi wanted to promote village activities not only those of making cloth by handlooms, but also soap making, paper making, tanning etc. This would not only be a source of adequate income for the villagers but would also maintain their dignity and promote friendship and harmony.

Perhaps Gandhi's attitude towards machinery would appear not only outdated but extreme in today's context. However the conditions of farmers in India are really bad due to several factors apart from the issues of machinery and many of them resort to suicide to escape their ordeal even today.

According to Professor Pulin Nayak, economist of Delhi School of Economics, *Hind Swaraj* 'aimed for self rule in a context where the twin principles of *satyagraha* and non-violence were the core postulates'.

Poverty, discrimination and oppression visible at present are, as indicated above, due to complex factors. But even today the conditions of not only farmers but the tribal peoples living in remote regions are bad and grim. Tribal people, who have survived for centuries in their so called *primitive* conditions, are victims of modern developmental paradigm as their forest lands have been encroached upon and they are forced to evacuate their habitats. Gandhi, who lived in a simple manner, was careful in

Darkness is the only end for the Dam Tunnels

"Black Spot" - A film made on the impacts of Vishnugaad – Peepalkoti tunnels on the Alaknanda River. The affected peoples have declared, "We have been ignored and treated merely as a character to laugh at. The tunnel is being built beneath our houses. How much damage will it do, nobody knows. The compensation of previous damages have not been made yet. If we will protest then we will have to face the court cases. The Court has made restrictions on people's visiting the Dams working sites." Now what to do?", asks Ramlal, a residence of Durgapur Village. Durgapur village is the part of Village Panchayat where dalit families reside. The THDC, Dam Construction Company, is building/ constructing tunnels for Vishnugaad – Peepalkoti Hydro Power Project Power House. Cracks have appeared on the walls of houses present above the tunnels due to high intensity blasts happened during the construction of tunnels, the future has become uncertain. The condition of the Harsari hamlet of Haat Village is also the same. The other project affected villages are also facing the same threat and uncertainties. What is the guarantee that everything will be secure once the projects will be completed? The tunnel of Vishnuprayag dam have already brought disaster in Chai –Thai Village after years where NEPI Company had denied claims of any losses. There has been no evaluation done of the impacts of these tunnels

in World Bank fostered projects. This is the way of neglecting the much required expenditure on rehabilitation and other issues. "We get the threats of arrest if we resist and protest for our rights. Are the Ganga dam affected region not in India?", questioned Rajendra Hatwal.

Narendra Pokhariyal has been struggling for years for security of his Village and constant flow of the River Ganga but got only false promises and increased confusion. World Bank and State government is responsible for not giving the right solutions of the issues. The film "Black Spot" made by Media Collective tried to cover all these aspects. This Hindi film with subtitles in English is made by Hagen Desa.

This film reveals the reality of tunnel projects through the issues prevailing in Vishnugaad - Peepalkoti Dam affected area. When there is planning to bind Ganga – Yamuna – Kali - Saryu and all their tributaries in tunnels, then this film reveals the grim realities and likely impacts in front of development planners, government agencies and financial institutions like World Bank. We expect that they will learn a lot from this and bring subsequent changes in their attitude taking people's and environmental issues on higher priorities. This film has been released by the villagers in Gopeshwar headquarter of Chamoli district.

(Contd. on Page 14)

Reena Devi

Vimal Bhai

not exploiting nature that has now resulted in environmental pollution and climate change.

Gandhi advocated a system that he called *Swaraj* or *Home Rule* that was conducive for all peoples and was inclusive in nature, where people had opportunities to live in a harmonious manner keeping in view their specific conditions,

needs and skills. Such a system is necessary even today if we want all sections of the population to live harmoniously, with their basic requirements fulfilled.

Does the present globalised neo liberal economic model produce these conditions? The answer can only be in the negative. Gandhi who was killed in 1948 is relevant

even today for his holistic approach in promoting a just economic and political system, skill based education and an environmentally friendly system for preserving nature and not over exploiting our earth. Albert Einstein had said that future generations will hardly believe that such a man ever walked on this earth! Truly, we need Gandhi more than ever today.

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(बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था)

अपना बाजारTM को-ऑप

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दर्जा, गुणवत्ता आणि विश्वासाहता म्हणजेच अपना बाजार

आमची ठळक वैशिष्ट्ये

- ६८ वर्षांची अभिमानास्पद ग्राहक सेवा
- भारतातील एकमेव बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था
- महाराष्ट्र व गुजरात राज्यात ग्राहक सेवा
- एकूण विक्री दालने २५
- वार्षिक उलाढाल रु. १३९ 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 अॅवार्ड ऑफ एक्सीलन्स (२०१३)
- मुंबई जिल्हा मध्यवर्ती सहकारी बँक लि. यांच्या तर्फे सहकार गौरव पुरस्कार (२०१५)

आरोग्यसेवा :

- दादासाहेब सरफरे आरोग्य केंद्र व क्लिनीकल लॅबोरेटरी, नायगांव.

सामाजिक उपक्रम :

- खरेदी बचत योजनांना प्रोत्साहन
- ग्राहक जागरुकतेसाठी विविध कार्यक्रम

अपना बाजार सर्वासाठी :

- १) खरेदीवर वेळोवेळी विविध सवलती
- २) दर्जेदार वस्तू खात्रीपूर्वक मिळण्याचे ठिकाण
- ३) वेळ आणि पैसा यांची बचत
- ४) सणासुदीसाठी खास सवलत
- ५) मोफत घरपोच सेवा
- ६) भेट देण्याकरिता अपना गिफ्ट व्हावचर
- ७) मंगल कार्याकरिता अपना बाजार नायगांव एअर कंडिशन बँक्वेट हॉल
- ८) सोडॅक्सो पास, तिकीट रेस्टॉरंट कुपन्स आणि बँक कार्ड्स मार्फत खरेदी

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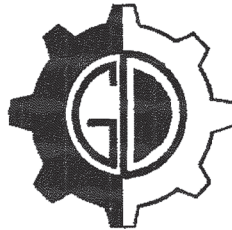
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Budget Reality

Neeraj Jain

The Prime Minister and many leading intellectuals have praised the budget as pro-growth, pro-poor and pro-farmer. The reality is, however, exactly the opposite of all these epithets.

While total budget outlay has increased over the figure for 2016-17 budget estimate (BE) by 8.5%, in fact, as compared to the GDP, it has fallen from 13.13% to 12.74%. This is an indication that the government is curbing its budget spending. Can it be called a pro-growth budget?

This year, the Finance Minister, in order to deflect criticism as regards the concessions being given to the country's richie rich in the form of deductions/exemptions given on corporate taxes, customs and excise duties, has changed the methodology for calculating these deductions, and has thereby drastically brought down the custom and excise duties exemptions. Even with the new methodology, the figures show that the exemptions are higher than that of the previous year, and have gone up from Rs 2.25 lakh crore to Rs 2.38 lakh crore, a rise of 5.8%.

The earlier methodology was being followed for the last 11 years.

Calculating these exemptions given to the rich based on the earlier methodology, these exemptions (excluding the exemptions given in personal income taxes, which are more oriented towards the middle classes) work out to: 83,492 (corporate taxes) + 250,642 (customs duties) + 224,940 (excise duties) = 559,074 or Rs 5.59 lakh crore. (In making these calculations, the customs duties exemptions has been calculated as below: *The Statement of Revenue Impact of Tax Incentives under the Central Tax System: Financial Years 2015-16 and 2016-17* in the budget documents gives the the total estimated customs revenue impact of tax incentives for 2016-17 as Rs. 307,707 crore by the old methodology, and from this the revenue impact of input tax neutralization schemes is deducted, which stands at Rs 57,065 crore, to give the customs duties exemption by old methodology of Rs 250,642 crore. Similarly, the excise duties exemptions are calculated in the following way. The statistics given in section no. 2.8 and 2.9 in the *Statement of Revenue Impact of Tax Incentives under the Central Tax System* show that the revenue impact of tax incentives on the Central Excise side for 2016-17 (estimated) is the

same as that for 2015-16 (actuals). Therefore, to estimate the excise duty concessions for 2016-17 by old methodology, we have assumed that they have remained the same as the 2015-16 budget estimate made in the budget statement of 2015-16, that is, Rs 224,940 crore—this is actually an underestimate, as normally the excise duty concessions have been increasing every year by at least 10% over the previous year's estimates.)

The total concessions to the richie rich for 2016-17 are the highest ever, even more than the record level of Rs 5.51 lakh crore for 2015-16.

Another important subsidy to big corporates is in construction of roads and highways, for which the total allocation has gone up from Rs 58,000 crore in 2016-17 BE to Rs 64,900 crore in 2017-18 BE. Obviously, a major portion of this is going to be transfers to corporate houses in the form of PPP—which is nothing but a transfer of public resources to the private sector.

And on the other hand, while the media has praised the budget as a pro-poor one, the figures speak otherwise. While in absolute terms, there has been some increase in the total social sector spending of the government, which is only to be expected if inflation is to be accounted for, the total social sector expenditure of the government (Rs 492,635 crore) as a percentage of the GDP is only a low 2.92%. It is definitely not such a large sum for the budget to be called pro-poor. And it continues to be below the level of 3.23% that was budgeted by the Finance Minister in his first budget of 2014-15, and is also below the level of 3.43% that was estimated in the budget of the UPA

(Contd. on Page 13)

Economic Survey 2017

Arun Kumar

The survey does not lift the mist of confusion over India's macroeconomic situation after demonetisation, while the conservative fiscal stance proposed will only lead to an aggravation of the problems confronting the economy.

Economic surveys assess the performance of the economy in the financial year. They identify the problems faced. They also give some inkling as to what the official thinking is about how these problems may be tackled in the following year and especially via policies in the Budget that is to follow. However, it is often the case that the Budget does not address these problems, or not in the way that may be presented in the survey.

Real rate of growth

The Economic Survey 2016-17 needs to ask and answer some crucial questions about the year that has just passed in which a major economic event occurred, namely, demonetisation. Field reports suggest that the wholesale trade is even now down by 20% to 30% which suggests that retail demand is still slack two and a half months after demonetisation was announced. Immediately after the announcement, wholesale trade was reported to have declined by anywhere between 60% to 80%. Such a sharp decline in trade and other reports from the field from industry suggest that the economy is facing recessionary conditions. Output and investment are reported to have contracted and unemployment has increased especially in the unorganised sector.

While the organised sector is less affected the unorganised sector has been hit badly. The latter employs 94% of the workforce and produces about 45% of the output.

Yet, the Economic Survey projects a growth rate for 2016-17 of 6.5%. How is this arrived at if there has been negative growth in large parts of the economy since November 2016? The survey itself admits that the unorganised sector data are not directly captured in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) because it does not directly measure this sector's contribution and assumes it to be in proportion to that in the organised sector. Demonetisation has led to a delinking of the growth rates of the two sectors, so that IIP does not anymore reflect the growth rate of industry.

Under different assumptions – specifically about the impact on the organised and the unorganised sectors of the economy since November 2016 – it can be shown that the rate of growth of the economy would drop sharply from 7% pre November 2016 to about 2%, 0% or even negative for the year as a whole. Just how low the growth may be is hard to estimate at present due to the limited data available.

The problem is further compounded when it comes to predicting the rate of growth for the coming year, 2017-18. What should the projection be based on? The average of the previous year (2016-17) or the trend from November 2016 when the big shock to the economy was delivered? The average of

very disparate numbers is not the representative number to base one's projection. Further, the conditions that prevailed before November 2016 were very different from those after that month. Hence they are no more relevant for projecting the numbers.

Irreversibilities have set in

It is suggested by the survey that the situation of the economy would reverse quickly once cash shortage is over in a few months' time. However, it is not taking into account the irreversibilities that the economy encounters whenever there is a large shock. An economy is about society and people and not about some science experiment where one can replicate conditions for an experiment.

When employment falls, profits fall and investments are cut back. That is when irreversibilities arise. After November 8, 2016, demand was hit all round, production slowed down, profits fell and all of that led to unemployment and decline in investments which leads to long-term effects. Even if the note shortage becomes less, as it is bound to happen, demand does not revive on its own and the cycle does not reverse.

Clearly, the government is not willing to admit (for political reasons) that there has been major pain in the economy and therefore, it is still talking of a 6.5-7.5% rate of growth. This means that it is planning on the basis of incorrect data. If the Budget is also based on these incorrect figures and understanding of what is happening in the economy, there will be serious consequences for the economy. It also implies that the government will not do what is required to be done to overcome the current problems. This could further deepen the recession in the economy

and make the problem worse.

A conservative fiscal stance

The survey has talked of a cautious fiscal stance. What is forgotten is that in 2008, when the economy was hit by the global recession, what saved the day for India was a rapid increase in the fiscal deficit and massive expenditures in rural areas under various schemes. India was not alone in that. All the countries in the world boosted their public expenditures by boosting the deficit in the budget. China in fact went in for a \$600 billion rural infrastructure programme and so on. In the present situation of recessionary conditions, a cautious stance would lead to a decline in demand since tax revenue would not be buoyant given the slowdown in the economy.

The survey also talks of giving tax concessions to the corporates by accelerating the promised cut in their tax rates. There has also been talk of giving concessions to the middle class and the rich by lowering income tax rates. These would lead to a fall in the tax collection in the present situation of slowdown. This would mean that either the fiscal deficit would rise or there would be cut back in expenditures. The former is ruled out by the survey under the rubric of a fiscally conservative stance and the latter can only deepen recessionary conditions. The Budget therefore is in a pincer. The government has to make bold choices but the survey rules that out.

The black economy, if tackled effectively, could have given additional resources for the Budget. However, the Survey does not give a lead as to how that could happen. Demonetisation has not managed to unearth any major chunk of the black economy or make it come into the formal economy.

The Survey suggests that stamp duties should be lowered in the hope that black income generation in real estate would decline. However, this is based on the false premise that real estate generates black income. Actually, it circulates black money since the incomes earned here are in the nature of 'transfer incomes' where assets change hand and production does not take place. Analytically, this is not understood in the Survey so lowering of stamp duties would not deter black income generation in real estate.

How long will the pain last?

The pain related to cash shortage maybe getting less (although rural areas are still hurting more) but the bigger problem now is the recession. The public is curious to know how much black money demonetisation unearthed but the government is not providing any answer to this as yet. The irony is that those who never generated black incomes have faced all the pain while those who generate black incomes and have black money have escaped through various devices. They have largely managed to recycle their old notes into new notes in connivance with the corrupt in the system. No wonder according to unofficial reports, most of the old notes have come back into the banking system.

It also needs to be kept in mind that cash does not automatically mean black money. A lot of cash is used in the white economy for purposes of transactions, working capital by businesses and also as precautionary motive for any illness or an emergency. The banks cannot declare the money deposited with them as black. The income tax department has to do that but after following procedures. They can ask for the source of the cash deposited in a bank and that may lead to some

past concealed income but it is usually difficult to establish that.

Often, the cash is explained away by businesses as working capital. If the money is in the account of poor persons and if they claim it to be their money, there is little that the income tax officer can do. Most of these sums are so small that they would be below the taxable limit and not worth pursuing for the department. Those who have misused the accounts of the poor usually have them under their thumb so they cannot double cross without facing social consequences or losing their job. The cost would not be worth the double cross.

The survey does not lift the mist of confusion on the macro situation of the country and does not provide clarity on what happened due to the big shock to the economy on November 8, 2016. It is in a state of denial and that is what is creating a problem for the economy. The conservative fiscal stance being proposed will only lead to an aggravation of the problems confronting the economy. The government and the country are trapped because demonetisation was ill-advised. It does not check the black economy but the government pretends that it does. It is causing the Indian economy to slip into a recession and that is hurting everyone and especially the poor who had nothing to do with black income generation. But the pain of the marginalised (not captured by the Index of Industrial Production) is far greater than can be ameliorated by the few sops that are offered to them.

One needs to admit the problem to solve it and that is not forthcoming in the Economic Survey 2017.

-The Wire

Union Budget 2017-18

Delhi Solidarity Group

Following the ritual, Government of India presented its budget with much fanfare, claiming it to be pro-poor, but the larger question that looms is whether it will really change the lives of the marginalized sections of the society. For a country like India which is 'democratic, socialist, sovereign, republic' working towards the 'welfare' of its citizens, one, either out of innocence or honest belief, tends to assume that the key areas of priority for the government will be social sector, health, education and livelihood. One might also assume that a substantial proportion of the budget shall be allocated to the aforementioned sectors. However, on a close analysis of budget presented by the Finance Minister on 1st February 2017, despite rushing the budget presentation to February for reasons they only know, one cannot help but be disappointed in the way the wealth of this country is being put to use. The budget has not only failed to give due share to the Dalits, Adivasis, working class, women and children but has also failed to take concrete steps to resolve the economic crisis prevalent in the primary sector of the economy, i.e., agriculture. Instead of providing the farmers with substantial financial relief, they have been left in a world of false hopes and promises. Also, education and health have not been provided with the kind of attention they badly need.

For a common person looking at the budget, it is very important to warn beforehand that the absolute increase in the amount of money allocated

cannot be taken as the metric for analysis. This increase must be compared with the allocations made in the previous few years and should also be evaluated in comparison to the total GDP growth that has been recorded. What must also be kept in mind is that whether the government has been able to utilize the budget of the previous year that was at its disposal. Presence of unutilized budget, especially in the categories of social sectors like rural development, health, education, etc. signals towards government's failure to channelize the money into these sectors even after huge promises of implementing thousands of schemes are made in the Parliament during the budget presentation.

To understand this further, we shall have a small tour of the Economic Survey and the budget presented on 1st February 2017 in the Parliament.

Economic Survey

In this document, presented in the Parliament on 31st January, several changes have been made.

1. In the Economic Survey 2016-17, the terms Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been removed. It clearly points to the priorities of the present ruling dispensation which perhaps want to convey that indicators of development of SC and ST communities are no more the indicators for national development, all the while claiming that their budget is pro-poor one.

2. Universal Basic Income: Paragraph 9.1 states that “..... ‘wiping every tear from every eye’ is about a lot more than being able to imbibe a few calories. And the Mahatma understood that better, deeper, and earlier than all the Marxists, market messiahs, materialists and behaviouralists. He intuited that it is also about dignity, invulnerability, self-control and freedom, and mental and psychological unburdening.” Para 9.2 states that “..... UBI has three components: universality, unconditionality, and agency (by providing support in the form of cash transfers to respect, not dictate, recipients’ choices).” The concept of UBI might have been derived from the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi. However, the ‘tear’ mentioned in the survey report does not distinguish between tears of Rohith Vemula and tears of Vijay Mallya; the former’s scholarship was stopped and then he was forced to commit suicide whereas the latter was awarded by exonerating him of the corporate crime of willful defaulting, by the way of loan waiver. There are tears of other people that don’t count to the present ruling dispensation such as the tears of the people related to those killed and injured in arbitrary firing at Hazaribagh recently.
3. Section 2: One India: Paragraph 11.37 states that “The GST was justly touted as leading to the creation of One Tax, One Market, One India. But it is worth reflecting how far India is from that ideal. Indian states have levied any number of charges on goods that hinder free trade in

India—octroi duties, entry taxes, Central Sales Tax (CST) to name a few. The most egregious example of levying charges of services coming from other states is the cross-state power surcharge that raises the cost of manufacturing, fragments the Indian power market and sustains inefficient cross-subsidization of power within states.....” Several Constitutional references have been cited. However, nowhere the documents mention, let alone explain, about mechanisms to tackle the heavily underplayed problem- Revenue Foregone to corporate sector, tax exemption to Stock Exchanges, etc.

4. In the chapter 11 named “One Economic India: For Goods and in the Eyes of the Constitution” there are some interesting facts. It starts with the quotation of Ravindranth Tagore, “Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls.” Thereafter, paragraph 11.1 states, “When, several decades ago, an earnest Raj Kapoor famously sang “Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani,” (“Still, my heart is Indian”), he was expressing what in hindsight appears to be a deep insight on comparative national development.” Paragraph 11.51 states that “But there is a third and much weaker standard by which Indian rules should be assessed: the WTO. The WTO has a membership of 164 countries with widely varying income levels and political systems: for example, the ratio of per capita GDP of the richest countries is more than 60 times that of the poorest, while the corresponding ratio within India is less than 5.” Paragraph 11.52 states that “If that is reasonable, then

the comparison between WTO rules and the provisions of the Constitution is not inappropriate.” The language used in Economic Survey of India can be better judged by the readers themselves.

The Economic Survey has gone beyond principles of Democracy, Economics, Assyriology (principle and theory of language), Constitution, and everything is interpreted in connivance with corporate world and according to the will and wishes of Corporate World. Industries are necessary, but industrializing cannot mean cultivating human values for the industrialists to be exploited for profits. Industries are for the collective development of mankind and mankind can’t be forced to sacrifice their lives for industrialists. The current dispensation’s will and wish reflected in the Economic Survey of India 2016-17 clearly indicates appropriation of principles in favor of corporate world throwing public interest to winds.

Budget

1. SC and ST Allocations: Deviating from the established norm of presenting Plan and Non-Plan components separately, they are merged in the Budget of 2017-18. This will affect allocation for SC/ST meaning, allocation for them is also to be merged or mingled and reflected in the expenditure of establishments. In previous budgets, allocations for SC/ST was mandated for programs covered for plan period only and expenditure of establishments after the expiry of plan period were booked under Non-Plan heads. Thereby, in the figures given in the budget 2017-18, population proportionate allocation

for SC/ST is applicable in total budget of Union of India. It is also important to note the purpose for which notions assigned to the term “Plan” and “Non-Plan”, in the context of SC/ST is abandoned henceforth from this budget. Such being the underhand mathematical jugglery, we shall see the allocations made under Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan to and Tribal Sub-Plan.

Total Budget Size - Rs. 21, 47,000 Cr

Population of SC- 16.6% (Census 2011)

Allocation made under Special Component Plan- Rs. 52,393 Cr

In the previous year 2016-17 allocation was Rs. 38,338 Cr in the plan budget only.

Due Share of SC in total budget including all sorts of expenditure: Rs. 3, 56,402 Cr.

Shortage of allocation for SC in the budgetary allocation: Rs. 3, 04,009 Cr.

So, this is a government that had named its digital payment application as BHIM (BHARAT INTERFACE FOR MONEY). This whatsoever BHIM has no link with Dr.Ambedkar; a mere camouflage allocates 14.7% of what it is mandated to allocate. Not

even 16.6% of the actual 16.6% (Rs.3, 56,402 Cr) it did allocate. Modi might have shed tears on the perpetrating killing on Rohith Vemula but no pretence of even shedding tears for such abysmal allocation.

Population of ST: 8.6% (Census 2011)

Allocation made under Tribal Sub-Plan: Rs. 31,920 Cr

In previous year 2016-17 allocation for ST was Rs. 24,000 Cr in Plan budget.

Due Share of ST in total budget including all sorts of expenditure: Rs. 1, 84,642 Cr

Shortage of allocation for ST in the budgetary allocation: Rs. 1, 52,722 Cr

A government whose parent organization runs schools for *Vanvaasis* (RSS version of pronouncement of ST) with unknown funds cannot even allocate the meager 8.6% of the funds it is supposed to. The allocation made is mere 17.3% of the actual allocation it is mandated to allocate (1, 84, 642 Cr). One question that forcefully comes to our mind is - does such meager allocations have anything to do with successful running of unaccounted *VanvaasiKalyanAsharams*?

So, the total amount denied to SC and ST communities is Rs. 4, 56,731 Cr. (Table 1)

Merging contents and redefining them in Economic survey of India and Budget is another game plan to complicate and make people difficult to understand the riddles of budget. The *Jumla* of Demonetization, Skill India, Startup India, Shining India, Make in India, and many more proved noting but waste of human capital of the country. Now these *Jumla* have been well incorporated into the Economy and Budget terminologies.

2. Allocation to Fisheries: We have seen the gross injustice in allocations to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Now, it is the turn of Fisheries. Before this we have to understand one crucial similarity between members of Scheduled Tribes and Fisher folk. Members of Scheduled Tribes and Fisher folk depend almost solely on Forest and Sea produce, respectively. We are seeing the continued attack on forests in the name of mining despite strong Constitutional and Legislative checks in place. The abysmal situation of granting Forest Rights coupled with utter dis-regard for PESA and Samata judgment is rendering the lives of Tribals much more vulnerable. Now, with the advent of ‘Ocean Grab’ the situation of fisher folk is taking

Table 1

S . No	Total Budget (Rs. in crores)	Community	Population Percentage	Allocations to be made (in crores) (%)	Actual Allocations Rs. in Cr	Shortfall (Rs. in Cr)
1	21,47,000	Scheduled Castes	16.6	3,56,402	52,393 (2.44%)	3,04,009
2	21,47,000	Scheduled Tribes	8.6	1,84,642	31,920 (1.49%)	1,52,722
	Total		25.2	5,41,044	84,313 (3.93%)	4,56,731

the same trajectory. The grand ambitious plans such as Sagaramala, the proliferating Nuclear Power Plants, the Industrial Corridors that are crisscrossing mainland India, proposed Coastal Economic Zones, Coastal Corridors, huge projects such as PCPIR will, if materialize, eventually displace millions of fisher folk. That being the precarious situation, one would expect the government to make alternate arrangements for the displaced to lead a dignified life. Alas! As the following numbers show that is not the case. Forget increasing the budget allocation, they have in fact decreased the allocation for Fisheries. The following is the comparison table for allocations to fisheries in last few years. The question that has to be asked is for who benefits from fisher folk's loss? (Table 2)

The above table tells us that in previous years even the meager amounts allotted were not spent. It is estimated that some 360 million people live in coastal areas. Though not everyone living in coastal area

is dependent on fishing majority of them are dependent on fishing. As mentioned above with such massive threat of displacement looming over the inhabitants of coastal regions of India, one would earnestly expect increase in the allocations. What fisher community got in fact is reduction!

3. Handloom Sector: We have seen what happened with allocation to deprived sections. Another deprived section which generally goes unnoticed is the community of handloom weavers. We all like to romanticize the exoticness of the handloom products and well-off even find a sense of guilt reduction in purchasing exotic handloom products. However, what generally as a matter of fact escapes the view of many of urban well-off Handloom purchasers is the abysmal working conditions and the marginality of their existence owing to the cheap products produced by power looms. It is ironic that when we are talking about the contradiction between handloom and power loom we have an overarching ministry

called Ministry of Textiles which supposedly takes care of both Handloom and Power Loom. An estimate of 4.3 million people are engaged in Handloom sector. The following table clearly explains the attention Handloom as a sector receives when we compare with the overarching ministry of Textiles. (Table 3)

The above table clearly shows the decreased funding to Handlooms all the while when the funding to Ministry of Textiles has increased. There is 35.5% increase in allocation to Textile ministry where as there is 15% decrease in allocation to handloom sector. Simple math tells us that Handloom is under-allocated by 37.2% or 358 Cr on proportionate basis.

We have seen the pattern where each and every sector we have touched by now is under-allocated. On the other hand the total budget has increased. Then the natural question is where is the increased amount going to? Looking into Revenue and Expenditure statement

Table 2

Allocation for Fisheries Sector and entire Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy & Fisheries						
Year	Budget of Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries			Budget for Fisheries Sector		
	Plan	Non-Plan	Total	Plan	Non-Plan	Total
Budget 2014-2015	2174	92.3	2266.3	422.56	38.74	461.30
Budget 2015-2016	1491.14	94.29	1585.43	410.69	40.45	451.14
Expenditure 2015-16			1410.12			449.97
Budget 2016-17	1600	281.51	1881.51	450	125.34	575.34
Budget 2017-18			2371.00			549.13

Table 3

Budget Allocation for Handloom Sector 2016-17						
Year	Textile Ministry			Total Handloom		
	Plan	Non Plan	Total	Plan	Non Plan	Total
Budget 2014-15 BE	4831	866.4	5697	242	72.51	314.5
Budget 2015-16 BE	3523	751.5	4275	360	80	440
Budget 2016-17 BE	3350	1245	4595	612	98	710
Budget 2017-18 BE			6227			604

tells us a lot. The following is the table of Revenue and Expenditure for the past few years.

4. Trend in GDP, Budget, Expenditure and other liabilities:

One can see the trends of indicators to justify the economic development and its impact observed in the society. (Table 4) One thing that immediately catches our eyeballs in the above table is expenditure always outnumbering Revenue. The following natural question is why do we always lack in raising required Revenue? The answer to this question lies in the same table. A glance at Column 5 explains a lot. The revenue forgone, which includes Corporate tax incentives, Corporate tax waivers, Import Tax incentives and Waiver, Customs duty incentives and waivers, has been increasing along with the fiscal deficit. In fact, the vicious cycle is so visible here. The huge revenue forgone compels us to borrow and the interest payments

over the borrowings along with revenue forgone further widen the fiscal deficit which again compels us to new borrowing. If this is to continue, what we will have is unending vicious debt cycle. Who benefits from this debt?? The answer lies in who are siphoning off the benefits from Revenue Forgone. It is so clear that they are Corporates and Well-off sections.... Then glaring question is if it is not privatizing public good and socializing private debt, what else it can be??

5. Allocation for Backward Classes and DNT/Nomadic Tribes by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

There is no clear identifiable figures at this stage. The clear figure of allocation can be traced out from Detailed Demands for Grants. DNT and Nomadic Tribes are classified within Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. The allocation

for SC/ST is available. For OBC it is not given in detail. Information on budget allocation available for the year 2017-18 is as follows:

1. National Fellowship for Other Backward Classes and Economically Backward Classes Rs. 40.00 Cr
2. Free Coaching for SC and OBC Students Rs. 25.00 Cr
3. National Overseas Scholarships for OBCs Rs. 4.30 Cr
4. National Commission for Backward Classes Rs. 5.50 Cr
5. National Commission for Denotified Tribes Rs. 2.50 Cr
6. Schemes for Backward Class Rs. 1193.00 Cr
7. Scheme for Development of Denotified Nomadic Tribes Rs. 6.00 Cr
8. Update with more insight will be made available within 2-3 days

–This brief update is prepared by Umesh Babu, Rohit Gutta, Anirudh Rajan, PMARC

Table 4

Year	Budget		GDP - Advance Estimate	Revenue Foregone	Interest Payment	Fiscal Deficit = Borrowing
	Estimate	Expenditure				
2008-09 BE	7,50,884	8,83,956	53,21,753	4,58,516	1,90,807	1,33,287
2009-10 BE	10,20,838	10,24,487	61,64,178	4,82,432	2,25,511	4,00,996
2010-11 BE	11,08,749	11,97,328	78,77,947	4,59,705	2,48,664	3,81,408
2011-12 BE	12,57,729	13,04,365	89,12,179	5,33,583	2,67,986	4,12,817
2012-13 BE	14,90,925	14,10,372	100,28,118	5,66,235	3,19,759	5,13,590
2013-14 BE	16,65,297	15,59,447	113,55,073	5,72,923	3,70,684	5,42,499
2014-15 BE	17,94,892	16,63,673	126,53,762	5,89,285	4,27,011	5,31,177
2015-16 BE	17,77,477	17,90,783	135,67,192	6,11,128	4,56,145	5,55,649
2016-17 BE	19,78,060		150,65,010	3,95,192	4,92,670	5,33,904
2017-18 BE	21,47,000		168,47,455		523078	5,46,532

Political Party Funding through Electoral Bonds - Backward Leap to the Era of Secrecy

Venkatesh Nayak

While presenting the budget in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) the Hon'ble Finance Minister made some announcements about the manner in which he sought to make donations to political parties more transparent. If the proposals to amend the relevant laws are approved by Parliament, from April 2017 onwards, donations in cash can be made up to Rs. 2,000 only by any person; payments of higher value will be permitted only through cheques or digital mode and donors will be able to buy 'electoral bonds' that will be sold through commercial banks under the regulations made by the Reserve Bank of India.

An analysis of what the Government is proposing and what it means for transparency of political party funding is given below for readers to understand better without having to trawl through the Finance Bill, 2017. In short, if the amendments are approved by Parliament, political party funding is likely to become largely opaque in future.

The extract from the speech of the Hon'ble Finance Minister made in the Lok Sabha on the subject of transparency of electoral funding is reproduced word for word below:

“Transparency in Electoral Funding

164. India is the world's largest democracy. Political parties are an essential ingredient of a multi-party Parliamentary democracy. Even 70 years after Independence, the country has not been able to

evolve a transparent method of funding political parties which is vital to the system of free and fair elections. An attempt was made in the past by amending the provisions of the Representation of Peoples Act, the Companies Act and the Income Tax Act to incentivise donations by individuals, partnership firms, HUFs and companies to political parties. Both the donor and the donee were granted exemption from payment of tax if the accounts were transparently maintained and returns were filed with the competent authorities. Additionally, a list of donors who contributed more than `20,000/- to any party in cash or cheque is required to be maintained. The situation has only marginally improved since these provisions were brought into force. Political parties continue to receive most of their funds through anonymous donations which are shown in cash.

165. An effort, therefore, requires to be made to cleanse the system of political funding in India. Donors have also expressed reluctance in donating by cheque or other transparent methods as it would disclose their identity and entail adverse consequences. I, therefore, propose the following scheme as an effort to cleanse the system of funding of political parties:

a) In accordance with the suggestion made by the Election Commission, the maximum amount of cash donation that a political party can receive will be `2000/- from one person.

b) Political parties will be entitled to receive donations by cheque or digital mode from their donors.

c) As an additional step, an amendment is being proposed to the Reserve Bank of India Act to enable the issuance of electoral bonds in accordance with a scheme that the Government of India would frame in this regard. Under this scheme, a donor could purchase bonds from authorised banks against cheque and digital payments only. They shall be redeemable only in the designated account of a registered political party. These bonds will be redeemable within the prescribed time limit from issuance of bond.

d) Every political party would have to file its return within the time prescribed in accordance with the provision of the Income-tax Act.

Needless to say that the existing exemption to the political parties from payment of income-tax would be available only subject to the fulfilment of these conditions. This reform will bring about greater transparency and accountability in political funding, while preventing future generation of black money.”

The sub-heading related to political party funding and the last sentence of this section of the speech indicate that the moves proposed are for greater transparency in political party funding.

What amendments to which law are actually being proposed?

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives the Finance Bill proposes to amend the following laws in the following manner. The extracts from the Finance Bill are reproduced below along with a brief explanation of what they imply:

I. AMENDMENTS TO THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA ACT, 1934

“133. The provisions of this Part shall come into force on the 1st day of April, 2017.

134. In the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, in section 31, after sub-section (2), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely: “(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, the Central Government may authorise any scheduled bank to issue electoral bond.

Explanation. : For the purposes of this sub-section, “electoral bond” means a bond issued by any scheduled bank under the scheme as may be notified by the Central Government.”.

In other words, the RBI Act is sought to be amended to allow for the issuance of electoral bonds that individuals and companies can buy through commercial banks.

II. RELEVANT AMENDMENTS TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961

“11. In section 13A of the Income-tax Act, with effect from the 1st day of April, 2018,—

(I) in the first proviso,—

(i) in clause (b),—

(A) after the words “such voluntary contribution”, the words “other than contribution by way of electoral bond” shall be inserted;

(B) the word “and” occurring at the end shall be omitted;

(ii) in clause (c), the word “; and” shall be inserted at the end;

(iii) after clause (c), the following clause shall be inserted, namely: ‘(d) no donation exceeding two thousand rupees is received by such political party otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or an account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through electoral bond.

Explanation.: For the purposes of this proviso, “electoral bond” means a bond referred to in the Explanation to sub-section (3) of section 31 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.’;

(II) after the second proviso, the following proviso shall be inserted, namely: “Provided also that such political party furnishes a return of income for the previous year in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (4B) of section 139 on or before the due date under that section.”. [emphasis supplied]

Section 13A of the IT Act, 1961 relates to special provisions regarding the income reported by political parties registered with or recognised by the Election Commission of India. Section 139(4B) of the IT Act contains the reporting requirement for political parties.

In simpler terms, the IT Act is sought to be amended to exclude donations received by these political parties through “electoral bonds from being reported to the IT Department every year in order for them to continue to avail the exemption from paying income tax.

III. AMENDMENTS TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT, 1951

“135. The provisions of this Part shall come into force on the 1st day of April, 2017.

136. In the Representation of the People Act, 1951, in section 29C, in sub-section (1), the following shall be inserted, namely:—

‘Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall apply to the contributions received by way of an electoral bond.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this sub-section, “electoral bond” means a bond referred to in the Explanation to sub-section (3) of section 31 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.”

Section 29C of the RP Act, 1951 for which the NDA Government claims credit during the Vajpayee-era requires all recognised national and State level political parties to make annual declarations of contributions received from individuals and companies in excess of Rs. 20,000/- The Election Commission of India publicises the contribution reports of recognised national political parties as well as those of the recognised State political parties on its website as and when it receives them. The Association for Democratic Reforms has recently disseminated a detailed analysis of the donor reports submitted by political parties for the financial year 2015-16.

In other words, the import of the amendments proposed to the RP Act, 1951 is that political parties will not be required to disclose the identity of individuals and companies who make donations through electoral bonds bought from the commercial

banks.

The Finance Bill contains the following justifications for amending these three laws:

“Clauses 133 and 134 of the Bill seek to amend section 31 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 relating to issue of demand bills and notes.

It is proposed to insert a new sub-section (3) to the said section so as to provide that the Central Government may authorise any scheduled bank to issue electoral bond as referred to in the proposed clause (d) of the first proviso to section 13A of the Income-tax Act.

It is also proposed to define the expression “electoral bond”.

This amendment is consequential in nature.

This amendment will come into force from 1st April, 2017.”

Justification for amending the IT Act:

“Clause 11 of the Bill seeks to amend section 13A of the Income-tax Act relating to special provision relating to incomes of political parties...

It is proposed to amend the said section so as to provide, inter alia, that political party shall be eligible for exemption of income-tax under section 13A if,—

(i) no donation exceeding two thousand rupees is received otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or an account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system

through a bank account or through electoral bond;

(ii) it furnishes a return of income for the previous year in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (4B) of section 139 on or before the due date as per section 139.

It is further proposed to provide that any contributions received by way of electoral bond shall be excluded from reporting as per clause (b) of said section.

It is also proposed to define the expression “electoral bond”.

These amendments will take effect from 1st April, 2018 and will, accordingly, apply in relation to the assessment year 2018-2019 and subsequent years.”

Justification for amending the RPA Act:

“Clauses 135 and 136 of the Bill seek to amend section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 relating to declaration of donation received by the political parties.

Sub-section (3) of section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, inter alia, provides that every political party shall furnish a report to the Election Commission with regard to the details of contributions received by it in excess of twenty thousand rupees from any person in order to avail the income-tax relief as per the provisions of Income-tax Act, 1961.

It is proposed to provide that the contributions received by way of “electoral bond” shall be excluded from the scope of sub-section (3) of section 29C of the said Act. It is also proposed to define the

term “electoral bond” which is consequential in nature.

This amendment will take effect from 1st April, 2017.”

If approved by Parliament, the combined effect of the amendments to the RBI Act, the IT Act and the RP Act is likely to be as follows:

- 1) Many political parties are likely to strive to receive cash donations below Rs. 2,000 only. Thanks to Section 29C of the RP Act which applies to donations of Rs. 20,000 or above only, these will not be required to be reported to the IT Department or to the Election Commission of India.
- 2) As donations received through electoral bonds are exempt from being included in the annual reports of political parties to the IT Department or the Election Commission of India, these amounts will also not be reported.
- 3) Only such contributions received about Rs. 20,000 through cheques or digital mode of payment will be required to be reported to the IT Department and the Election Commission of India.

So the combined effect of the amendments is that political parties will be under no obligation to disclose any donation or contribution that they receive at all, unless it is made electronically or through cheques.

Keeping the Rajya Sabha out of the decision-making loop

The process through which these changes are proposed to be made are also hugely problematic. The Finance Bill is a Money Bill within the meaning of that term under Article 109 of the Constitution.

Times are a-Hanging

Ram Puniyani

Rajya Sabha being the Upper House has no powers to vote on make any amendments in money Bills. However the definition of "Money Bill" as provided in Article 110 of the Constitution is crystal clear. It cannot and must not include matters other than those relating to the imposition of taxes or matters related to the Consolidated Fund of India. The amendments proposed to the RBI Act, the IT Act and the RP Act clearly do not fall within this criteria. So once again the Government is trying to bulldoze amendments to other laws through legislation labelled 'money bill to prevent any actionable dissent in the Rajya Sabha. The political parties connived to a similar action in 2016 when the Foreign Contribution Act was amended to permit political parties to receive donations from Indian subsidiaries of MNCs. That proposal was also pushed through a Finance Bill. This is grave constitutional impropriety to say the very least and seems to be becoming a habit.

Is this a step forward in political party funding or a leap backward into the era of secrecy ordained by law (and not absence of a law as was the case earlier)?

As political parties are refusing to be covered under *The Right to Information Act* despite a June 2013 order of the Central Information Commission, citizens will not be able to access information about political funding through that channel either. So while the regulating agencies like the IT Department and the Election Commission are deprived of their powers to make political party funding transparent, citizens will also not have any means to find out which party has collected how much money and from whom. The entire exercise of demonetisation is also not likely to help bring in any transparency in the funding of political parties.

As we pass the republic day many questions haunt our mind. What has been the direction of our politics in last few decades, does it conform to what was expected of our Republic as outlined in our Constitution? Are we living up to the dreams and visions of the freedom fighters and the founding fathers of India?

What we need to recall is that Indian Republic came to become one through the long period of struggle against the colonial powers, the British rule.. Those participating in the struggle were people of all religions, all regions; women and men both. The movement itself was founded on the principles of equality and justice. While those who were part of the upcoming India, the industrialists, the workers, the educated classes, the peasants, the Adivasis, and dalits, aspired for the Republic based on secularism and democracy. All these sections had the longing for the modern values of liberty, equality and fraternity, away from the prevailing feudal values of birth-based hierarchy of caste and gender.

These sections were the mainstream of the anti-colonial movement, the movement for 'India as the nation in the making'. In contrast sections of feudal elements, Kings and landlords were opposed to the values of equality; they threw up the politics of feudal values, couched in the language of religion. In contrast to 'India as the nation in the making' they wanted to build a Muslim Nation or a Hindu nation. For them glorification of the past and its norms were the central point of

their effort to preserve their feudal social and political privileges. They kept aloof from freedom movement and helped the British policy of 'Divide and rule'; this is what led to the tragic partition of the country in to Pakistan in the name of Islam and India as a secular democratic state.

Indian Constitution is the core of Indian republic. It is the document which expresses the aspiration of national movement. The Constitution makers referred to most of the modern constitutions of the world and came up with this document, calling us as 'India that is Bharat' and its directive principles and fundamental rights outlined the rights and duties of citizens and of the state. Lately its directive principles and fundamental rights have come to be questioned. During last four decades many a basic tenets of the Republic are being challenged.

The first major value of the republic which came to be criticized is the one related to pluralism, diversity and secularism. Globally right wing politics has been asserting itself; the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini was the first major indication that vested interests are going to use the cover of religion for retrograde-pre-industrial political values. With the demise of Soviet Socialist states and the emergence of US as the sole super power, globally the politics started being asserted around identity issues particularly identity of religion. This politics is built to undermine liberal-democratic ethos globally and undermines the essence of democracy.

As such the decade of 1980s has been a major turning point in the history of mankind. From the early decades of twentieth century the path leading to values of equal rights of citizens were coming up. Inspired by the Soviet Revolution many a countries came forward to put an end to the feudal values, the values prevalent at the times of kingdoms. While the language was that of socialism, the agenda was that of ending landlordism and promoting the industries with the assistance of the state. China, Vietnam, Cuba being the major examples. In India the inspiration of Socialism guided the state policies to bring in public sector, which in turn promoted creation of vast number of jobs paving the way for participation of dalits, women and Adivasis in particular in the so far forbidden public space, It opened up the space for vast industrial and educational development of the country, this is what gave an edge of India as a major economic power in times to come.

Initial three decades of the Indian republic were dominated by the issues of the society; the problems of the downtrodden were on the center stage. Apart from industrial production, green revolution and white revolution also lifted the country from a backward country to frontline economies in the World. During these decades the republic focused mainly on the libertarian values, equity and dignity for all. The fundamental rights and directive principles were interpreted in the direction of concern for the rights of all citizens. During the decades of 1990, globally and nationwide, the globalization of economy led to the dominance of corporate sector leading to decline in the concern for rights of average people and

religious minorities in particular. While earlier India was sort of an example for marching towards a just society, during last two decades in particular, the march has been reversed. The factors reversing this march are within the republic as well as there are global factors affecting this march. Worldwide we see that those leaders having rightward shift, those influenced by narrow nationalism are coming up, it may be Italy, France, Turkey or even United States for that matter. It is precisely in these times that in India, the secular democratic republic is being challenged and Hindu nationalism is being asserted. This Hindu nationalism is pushing

back the policies of social welfare and the policies of affirmative action for weaker section, minorities in particular. Countries like Pakistan had been dominated by such politics all through. The matter of concern now is that Indian republic, which had shown the way to South Asia in matters of values of justice, is mired more in issues of identity. Policies which are giving more powers to corporate sector are becoming the norm and social control on these matters is coming down. It's time that we shift the focus back to issues of average people and weaker sections of society along with nurturing back pluralism and diversity.

(Contd. from Page 2)

Government in 2010-11. In this context, it needs to be recalled that the total social sector spending of the governments at the Centre and States combined is a mere 7% of the GDP, which is far lower than not only that of the developed countries (30% and more) but also other emerging market economies like the Latin American countries who spend as much as 18% of their GDP on the social sectors.

Coming to the total spending on agriculture (including Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Water Resources), while this too has seen some increase in absolute terms in this year's budget, in actual terms, it continues to languish at 0.98% of the GDP – even below the level of 1.07% of the GDP reached during Jaitley's first budget of 2014-15. And this for a sector, on which more than 50 per cent of our population depend on for their livelihoods. It is not that the government does not have funds; it

is a question of priorities. The total spending on all agriculture-related sectors is just Rs 1.65 lakh crore, which is just 30% of the total tax concessions and exemptions given to the rich this year! So much so for it being a pro-farmer budget!

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Why Viceroy Mountbatten fixed August 15, 1947 as the Independence Day

Rajindar Sachar

Some people have attributed Congress acceptance of partition of India in 1947 to the fact that “the persuasive voice of Gandhiji which made the working committee accept the partition and which but for Gandhiji’s intervention, working committee might not have approved”.

This is grossly unfair and presents a wrong picture of final efforts by Gandhiji to prevent partition throughout up to the final stages. In fact it is now well known that when Jinnah was insistent, Gandhiji made a last desperate attempt by asking Nehru and Patel to step aside and let Jinnah be the first prime minister of undivided India and also let him form his ministry, the way he likes, including the choice if he wants to have only Muslims league Ministers in the Central Cabinet and assuring him that the Congress will not object. One cannot say what Jinnah’s reactions would have been. But considering that Jinnah is on record on insisting that his house in Mumbai/Delhi be not declared evacuee property because he wished to have good Indo-Pak relations and would like to spend one month every year in India and continue his contacts, it would have been worthwhile trying. But this suggestion could not be given a concrete shape because Nehru and Patel forthrightly responded in negative to this proposal. So for many of us who were quite grown up at that time this reference to Gandhiji’s acceptance of partition is painful and does not represent true

factual position.

In fact a reference to the socialist leader, who was present in that final Congress working committee meeting, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia’s, book “Guilty Men of India’s Partition”, gives a correct factual position.

Dr. Lohia who along with Jayaprakash Narayan attended that meeting has written, “I should like especially to bring out two points that Gandhiji made at this meeting. He turned to Mr. Nehru and Sardar Patel in mild complaint that they had not informed him of the scheme of partition before committing themselves to it. Before Gandhiji could make out his point fully, Mr. Nehru intervened with some passion to say that he had kept him fully informed. On Mahatma Gandhi’s repeating that he did not know of the scheme of partition, Mr. Nehru slightly altered his earlier observation. He said that Noakhali was so far away and that, while he may not have described the details of the scheme he had broadly written of partition to Gandhiji.....I will accept Mahatma Gandhi’s version of the case, and not Mr. Nehru’s and who will not? One does not have to dismiss Mr. Nehru as a liar. All that is at issue here is whether Mahatma Gandhi knew of the scheme of partition before Mr. Nehru and Sardar Patel had committed themselves to it. It would not do for Mr. Nehru to publish vague letters which he might have written to Mahatma Gandhi doling

out hypothetical and insubstantial information. There was definitely a hole in the corner aspect of this business. Mr. Nehru and Sardar Patel had obviously between themselves decided that it would be best not to scare Gandhiji away before the deed was definitely resolved upon. Keeping turned towards Messrs Nehru and Patel Gandhiji made his second point. He wanted the Congress party to honour the commitments made by its leaders. He would therefore ask the Congress to accept the principle of partition. After accepting the principle, the Congress should make a declaration concerning its execution. It should ask the British government and the Viceroy to step aside, once the Congress and the Muslim League had signified their acceptance of partition. The partitioning of the country should be carried out jointly by the Congress party and the Muslim League without the intervention of a third party. This was, I thought so at that time and still do, a grand tactical stroke. Much has been said about the saint having simultaneously been a tactician, but this fine and cunning proposal has, to my knowledge, not so far been put on record.....there was no need for anyone else to oppose the proposal. It was not considered. I am writing this to put record straight”.

Gandhiji anguish at the partition of the country was so unbearable that he refused to be in Delhi on 15th August – what nobility that the greatest fighter for the freedom of India refused to share this glory

and left Delhi to fight against the communal carnage taking place at Calcutta and to give solid assurance of safety to the Minorities.

There is another aspect which is not so publically commented, namely that though I accept that conditions in the country had reached a level that it was not possible to prevent partition, but yet we have not given sufficient thought to the fact that millions of death, most immeasurable destruction in the process of partition could have been averted if the leaders of the parties had shown statesmanship in carrying out the process of partition. It is well known that Prime Minister Attlee had given June 1948 as the date by which British government will leave India when Mountbatten was sent to India in March 1947.

Had this schedule been observed necessary and detailed arrangements for the safety of millions of population moving from both sides of India and Pakistan could have been made.

No doubt, pain, slaughters and mutual hatred would still have been there. But both the governments could have made safe arrangements for exchange of population and kept the government machinery intact for doing the needful. But no, it did not happen – and the reason was the unexpected unilateral announcement by Mountbatten in June 1947 that Independence Day would be on August 15th 1947, which left no time for any adequate and safe arrangements to be made for such unprecedented large migration of population.

Of course now one knows why this sudden announcement by Mountbatten at a press conference in June 1947 fixing 15th August 1947 as Independence Day was made. The real reason was the vanity and self-glorification of Mountbatten, who had accepted the surrender of Japanese Navy on 15th August 1945, when he was the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command (SEAC), of Allied powers.

Our politicians were unfortunately too self-obsessed with ignorance and vanity and as a consequence kept ominous silence resulting in the death of millions and the destruction of massive property. Can history forgive them – I doubt very much.



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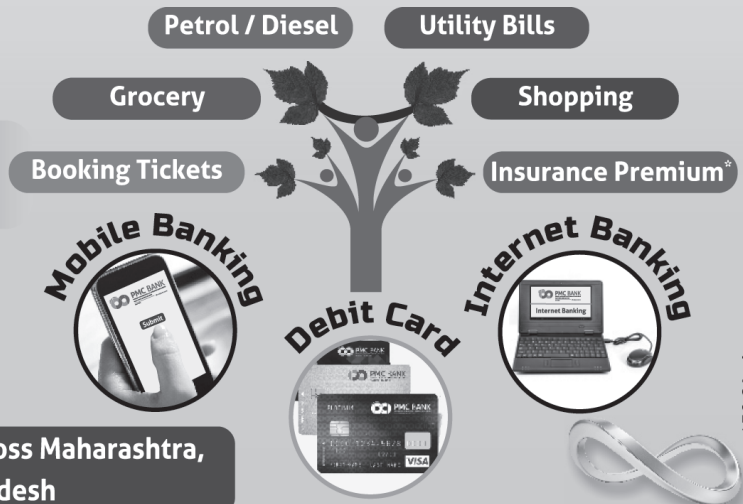


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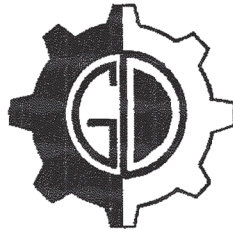
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Status quo budget
Kuldip Nayar

**Peace and friendship
ceremony at Wagha**
Saeeda Diep
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Politics no different in south

Politics in the South is no different from that of the North. The personality cult dominates in both. People go mad over the leaders they prefer and even go to the extent of self-immolating themselves in frenzy. The government has banned the practice but it has failed to stop it.

V.K. Sasikala in Tamil Nadu has become such a figure having been a close aide of former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa. Today, she is the general secretary of the AIADMK and the party has elected her as the leader of its legislature wing. The outgoing chief minister O. Panneerselvam was asked to put in his resignation. He was not even present where the decision was taken.

But the sudden turn of events in Tamil Nadu has sent everyone into a tizzy. Panneerselvam, the close confidant of the deceased chief minister, has come out strongly against Sasikala, accusing her of trying to usurp power. The swearing-in ceremony, which was to be held on Tuesday, seems to have been put off for the moment as the governor, apparently at the instance of Union Home Ministry, is dragging his feet.

Even otherwise, this is not the opportune moment for a change of guard in the state as verdict over

the disproportionate case against Sasikala and her mentor Jayalalithaa is awaited. The apex court has already indicated that a judgment will be delivered within a week. Whether she wins or loses, her stock is already waning.

As for Sasikala, she has been a long-standing friend of the former chief minister and by virtue of being close to Jayalalithaa she wielded enormous power. But she was never nominated by her as successor. Sasikala's claim to fame can be attributed to the proximity with Jayalalithaa. There were occasion when even the former chief minister was so annoyed with her friend that she choose to keep her away.

Considered part of the Mannargudi mafia, Sasikala rubbed people on the wrong side which had on occasions embarrassed Jayalalithaa. M. Natarajan, Sasikala's husband, was seen to be behind what she did and ultimately he was sidelined not only by Jayalalithaa but also Sasikala later. It is an open secret that Sasikala rose to accumulate so much wealth and was convicted, along with the former chief minister by the special court.

Whenever Jayalalitha was either in jail or during her brief period of wilderness owing to cases in the

court, it was Panneerselvam whom she depended on and foisted him on the chief minister's *gaddi*. And, as a loyal party worker, he had kept the seat warm all the time and vacated it when she would return.

Not only that, Panneerselvam revered Jayalalithaa so much that he would never sit on the chair which she occupied and instead would have another chair to sit. He had her photo in the chamber apart from the one he always carried in his pocket to express his blind loyalty to her. He became so dependable that every time there was a problem, Jayalalithaa chose him as the 'caretaker' chief minister.

Indeed, Jayalalithaa was so tall that nobody else came anywhere near. This was like Jawaharlal Nehru who, like a banyan tree, did not allow any other plant to grow. She, singlehandedly, carried the party and her government despite a strong opponent like the DMK with patriarch M. Karunanidhi, still in party chair.

The ruling BJP at the Centre has very little following of its own in Tamil Nadu because it is considered a party of the North. In the last Lok Sabha, the BJP won only one seat as compared to 37 by AIADMK.

The current turmoil in the state is an ideal situation for the BJP to make inroads but the 37 AIADMK Lok Sabha members are crucial for it to get a bill or motion passed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategy seems to be keeping a close watch. Maybe, the Supreme Court verdict against Sasikala would end the speculation one way or the other. However, it will be their endeavour to register their presence in the state. Sasikala's husband, Natarajan in confabulations with Congress leaders may also have triggered BJP president Amit Shah to take stock of the situation. He is said to be in favour of Panneerselvam, an affable man. The party hopes to ride on his shoulders to make a future presence in Tamil Nadu.

What seems to be going in favour of Panneerselvam is the public mood against Sasikala who was blamed for not allowing Jayalalithaa's niece to visit her ailing aunt. She has already formed a party and has threatened to divulge several secrets soon. People, however, resent all this because of Sasikala's antics to rise to the place where she is today.

All this is familiar in politics in the North. Nehru wanted her daughter Indira Gandhi to be his

successor. But Lal Bahadur Shastri was too popular to be ignored. Therefore, then Congress president K. Kamaraj settled matter when he announced that it would be Shastri first and Indira Gandhi later. Morarji Desai never accepted that and was the first to throw his hat in the ring after Nehru's death.

Indira Gandhi preferred to split the party than to accept Desai. She even sidelined Kamaraj after he had put her in the *gaddi*. Learning from the experience, she combined the posts of Prime Ministership and the party president. In the same way, the split in the AIADMK ranks seems imminent even though it is stage managed. The legislature members want Sasikala to be both party general secretary and the chief minister.

How this entire drama would unfold is difficult to say. But one thing certain is that Sasikala is a force to reckon with. So is Panneerselvam. Fortunately for the latter, the public is behind him. At least that is what it looks like at this juncture. However, the fate of Sasikala hinges on the court verdict. Sasikala is no Jayalalithaa and DMK is waiting in the wings.

Status quo budget

Howsoever prudent the budget, the fact remains that it encourages the status quo. Probably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government had UP elections in view. There is no new tax proposal, nor is there any long term plan of how to collect revenue. The dependence is on the indirect taxation and the curtailment of subsidies. There is nothing wrong

in resorting to such method. But the adverse effect is obvious.

Today's India is crying for jobs. Thousands and thousands of graduates have no employment. The private sector has not expanded enough to absorb them. Agriculture is growing up, as much as 4.1 per cent. But the graduates want a white

collar job, even though the salary is low. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley admits that the budget has not created jobs. But his defence is that if and when the economy picks up, the jobs will come.

It is no consolation to the college quitting students that the jobs would come sooner or later. Some relief

has been given to the small scale industry. But this is not adequate for giving fillip to the sector. The public enterprise, which was supposed to touch the commanding heights, has failed to do so because it is starved of funds.

The biggest drawback is that there is no planning. When the Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed the reins of government he wound up the Planning Commission. He did not believe in planning and thought it fit to spend as much money as required. There is nothing in such thinking except that there is no rhythm in expenditure. The government has felt the need but has left to the ministry concerned to plan its own expenditure.

There is still an obsession with us that deficit financing should be curtailed. When the inflation hovers around 3.5 per cent, there is no harm in spending more. The system can take it. Only by spending more, the country can have new enterprises, private and public.

What has weighed with the finance minister is fiscal management, not political maneuvering. That is the reason why the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has criticized the budget, arguing that expectations have not been met. Arun Jaitley was thinking of country's fiscal health, even at the risk of annoying those who control the Bhartiya Janata Party.

By bringing down the contributions to the political parties, from rupees twenty thousands to two thousands, he has risked the annoyance of all political parties, including the Leftists. But he had his eyes fixed on presenting a

balanced picture before the country. Therefore, touching the contribution to the political parties was essential.

Markets have heaved a sigh of relief with Sensex zooming by 486 points when the budget was announced. There is, however, no any long-term capital gain tax on shares trading as many feared. Still the government should have in its mind some upper limit. It cannot be free for all. True, there is no planning commission, nor a socialistic pattern of society, as India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had envisaged. But to have some contours for the economy are necessary.

To the common relief of the middle class, the government has proposed to halve the income tax to 5 per cent for those earning between rupees 2,50,000 and rupees 5,00,000 per annum. This will increase the number of tax payers because to hide money is also a great hazard. Many experienced it when they were exchanging the currency notes of rupees 500 and 1000. In the black market, they were sold at half the price. The Medicare scheme is noteworthy.

The government's decision to have the joint budget, the general and the railways, is a departure from the practice of many-many years. If I am not mistaken, this is the first time that joint budget has been presented before parliament since independence. If nothing else, it will keep railways out of politics.

Reducing corporate taxes for companies with an annual turnover up to Rs. 50 crore will benefit 96 per cent of companies. The idea of introducing electoral bonds is a novel one and possibly the first of its kind

in the world. This will streamline and cleanse electoral funding. Banning cash transactions over rupees 3 lakhs will allow the banks to focus on value based banking rather than purely transaction banking.

Abolition of Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) may streamline funds coming from abroad. Providing infrastructure status to affordable tenements and rationalization of area will make the housing sector more competitive. It is good that the builders who do not deliver the houses on time are punished through the obligation to give back part of money to the people who have given the advance.

Modi's government is half way from the general election. It has probably some prospective in view. But it is not visible and that is going to affect adversely the outcome of next general election. No doubt, he would like to have another term. His task has been made easy because Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi is not a formidable opponent.

The tragedy of reelecting Modi is strengthening the Hindutva. Those who take order from Nagpur, the headquarters of the RSS cannot serve the country which has secularism as its ethos. The constitution which rules the country gives equal right to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. The BJP cannot challenge the letter of the constitution because of the Supreme Court which recently held that religion or caste cannot be used for propaganda purpose during the elections. It is not the letter but the spirit which counts. The economy will have to change accordingly.

- Kuldip Nayar

Peace and friendship ceremony at Wagha

Saeeda Diep
Sandeep Pandey

The Indian government has decided to increase the number of seats at the stadium on the India-Pakistan Wagha-Attariborder, where a joint beating retreat ceremony is held every evening, from 5000 to over 13,000, at an estimated cost of Rs.24 crores.

Every evening, the Pakistan Rangers and Border Security Force (BSF) of India, practice a coordinated exercise and lower their flags before closing the gates on the respective sides. The drill starts with performance of aggressive brisk parade with knees raised up till nose height and slamming on the ground, staring at each other fiercely, ending with unwilling hand-shake and slamming the steel gates in mock aggression.

The ceremony attracts visitors from both sides and evokes nationalistic zeal. Patriotic slogans bordering on jingoism are raised on both sides.

Increased tension between India and Pakistan sours the emotions among people also. After the Indian surgical strike inside Pakistan on 29th September 2016, the Indian side of the border was closed to visitors for ten days.

In order to ease the tension and aggression displayed on the borders of India and Pakistan every day, Gujarat government has decided to develop the border with Pakistan as a tourist location and intends to start a 'seemadarshan' programme at Nada

Bet in Sui village.

Even though the two countries are officially sworn enemies, their people meet each other very warmly, showing that there might be aggression between the governments on the diplomatic front, people-to-people relation between India and Pakistan has inclined towards mutual acceptance, love and peace, which could bring the two nations closer if the governments had acted in a more innovative way.

The continued rift between India and Pakistan has enforced lifelong sufferings and miseries for people, whose families are now divided by the border. Families, who cannot be with their loved ones in times of happiness and grief, only because they happen to be on the other side of the disputed border, are the real victims of the conflict.

As peace activists from two sides, we propose a different model for the border programme.

- Instead of an aggressive military performance during the evening ceremony, there should be a ceremony with a flavour of peace and friendship between the citizens of two countries.
- People from both sides, who desire to meet each other, but cannot because of a very strict visa and permission from their respective Home/Interior Ministry (even after one has a visa from the other side) regime,

should be allowed to meet for an hour or two unrestrained.

- Proper checking can ensure that no disruptive element like the suicide attacker who caused a fatal incident on the Pakistani side on 2 November 2014 is allowed to slip in.
- To ensure that people return to their respective countries, one of their valued identities like the passport, National Identity Card or voter's card may be deposited as a security.
- People should be allowed to exchange harmless gifts and sweets.
- People should be able to perform impromptu joint short musical items.
- Similar activities should be allowed at Gujarat-Sindh, Rajasthan-Sindh, Punjab-Punjab, Kashmir-Kashmir borders.

The peace and friendship ceremony will have a calming effect on the relationship between the two countries. The degree of enmity between the two countries will be reduced, if people are allowed to meet freely.

The people share a common culture and speak the same language on either sides of border. Those, who came from the other side during partition, have separated families on the other side of the border, whom they have not been able to meet for

years and have been longing to meet. With the proposed initiative all such people will get a chance to freely meet their desired persons from the other side.

While exhibition of military aggression has been the way of flexing muscles by both India and Pakistan, its people can take pride in non-military achievements which they'll be too happy to share with the citizens of the other country.

Under the proposed programme students, artists, children, literary personalities, women, professionals and activists can undertake joint constructive activities. There can be joint cultural activities involving citizens of all ages. Long term friendships can be built.

The positive effects it will have on the consciousness of people undoubtedly outweighs any benefits which may accrue from the distorted mentality, which some of our citizens harbour for the other country.

We hope that if these peace and friendship points are opened up it will not only help lower the cost as compared to military performance expenditures, it will lead to an eventual situation where the two countries may open the border allowing free travel across without any requirement of a passport-visa regime. Before the border is opened up for people, they could be opened for free (unrestricted) trade, as a first step.

The arms race that the two countries are presently engaged in can only lead to destruction, with the possibility of a nuclear conflict. Both India and Pakistan should enter into arms control treaties like the US-

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Let us unite to wipe out communal hatred

A Communal Harmony Symposium was organized jointly by Socialist Party (India), Gujarat Mazdoor Panchayat and Self-employed Labour Organisation at Maniben Patel Hall in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak, Ahmedabad on 28th January 2017. Veteran Socialist leader, Pannalal Surana was in the chair. Ram Sagar Singh, activist of the CPI, urged the audience to shed lethargy and rise up for effective action to forge communal unity. Referring to the sliding strength of socialist and communist forces in Gujarat and in the industrial city of Ahmedabad in particular Singh exhorted the old as well as young people to join hands to reinvigorate progressive forces in the society.

Nippon Saha, who is a resident of Nagaland, said that Socialist Yuvajan Sabha is holding meetings for this purpose at various places in Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi, etc.

While delivering key-note address, Jayanti Panchal, General Secretary of the Gujarat Mazdoor Panchayat said, "We are passing through difficult times. Exploitation, injustice, atrocities, instead of receding, are assuming dangerous proportions. We have gathered here to make a firm resolve to take up these challenges and strive hard to realize the dream of ushering in just, humane and progressive social order.

There is increasing pollution ignited in the name of religion. It has become a profession with some elements. During the last few years, politics of religion has become very aggressive. Communal riots have become too frequent.

Hatred, violence and massacre of human beings are becoming order of the day. It is the common man who suffers the most. He cannot earn his bread when there is social strife and disorder. Every thinking and sensitive person is greatly perturbed. Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, the great Socialist thinker, had said that "religion is a long-term politics while politics is a short term religion". Religion is supposed to expand area of goodness and politics is to fight back evil. It is the duty of every sensitive person to gather courage in both hands and rededicate himself/herself to the values of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that are enshrined in our Constitution. We should not allow our faith in these values to dilute in any measure.

Religion calls upon every human being to treat every fellow citizen with love, truth and benevolence. Ghosts of falsehood, ill-will, conspiracy, and hypocrisy must be buried once and forever. No discrimination as between citizens and citizens on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender, etc. We should warn the people to be aware of the mischief-makers in the name of religion or caste. In particular, they should keep all those people at arms' length who talk of cultural nationalism which is nothing but stark communal hatred.

Democracy cannot flourish without political parties and political parties cannot exist without well thought out policies and programs. Political parties should spell out policies that can help eradicate ignorance, poverty and inequality.

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Jallikattu- A cultural ideal we desire?

Neha Dabhade

Hundreds of thousands of protestors poured out on Marina beach in Chennai in January to protest against the ban on Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu. There was sloganeering against the political establishment at the Centre and the state. The media reported that the protestors were mainly youth, college going students and intellectuals making it 'people's movement' (Janardhanan, 2017). Various issues were raised, all viewed as hurting Tamil pride and culture. But Jallikattu remained at the core of the protests. The state witnessed such massive 'spontaneous' unprecedented protests. The implications of this reaction must be discerned more comprehensively.

There is a lot written about Jallikattu from two different perspectives. One is about the cruelty meted out to the bulls involved and how it can't be ethical normative precedent for our society. Other argument is how Jallikattu is part of Tamil tradition and now of Tamil identity and pride. While both arguments are built on a number of facts, arguments and counter arguments, it is important to dwell deeper into the sport, the ban and the subsequent ordinance by BJP government at the Centre to analyze these issues beyond the pivot points of animal cruelty or traditions/culture. Jallikattu is also a signifier of the culture we want in our society. Do we want a culture steeped in violent and masculine ideas of entertainment at the cost of mute, helpless, tortured animals or a peaceful inclusive society based on the values of compassion and equality? This is the framework this article wants to adopt while

examining the issue of Jallikattu and the related politics.

Jallikattu is a sport where a bull is let loose and the males compete to hold on to the hump of the bull and go a particular distance. The winner gets a bag of money attached to the hump of the bull. In order to make the sport exciting and giving it heroic proportions, the bull are infuriated and made more aggressive by prodding them with sharp objects like spears, bitten, tails mutilated, bitten or twisted, chilli powder put in their eyes, the bulls are dragged by the ropes in their nose which leads to bleeding and administered alcohol. This makes the bull agitated and dangerous adding more adrenaline factor and attaching the notion of male valor to it (*The Wire*, 2017). Looking at the gruesome treatment meted out to the bulls, the Supreme Court in 2014 had banned the sport along with other similar sports like rekla, kambala and manjuvirattu. But there have been persistent demands for continuing of the sport. The Central government issued an ordinance which allowed Jallikattu to be held albeit some restrictions. This was challenged in the Supreme Court by animal activists and the Supreme Court stayed the notification. This led the Tamil Nadu State Assembly to pass amendments in the Prevention of Cruelty Act of 1960 to allow Jallikattu. Emboldened by the protests against the ban and the Central government giving into it, there are similar demands from other states like Maharashtra and Karnataka to legalise bullock cart races and kambala. Arguments for Jallikattu range from how it contributes to protecting native

breeds from extinction to how it is central to Tamil identity!

At the outset the issue is significant in the way how the State and the Central governments have undermined the rulings of the Supreme Court by passing subsequent ordinances. In order to please the populist demand, the governments have breached the principle of separation of judiciary, executive and legislature. What the judiciary struck down based on constitutional reasoning, the executive and the legislature sought to undo. This is an alarming precedent. In the future, similar ordinances can be passed to give legitimacy to other harmful practices in the society which violate fundamental rights of citizens and constitutional values. Untouchability is still practiced in all parts of India. So are honor killings. These issues evoke strong emotions and are argued to be part of culture. So by applying the same yard stick, will these also be made legal? It must not be forgotten that lives of many youth are lost in Jallikattu violating their right to life enshrined in the Constitution. The two lives lost in Jallikattu this year are not so widely written about in the media. Why are there no protests for their fundamental rights?

What is perhaps interesting is that the ban could mobilize so many youth on the marina beach. There are still debates if the youth gathered spontaneously or the Marina beach protest was engineered by political parties. Though Jallikattu was only symbolical and the ire of the crowd was directed at the political establishment for a range of issues including the perceived unfairness

in the distribution of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu. The general perception of marginalization and discrimination of the Tamils by the Centre snowballed in the massive mobilization. Yet it needs to be examined that why an issue of jallikattu and not employment or drought or floods which are more pressing issues did not become the rallying point for the youth or the masses. How jallikattu assumes such centrality in Tamil identity and the implications of such demands and protests must be analyzed.

Its important at this juncture to look at the character of Tamil Nadu and the influences that have shaped the dominant culture of the state. While Jallikattu is often touted as the only tradition indigenous to Tamil culture, what is invisibilized is the contribution of Bhakti movement to the cultural ethos in South India where the Bhakti movement actually started. The philosophy of stalwarts like Basavanna and Alvars/Nayanars holds prominence in the literature and culture of the region of South India. Alvars were saints devoted to Lord Vishnu and Nayanars were devotees of Shiva. They gave a clear message of selfless devotion and compassion. Their contribution to the Bhakti movement is immense. Bhakti movement was a movement against tradition and rituals which started in South India and spread all over India. It laid emphasis on single minded devotion to God. The most significant aspect of the movement however was the values it sought to spread. These values were love, compassion and equality primarily. The Bhakti saints were against the Brahminical order that reigned supreme in the then society. Brahminical order prevalent was characterized by rituals, ceremonies and blind faith. The Bhakti saints on the other hand countered these practices with a narrative of humaneness, rationale

thinking and message of selfless surrender to God. The essence of the movement is shedding of all identities of caste, gender, class, region etc. The message was of simplicity and surrender to God.

As opposed to these messages which have left an indelible mark on the cultural map on India, Jallikattu stands for a virulent underlying belief that spilling of blood on the land will bring prosperity. The philosophy of Jallikattu is based on the idea of control and supremacy over animal and other human beings. Instead of respecting the age old ethos of living in harmony with nature and submitting oneself to the Divine with others on the earth, such sports promote hierarchy and bloodletting where animals are degraded for vested interests. While the messages of the Bhakti saints resonate in Tamil Nadu through generations which reflect in a strong movement against caste, Jallikattu takes place in merely 20 villages in southern districts in Tamil Nadu. This deflates the claims of Jallikattu being an integral part of Tamil culture. There are many facets to Tamil culture, most of which are inclusive and humane. Jallikattu is wrongly selectively portrayed as being the dominant one.

At the risk of repetition of the obvious point, I would like to point out at the masculine and patriarchal nature of Jallikattu. The idea of Jallikattu is entrenched in violent masculinity. Earlier the winners of Jallikattu were honored by bull owners by marrying off the daughters of bull owners to the victors. Women have very little to do with the sport than to rear the bulls. In this sport both, the women and the bulls are objectified- bulls become objects to be tamed and subdued and women become objects to be given away as prizes, in effect taking away agency from both and placing them at the subservient position

to men in a patriarchal tradition. This notion of masculinity which is not inclusive of nature around and propels a violent culture is against the very values that form the basis for the movements against caste, equality, liberty. Gandhi's idea of society in harmony with nature or Periyar's struggle against caste are incompatible with such hyper macho practices which hold so much sway over the youth and create a dominant discourse in the society to be emulated.

Not only is Jallikattu symbolic of patriarchy prevalent in our society but also symbolic of a caste ridden society. A strong voice of protest has emerged from the Dalit community in Tamil Nadu which points out that Jallikattu has a caste character and is a vestige of caste divided society. Jallikattu still takes place in districts where caste Hindus are dominant. Dalit youth who attempt to participate in the sport are attacked (Yamunan, 2017). If the bull is tamed by Dalits it leads to clashes. Even as spectators they have to stand only in the earmarked area and are forbidden to share the same space with other caste Hindus (Indian Express, 2017). How can Jallikattu become the mascot of Tamil identity when a large section of the Tamil society has been excluded from the practice and is penalized for their participation? The Dalits view Jallikattu as one of the instruments to reinforce the already deeply entrenched caste hegemonies by claiming it to be part of Tamil culture.

While the emotions of the masses ran high in the protests, the positions taken by the political establishment is quite ironical. The Central government passed an ordinance to allow Jallikattu to continue (discussed above). This is not in keeping with BJP's stand on beef. Ironically the Hindu nationalists

see Jallikattu as Hindu practice and its ban as interference with Hindu religion and culture (Indian Express, 2016). It doesn't come as a surprise considering that they feel Sati and caste system also are part of Hindu culture. But what is incongruent is that BJP treats bovines as sacred and thus brings about ban on slaughter of bulls in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. The cow has become an icon of Hindutva politics. Gau Rakhshaks like in Una beat up Dalits for skinning dead bovine. Innocent persons are lynched to death merely on the suspicion that they store beef at home. Bovines are revered to that extent. But such rampant cruelty to bulls is not objected to, in fact any attempt to stop it is taken as an interference on Hindu culture. This can be explained by the electoral interests that BJP nurtures in Tamil Nadu. For sake of populism which it hopes will get it electoral success, BJP has abandoned its "concern" for the bovines which otherwise forms a backbone of its idea of India and nationalism. Communities that depend on bovines for livelihood and food are vilified and stigmatized as anti-national since cows are sacrosanct. However it sees no problem with unspeakable cruelty to bulls for entertainment and merriment. This amounts to selective protection to bovine for its own vested interests and shows its insincerity to 'cause' which has become a litmus test of nationalism for the whole country.

Jallikattu has come to represent brute majoritarianism where regardless about the ethics of the matter there are persistent demands for populist measures. The serious ramification of the issue was how the Supreme Court's judgment was systematically undermined. Jallikattu is a merely a symbol. Through demands in favour of Jallikattu, a kind of atavistic, violent

and brutal culture where fellow living beings are treated with cruelty for entertainment and reinforcing supremacy over other human beings is being promoted. Notwithstanding its casteist and misogynist overtones, the State is bending over backwards to appease the "Tamil pride" for electoral gains by selectively taking a stand on bovines. The pride of any culture or group must be its emphasis

and faith in compassion and equality it can extend to fellow living beings. Our society has given us more humane framework and ideals that can be celebrated and highlighted. Can all practices be claimed as part of culture? And doesn't culture evolve or is it static? Why can't we choose a more humane culture? These issues should be debated and discussed in a democratic way.

–*Secular Perspective*

(Contd. from Page 5)

During the last few years, in our country a number of political parties have sprung up on the basis of caste or region or such other parochial aims or considerations of caste exclusions. A party can help the nation to progress in the direction of bettering the lot of the common people only if it adopts a set of policies that aim at eliminating exploitation and enhancing well-being of the people as a whole.

Therefore, it is the need of the hour to resist the forces of fascism in the garb of cultural nationalism. We should also fight out the forces of capitalism who are bent upon enslaving the toiling masses. All out efforts must be put in to protect the social, political and economic rights of the people. Non-communal approach, equality, liberty and social justice must be the pillars on which the magnificent edifice of social order that can ensure truth, beauty and goodness for all. True, it is an uphill task to build up political party that can become a weapon of bringing about basic transformation of society. But there is no short cut. We should put in herculean efforts to build up a party of socialism, the Socialist Party(India). We should give an inspiring message: *Insanka insan se ho bhaichara, yehi paigam hamara.*

A few of the participants made speeches endorsing the feelings expressed by Jayantibhai.

In his concluding speech, Pannalal Surana said that we need not get overpowered by the high sounding speeches of the pracharaks of Hindutwa. While condemning the heinous crimes committed by organisations like ISIS, we should stick to our guns of secularism. Let us not forget that the Hindu fanatics got only 31 per cent of the popular votes in this land where more than 80 per cent persons are born in Hindu families. We would do well to remember that virtues like mutual tolerance and understanding and adjustment have been nourished by centuries-old traditions in this land of Buddha, Mahavir and Gandhi. During the last Lok Sabha elections many people wanted to give vent to their anger gathered over innumerable scams perpetrated by the Congress rule of ten years. Now, people have grown wiser, particularly by failure of Modi dispensation in fulfilling the promises given during the elections.

In addition, they have gone through the uncalled for torture in the form of Note-Bandi. Let us held our heads high and thunder out the slogan of Jai Samajwad.

–JSP

Gandhi's martyrdom saved India

On January 31, 1948, a former Indian Civil Service officer named Malcolm Darling, then living in retirement in London, wrote in his diary: 'Gandhi was assassinated yesterday. ...Very difficult to say what will happen, but it is as if a ship has lost its keel. Further disintegration seems inevitable, and what happens to the 40 million Muslims left in India now, now that they have lost their chief protector? ...I wonder if sooner or later we will have to go back.' By the standards of his tribe Darling was an extremely enlightened man. While serving in the Punjab he had been a sensitive administrator, sympathetic to Indian aspirations. But the horrors of Partition made him re-think his ideas. Now, with the murder of Gandhi, he was even contemplating the British returning to take charge of what seemed to be a forever unruly sub-continent. Darling's fears were widely shared. Other Western observers thought that India would go back to the pattern of the 18th century, when its territory was carved up between dozens of small and large chiefdoms. At any rate, they expected the bloodletting between Hindus and Muslims to further intensify, now that the pre-eminent peace-maker was no more. But none of this happened. One immediate consequence of Gandhi's martyrdom was the patching up of a potentially disastrous rift between his two main lieutenants, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. Nehru served as prime minister (and concurrently as foreign minister) in the government of newly-independent India; Patel as deputy prime minister (and concurrently as home minister and minister for the Princely States). In the weeks before Gandhi's death,

Nehru and Patel had a series of sharp disagreements. Both were contemplating resigning; neither was prepared to work with the other. Gandhi had a long conversation with Patel before his prayer meeting on the 30th; and he was due to meet with Nehru after the prayers were over. Gandhi's assassination made the two sink their differences. 'With Babu's death,' wrote Nehru to Patel, 'everything is changed and we have to face a different and more difficult world. The old controversies have ceased to have much significance and it seems to me that the urgent need of the hour is for all of us to function as closely and co-operatively as possible... .' Patel, in reply, said he 'fully and heartily reciprocate[d] the sentiments you have so feelingly expressed... Recent events had made me very unhappy and I had written to Babu ... appealing to him to relieve me, but his death changes everything and the crisis that has overtaken us must awaken in us a fresh realisation of how much we have achieved together and the need for further joint efforts in our grief-stricken country's interests'. Meanwhile, both Patel and Nehru went on All India Radio to calm tempers. Patel appealed to the people not to think of revenge, but 'to carry the message of love and non-violence enunciated by Mahatmaji. ...We did not follow him when he was alive; let us at least follow his steps now he is dead'. Indians, said Nehru in his broadcast, had now 'to hold together and fight that terrible poison of communalism that has killed the greatest man of our age'. Remarkably, the message was heeded. Far from leading to further rioting and bloodshed, Gandhi's murder led to a cessation of the violence. Hindus were horror-struck

that one of their own had killed the greatest living Hindu. The attacks on Muslims ceased, the desire to match Pakistan in its savage treatment of its own minorities was tamed. It would be a decade and more before India next witnessed a serious Hindu-Muslim riot. This diminution of communal passions allowed Nehru, Patel and their colleagues to focus on giving the country a democratic Constitution, bring the princely states on board, and lay the foundations of independent foreign and economic policies.

– *Ramachandra Guha in
Hindustan Times*

(Contd. from Page 5)

Soviet Union/Russia Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty models or the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone model in existence in five areas of world.

Promotion of love through Peace and Friendship ceremony is the urgent need of the hour.

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Budget 2017–18: is it indeed a pro-farmer budget?

Neeraj Jain

It is now well established that demonetisation has had a crippling impact on the Indian economy, and in particular, has sent the informal sector into a coma. The informal sector consists of small scale manufacturing, most of the construction industry, perhaps three quarters of the remainder of the services sector, and the agricultural sector. Among the worst hit was the agriculture sector.

The globalisation–liberalisation–privatisation policies being implemented in the country by successive governments that have come to power at the Centre since 1991 had already pushed Indian agriculture into deep crisis. The majority of the Indian peasants are small farmers with landholdings of less than one hectare. An important objective of the agricultural reforms being implemented in the name of globalisation is to slowly strangulate these small farmers and drive them out of their lands so that big agribusiness corporations can take them over. And so, for the past two decades, successive governments have been reducing public investment in agriculture, cutting subsidies given on major inputs needed for agriculture (such as fertiliser, electricity and irrigation subsidies), gradually eliminating output support to agriculture (in the form of public procurement of agricultural produce), gradually

phasing out subsidised credit given to agriculture by public sector banks, and allowing imports of heavily subsidised agricultural produce from the developed countries into India. These policies have driven the hardy Indian farmers into such despair that more than 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since mid-1990s, the largest recorded wave of such deaths in history.

Two consecutive years of drought, made worse by Modi Government's anti-farmer policies, further worsened this crisis. And then, in the third year (2016), just when farmers were hoping for better days due to a better monsoon, and were about to harvest their kharif crop and begin preparations for the sowing of the rabi crop, they were hit by the cyclone of demonetisation, resulting in huge losses and pushing them further into debt.

It was therefore expected that the Finance Minister would announce measures to compensate farmers for the losses suffered by them due to demonetisation, and also take steps to address the acute crisis gripping the agricultural sector, in his Budget 2017–18.

True to form, the mainstream media has hailed the latest budget presented by Jaitley as a pro-farmer budget one that would give a fillip to agriculture. Just like it had done for

last year's budget. We examine the claims made by the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister about the pro-farmer nature of Budget 2017–18 and repeated sycophantically by the media in this article.

Doubling farmers income?

In his budget speech, the Finance Minister has repeated his promise made last year to double farmers' incomes in five years, a promise that has also been repeated by the Prime Minister. But just like last year, Jaitley has not clarified whether he means to double nominal incomes or real incomes; and just like last year, there is no roadmap of how he plans to make this happen. In fact, a member of the official NITI Aayog, Bibek Debroy, clarified in a television interview last year that the doubling was meant in nominal, not real, terms, that is, not after discounting for inflation.¹ In such terms incomes could double anyway, even without "aiming"! In other words, the declaration is a complete fraud.

To get an idea of the crisis gripping Indian agriculture, the following statistics should suffice: For nearly 70% of Indian small farmers who have land holdings of less than 1 hectare, total income from all sources (cultivation, farming of animals, non-farm business and wages) was less than consumption expenditure (Table 1).

Table 1: Small Farmer Households, All India, 2012–13 : Average Monthly Income and Expenditure

Size class of land possessed	Number of households as % of total	Total Income from all sources	Total Consumption Expenditure
<0.01 ha	2.6%	4561	5108
0.01 – 0.40 ha	31.9%	4152	5401
0.41 – 1.00 ha	34.9%	5247	6020

This has led to a huge increase in rural indebtedness. The most extensive survey of farm households to date conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in 2012–13 found 52% of the total agricultural households in the country to be in debt. The average debt is Rs 47,000 per agricultural household, in a country where the yearly income from cultivation per household is Rs 36,972.³

These statistics make it clear that to tackle the agricultural crisis, which is pushing thousands of farmers to commit suicide every year, the government needs to make farming profitable by reducing input costs by increasing subsidies on fertilisers, electricity, water, etc., providing output price support, increase public investment in agriculture—which is absolutely essential for agricultural growth, and take big bang steps to tackle the debt crisis gripping Indian farmers by waiving their debts in a big way, and freeing small farmers from the stranglehold of moneylenders and taking steps to make institutional credit available to them at subsidised rates.

BJP U-turn

Budget 2017–18 addresses none of these issues. The BJP has made a complete U-Turn on its election promise made at the time of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections to provide farmers Minimum Support Prices (MSP) that would ensure them a 50% profit over cost of production. There is no mention of remunerative prices in the budget. MSP of most crops are far below even the cost of production. There is complete silence on the issue of strengthening public procurement of farm produce, and expansion of storage. While fertiliser prices are sharply rising, fertiliser subsidy stands still at Rs 70,000 crore in 2016–17 RE and 2017–18 BE.⁴ The government has

made no attempt to pass on the sharp fall in international oil prices to farmers—it has instead used the fall to increase its revenues by increasing excise duties on the petroleum sector: while annual average price of crude oil sharply fell from \$105 per barrel in 2013–14 to around \$46 per barrel in 2015–16 and 2016–17, the retail price of diesel (in Delhi) came down slightly from around Rs 55 per litre in March 2014 to Rs 48 per litre in March 2016, and has once again risen to Rs 59 per litre by end-January 2017.⁵

The farm credit fraud

The Finance Minister does not even make a mention of the growing indebtedness gripping Indian farmers, forgets about taking steps to waive their debts. On the other hand, Jaitley's announcement that farm credit target is being revised from Rs 9.5 lakh crore in 2016–17 to Rs 10 lakh crore in 2017–18 hit the headlines in several newspapers. But this is actually a farcical announcement! This number does not appear anywhere in the budget. Why? Because, it is not a government allocation, but simply a target for the banks to provide loans.

The Centre's actual contribution is through the interest subsidy provided on these loans. Interestingly, the budget for interest subsidy remains the same at Rs 15,000 crores, even though the credit target has been raised. So, farm subsidies are not being increased here too.

More importantly, who does this Rs 10 lakh crore of credit go to? In 2015, the BJP government removed the distinction between direct lending and indirect lending, making it possible for these loans to be given to agri-businesses like Reliance Fresh and not to farmers. As studies have indicated, much of the agricultural credit is actually

going to cities. For example, 40% of the agricultural credit in Maharashtra goes to Mumbai! So far as those who are actually farmers are concerned, most of them are actually not eligible for farm loans from banks—tenant farmers do not get bank loans, and neither do a large number of women farmers as they do not have land titles in their name—and nearly 50% of the farmers are women.⁶ The Finance Minister has turned a blind eye to these issues.

Insurance scam

As regards increasing public investment in agriculture, some isolated announcements have been made. Thus, one issue that caused a lot of hoopla in the media was the allocation of Rs 9,000 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY). The scheme aims to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events. It has a uniform premium of 2% to be paid by farmers for all kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops (for commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%). The rest of the premium is paid by the government. Actually, the allocation for this year for this scheme has actually fallen—it had been allocated Rs 13,240 crore in 2016–17 RE. Despite this fall, the government claims that the total number of farmers covered under this scheme is going to be increased from 26.5% of all farmers to 40% of farmers. That is strange mathematics indeed!

More importantly, the Rs 13,240 crores spent in 2016–17 under this scheme have not gone to farmers; this amount is actually the subsidy on insurance premium that has been paid to private insurance companies. It was thus a bonanza for the insurance companies; the farmers will benefit from this only if they get insurance claim payments.

How many farmers benefited under this scheme? The Finance Minister was silent on this in his budget speech, as the government has nothing significant to report on this. No wonder that the allocation for PMFBY is only discussed in TV studios and the Parliament; no farmer's organisation said a word about this scheme. So much for the government's flagship scheme for farmers.

Another big ticket announcement was the doubling of the long-term irrigation fund with NABARD—from Rs 20,000 crore that was allocated in 2016–17 to Rs 40,000 crore in 2017–18. According to the Finance Minister, this has been done to fast track the implementation of incomplete major and medium irrigation projects. Another corpus fund of Rs 5,000 crore was announced for micro-irrigation. But the Finance Minister was silent about how much of this corpus was spent in 2016–17, and what irrigation facilities were created with this money.

The Finance Minister also announced the setting up of a Dairy Development Fund with a corpus of Rs 2,000 crore, so as to expand the availability of milk processing facilities and other infrastructure for farmers. But again, like most of his pronouncements, he was only indulging in window-dressing; actual allocation for animal husbandry was only Rs 2,371 crore in 2017–18 BE compared to Rs 1,994 crore revised expenditure of 2016–17.

Record allocation for MNREGS

Probably the allocation that drew the biggest cheer was the allocation of Rs 48,000 crores for the employment guarantee scheme, MGNREGS—a scheme that had been derisively dismissed by PM Modi only two years ago. Arun Jaitley proclaimed in his budget speech that this allocation was the highest ever, and was a big increase over the allocation of Rs 38,500 crore for this scheme made in the 2016–17 budget. But what he forgot to mention was that actual expenditure under this scheme in 2016–17 was Rs 47,499 crore, implying that the increase over last year's revised estimates was only Rs 500 crore, or 1%. In real terms, factoring in inflation, it is actually a decline!

Even this large expenditure of last year is no credit to the government. It was forced by the Supreme Court orders in the Swaraj Abhiyan case on the drought.

Furthermore, even this allocation of Rs 48,000 crore is actually very insufficient for a full roll-out of the scheme. MNREGS is a demand driven scheme, adequate resources need to be made available for it whenever there is a demand. Presently, 22 of 34 states and union territories have negative balances in their MNREGS accounts. Their total liabilities have piled up to Rs 3,469 crore. But according to the government, 93% of the funds

available for MNREGS have been spent. Additionally, the expenditure for February and March 2017 has still to be made, and to honour only the approved budgets for these two months, an additional nearly Rs 10,013 crore is required. Therefore, total pending liabilities at the end of fiscal 2016–17 under this scheme would be Rs 13,482 crore. Add to this an additional Rs 3,800 crore on account of inflation (at 8%), and that means that to keep the allocations at the same level as 2016–17 RE, the total allocation for 2017–18 needs to be $47,499 + 13,482 + 3,800 = \text{Rs } 64,781$ crore. The actual allocation for 2017–18 is actually 26% less than this!

In fact, the Supreme Court has stated that the entire demand of the states for work should be met by the Centre—which comes to nearly Rs 80,000 crores! The reality is that the Centre is actually discouraging the states from providing work, inordinately delaying the release of funds, with wage payments to workers delayed by two to three months.⁷

Let us now take a look at the total allocation for agriculture. This is ultimately the most important aspect of the agricultural budget. In actuality, as can be seen from the Table 2, as a percentage of the GDP, total allocations for all agricultural related sectors have actually declined in 2017–18 as compared to the revised estimates for 2016–17.

Table 2: Allocations for Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Resources

		2014–15 Actual	2015–16 Actual	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
1	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare	25,917	22,092	48,073	51,026
2	Ministry of Finance, Interest Subsidy on Short term farm credit	6,000	13,000	—	
3	Ministry of Rural Development	69,817	78,945	97,760	10,7758
4	Water Resources	5,480	6,862	4,756	6,887
5	Total: 1+2+3+4 = 5	1,07,214	1,20,899	1,50,589	1,65,671
6	GDP	1,24,33,749	1,36,75,331	1,50,75,429	1,68,47,455
7	Total Agriculture Spending (5) as % of GDP	0.86	0.88	1.0	0.98

As a percentage of GDP, total spending on all agriculture related sectors is just 0.9% of GDP. This, for a sector on which 60% of the population depend for their livelihoods!

Clearly, Modi and Jaitley are not interested in alleviating any of the distress caused by the disastrous demonetisation policy decision of November 8, 2016, and are ruthlessly continuing with the neoliberal agricultural reforms that are strangulating Indian agriculture and pushing lakhs of farmers to committing suicides.

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*Excerpts from
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Growing Inequality

As growth benefits the richest, the rest of society – especially the poorest – suffers. The very design of our economies and the principles of our economics have taken us to this extreme, unsustainable and unjust point. Our economy must stop excessively rewarding those at the top and start working for all people. Accountable and visionary governments, businesses that work in the interests of workers and producers, a valued environment, women's rights and a strong system of fair taxation, are central to this more human economy.

It is four years since the World Economic Forum identified rising economic inequality as a major threat to social stability and three years since the World Bank twinned its goal of ending poverty with the need for shared prosperity.

Since then, and despite world leaders signing up to a global goal to reduce inequality, the gap between the rich and the rest has widened. This cannot continue. As President Obama told the UN General Assembly in his departing speech in September 2016: 'A world where 1% of humanity controls as much wealth as the bottom 99% will never be stable.' Yet the global inequality crisis continues unabated:

- Since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than the rest of the planet.
- Eight men now own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world.
- Over the next 20 years, 500 people will hand over \$2.1 trillion to their heirs – a sum larger than the GDP of India, a country of 1.3 billion people.

- The incomes of the poorest 10% of people increased by less than \$3 a year between 1988 and 2011, while the incomes of the richest 1% increased 182 times as much. A FTSE-100 CEO earns as much in a year as 10,000 people in working in garment factories in Bangladesh.
- In the US, new research by economist Thomas Piketty shows that over the last 30 years the growth in the incomes of the bottom 50% has been zero, whereas incomes of the top 1% have grown 300%.
- In Vietnam, the country's richest man earns more in a day than the poorest person earns in 10 years.

Left unchecked, growing inequality threatens to pull our societies apart. It increases crime and insecurity, and undermines the fight to end poverty.

It leaves more people living in fear and fewer in hope. From Brexit to the success of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, a worrying rise in racism and the widespread disillusionment with mainstream politics, there are increasing signs that more and more people in rich countries are no longer willing to tolerate the status quo. Why would they, when experience suggests that what it delivers is wage stagnation, insecure jobs and a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots? The challenge is to build a positive alternative – not one that increases divisions. The picture in poor countries is equally complex and no less concerning. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in recent decades,

(Contd. on Page 14)

Remembering Srilata Swaminathan

Veteran social activist Srilata Swaminathan breathed her last at Udaipur on February 5. She was 74. At various times she was the President of the All India Progressive Women's Association, the Vice President of the All India Council of Trade Unions and a member of the Central Council of the CPI-ML.

Coming from a distinguished family of freedom fighters rooted in Kerala and Tamil Nadu she chose to make Rajasthan, and more particularly the tribal areas of Rajasthan, the main area of her work, although earlier she also contributed to various struggles in other parts of the country including Delhi. She was also imprisoned during the Emergency and later contributed to the establishment of civil liberties organizations.

During her earlier times in Rajasthan she helped to establish a voluntary organization Sanchetna. Apart from being involved in various struggles for socio-economic justice along with her husband Mahendra Choudhry, Srilata Swaminathan was also known for her keen interest in eco-friendly farming and alternative health therapies.

She combined brilliance of intellectual work with willingness and capability for mobilizing people.

Despite all these immense capabilities and many assets including willingness to work very hard and to make sacrifices, one has an uneasy feeling that her potential for social change was not adequately realized and the reason for this is to be found in our confused times regarding the path of social change and the wider alliances we need to make for this to realize our objectives in difficult conditions.

So while there is absolutely no doubt that Srilata ji led a most meaningful life with immense contributions, there is also need to reflect on why such brilliance and commitment could not lead to even wider contributions .

(Contd. from Page 13)

an achievement of which the world should be proud. Yet one in nine people still go to bed hungry.

Had growth been pro-poor between 1990 and 2010, 700 million more people, most of them women, would not be living in poverty today.

Research finds that three-quarters of extreme poverty could in fact be eliminated now using existing resources, by increasing taxation and cutting down on military and other regressive spending.

The World Bank is clear that without redoubling their efforts to tackle inequality, world leaders will miss their goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

There is no getting away from the fact that the biggest winners in our global economy are those at the top. Oxfam's research has revealed that over the last 25 years, the top 1% have gained more income than the bottom 50% put together.

Far from trickling down, income and wealth are being sucked upwards at an alarming rate. What is causing this? Corporations and super-rich individuals both play a key role. Corporations, working for those at the top Big businesses did well in 2015/16: profits are high and the world's 10 biggest corporations together have revenue greater than

At a personal level I will like to recall the help and hospitality I received from Srilata ji and Mahendra ji when I was reporting repeatedly on the problems of tribal areas of Rajasthan several years back.

—Bharat Dogra,

the government revenue of 180 countries combined.

Businesses are the lifeblood of a market economy, and when they work to the benefit of everyone they are vital to building fair and prosperous societies. But when corporations increasingly work for the rich, the benefits of economic growth are denied to those who need them most. In pursuit of delivering high returns to those at the top, corporations are driven to squeeze their workers and producers ever harder – and to avoid paying taxes which would benefit everyone, and the poorest people in particular.

While many chief executives, who are often paid in shares, have seen their incomes skyrocket, wages for ordinary workers and producers have barely increased, and in some cases have got worse. The CEO of India's top information firm earns 416 times the salary of a typical employee in his company.

In the 1980s, cocoa farmers received 18% of the value of a chocolate bar – today they get just 6%.

In extreme cases, forced labour or slavery can be used to keep corporate costs down. The International Labour Organization estimates that 21 million people are forced labourers, generating an estimated \$150bn in profits each year.

लोकायत

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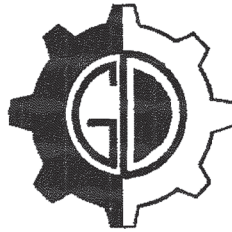
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Pandering to Dictates of Global Finance

Neeraj Jain

Just a month ago, the Modi–Jaitley government had once again massaged the GDP figures, for the second time in two years, to make them look even better. The earlier revision had made them to be 5.1% in 2012–13, 6.9% in 2013–14, 7.2% in 2014–15 and 7.3% in 2015–16. The revision—caused by a change in the method of measuring GDP—had made the economy grow at more than 7% for 2014–15, making India one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Then, in January 2017, the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) revised the figures once again to make them look like a perfect stepladder of sustained growth—5.6% / 6.6% / 7.2% / 7.9% respectively. The growth rate for 2015–16 had been revised to a high of 7.9%.¹

**Table 1: India, Growth Rates, as Revised by
BJP Govt in 2015 and 2017 (%)**

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Growth Rates, 2015 Estimates	5.1	6.9	7.2	7.3
Growth Rates, 2017 Estimates	5.6	6.6	7.2	7.9

The absurdity of these figures becomes obvious from just one statistic. The Index of Industrial Production data show that growth in factory output in the country had slowed down from 2.8% in 2014–15 to 2.4% in 2015–16, and the manufacturing sector, which accounts for over 75 per cent of the index, grew at meagre rate of 2% in 2015–16 compared to 2.3% in previous year. However, the CSO in its calculations has considered the manufacturing component of the GDP to have suddenly jumped from 5.5% in 2014–15 to 9.5% in 2015–16!²

However, demonetisation has had such a crippling effect on the economy that even the CSO has been forced to admit that the economy is expected to slow down in 2016–17. Predictably, the CSO has attempted to downplay the impact, saying that it expects the economy to grow at 7.1% in 2016–17 as compared to 7.6% the previous year. Almost immediately, other forecasters challenged its figure, with Icria expecting it to fall to 6.8% and HSBC projecting it to fall to 6.3%.³

Other figures actually project that the slowdown is much worse than that indicated by the above figures. Thus, for instance, factory output, measured by Index of Industrial Production, actually contracted by 0.4% in December 2016, driven by contraction in consumer goods, capital goods and manufacturing. It had risen by 5.7% in November 2016.⁴ Another set of data that again gives an indication on slowing economic activities is bank credit growth numbers. RBI data show that non-food credit growth slowed down from 6.7% in October 2016 to 4.8% in November and 4.0% in December. These figures were less than half of the corresponding figures for 2015—non-food credit growth increased by 8.8% in November and 9.3% in December 2015.⁵

Demonetisation particularly hit the informal sector hard, sending it into a coma. The informal sector consists of small scale manufacturing, most of the construction industry, perhaps three quarters of the remainder of the services sector, and the agricultural sector. While there are no official estimates of the number of jobs lost due to mass scale closure of small scale industries following demonetisation, it is for certain that lakhs of workers have been rendered unemployed and have had to return to their villages.⁶

Having saddled the economy with an entirely unnecessary slowdown in growth and massive rise in unemployment through demonetisation, the Central Government had a chance to partially undo the damage through Budget 2017 by significantly raising its expenditure relative to GDP, especially in those sectors most hit by the note ban. If ever there was a case for a more expansionary fiscal stance to revive demand in the economy, it was now. This would have helped increase demand in the system, and given a boost to employment generation.

In particular, since the economic pain caused by demonetisation was felt disproportionately by the poor, the Central Government was expected to take special

measures to alleviate their suffering by directing significantly increased spending towards the poor, through measures like increasing social sector spending, and increasing government expenditure on sectors like agriculture.

Jaitley and fiscal deficit

Unfortunately, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has done none of this in his Budget 2017–18. To please global finance, he has continued with the policies of neoliberalism that he has so assiduously been pursuing for the past three years and that were also pursued by the previous UPA Government. A key element of budget making under neoliberalism is reining in the fiscal deficit. And so, Jaitley has declared that he is going to further bring down the fiscal deficit to 3.2% of the GDP in 2017–18, from 3.5% achieved in 2016–17 and 3.9% in 2015–16.⁷ This policy of “fiscal prudence”, which constitutes the cornerstone of the government’s budgetary strategy, is staggering in its implications for the common people—who have already been devastated by the cyclone of demonetisation.

Fiscal deficit is just another term for government borrowings of various types. The government borrows when its expenditures exceed its receipts of all types. That India must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero if it wants to become an economic superpower in the near future has become an economic gospel today. All the leading establishment economists, each and every economist associated with international financial institutions, every renowned management guru—all are in agreement that high levels of fiscal deficit relative to GDP adversely affect growth. Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in fact criticised Jaitley for not striving to bring down the fiscal deficit to 3% in this financial year.⁸

The fact is, the economic theory that the government must balance its expenditure with its income, that is, must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero, is plain humbug. John Maynard Keynes, considered by many to be the greatest economist of the twentieth century, had demonstrated way back in the 1930s that in an economy where there is poverty and unemployment, the government can, and in fact should, expand public works and generate employment by borrowing, that is, enlarging the fiscal deficit; such government expenditure would also stimulate private expenditure through the “multiplier” effect. Even the governments of the developed countries

like the United States and Japan, when faced with recessionary conditions, have resorted to huge levels of public spending and high fiscal deficits.⁹

Despite this theory being a complete fraud, it is one of the conditionalities of the Structural Adjustment Loan taken by India from the World Bank way back in 1991, when India was in the throes of an external debt crisis. These World Bank dictated economic reforms, implemented dutifully by every government that has come to power at the Centre since 1991, have been given the grandiloquent name of globalisation.¹⁰

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 only reason why Jaitley is harping upon the theme of fiscal discipline is because it gives him an excuse to reduce government expenditures on the poor and transfer the savings to big corporate houses! This of course is going to sound amazing to Modi Bhakts—after all, Modi keeps singing *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas*. Therefore, let us explain this in slightly greater detail.

The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government’s expenditures over receipts. In all his three budgets presented so far, Jaitley has doled out lakhs of rupees as subsidies to the very rich. Had he really been concerned about the fiscal deficit, he could have easily reduced these mindboggling giveaways. But the government dubs these subsidies to the rich as “incentives”, and justifies them in the name of promoting growth–development–entrepreneurism. On the other hand, the social sector expenditures of the government 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.

Just a look at the extraordinary concessions given to the rich in the name of tax incentives in Jaitley’s budgets presented so far will make our point clear.

Tax incentives 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. This statement is included in the annexure attached to the

Receipt Budget in the Union Budget documents, and is titled: *Revenue impact of Tax Incentive under the Central Tax System*. We have compared the tax exemptions to the rich with the fiscal deficit for that year in Table 2. (The write-offs as mentioned in the budget statement are in corporate tax, personal income tax, customs duties and excise duties. In the data on tax exemptions given in Table 2, we have excluded the amount forgone on personal income tax, since this write-off benefits a wider group of people.)

Table 2: Revenue Forgone by Central Government Due to Tax Exemptions, and Fiscal Deficit (Rs lakh crore)

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	Total
Revenue Forgone	5.49	5.51	5.50	16.5
Fiscal Deficit RE	5.13	5.35	5.34	

[Note:

A note on tax exemptions given to the rich in 2016–17 is required here. Just like it has changed the methodology for calculating GDP, it has changed the methodology for calculating tax concessions given to the rich in this year’s (2017–18) budget documents. Under the new methodology adopted by the government and explained in the 2017–18 Budget documents, the Centre has differentiated between what it calls “conditional” and “unconditional” exemptions. Unconditional exemptions will no longer be considered for the purpose of calculating revenues foregone or the revenue impact of tax incentives. The new methodology does not affect the calculation for corporate taxes, but sharply brings down estimated revenue forgone in case of customs and excise duties.

Obviously, the distinction made between conditional and unconditional exemptions is an artificial concoction, meant to bring down the estimation of tax exemptions given to the rich. The statement on revenue forgone has been there in the budget documents since 2006–07; obviously, had there been some justification for excluding ‘unconditional’ exemptions from the calculation for revenue forgone, the previous UPA Government would definitely have used it too to lower the estimation for revenue forgone.

We have therefore used the older methodology to estimate the revenue forgone due to tax exemptions given in the case of customs and excise duties, based on data

given in the statement on revenue forgone given in the 2017–18 budget documents.

In case of customs duties, as per the older methodology, the estimated customs revenue impact of tax incentives is calculated based on data generated at the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). This system does not capture the full data of imports, and so suitable adjustments are made. From this, revenue impact on account of Export Promotion Concessions is deducted, to get the net impact of tax incentives on customs duties revenues. As per EDI data, the total estimated customs revenue impact of tax incentives for 2016–17 (annualised) came to Rs 307,707 crore. The EDI captured 95.01% of the gross customs revenue. After extrapolation for data not captured by EDI, the estimated customs revenue impact for the whole year comes to: Rs 323,868 crore. Deducting from this net revenue impact on account of input tax neutralization schemes (Rs 57,065 crore), we get the revenue impact of tax incentives on customs duty side for 2016–17 by the old methodology to be Rs 266,803 crore.

In the case of excise duties, as per the older methodology, this is calculated based on data generated by the Automated Central Excise & Service Tax (ACES) system, to which is added revenue impact due to the operation of area based exemption schemes. For 2016–17, this works out to Rs 199,838 crore [Rs 180,502 crore (general exemptions, conditional and unconditional) + Rs 19,336 crore (area based exemptions)].

Therefore, based on the older methodology, the total projected tax exemptions for the year 2016–17, excluding exemptions given on personal income taxes are:

- Corporation taxes = Rs 83,492 crore
- Excise duties = Rs 199,838 crore
- Customs duties = Rs 266,803 crore
- Total = Rs 550,133 crore]

The total tax exemptions given to the country's uber rich by the Modi–Jaitley government in the three years it has been in power total Rs 16.5 lakh crore! That is an amount that equals 86% of the estimated gross tax revenues of the Central Government for the financial year 2017–18.

Low tax revenues

It is because of these huge tax giveaways to India's

richie rich that India's tax revenues are low, because of which our combined tax-to-GDP ratio for Centre and States put together is amongst the lowest in the world. This is admitted even by the Finance Minister in his budget speech this year. The *Economic Survey* of last year (2015–16) admitted that India's tax-to-GDP ratio at 16.6% is lowest among BRICS and lower than both the Emerging Market Economy (EME) and OECD averages, which are about 21% and 34% respectively. India's tax ratio is the lowest even among economies with comparable (PPP adjusted) per-capita GDP such as Vietnam, Bolivia and Uzbekistan.¹¹

In fact, the government's revenues would have been in a far worse state but for the fact that the government was able to take advantage of the fall in international oil prices to hike excise duties on crude oil and petro-products from 1.02% of GDP in 2014–15 to 1.61% of GDP in 2016–17, an increase of 0.6% of the GDP! It is because of this that despite giving away such huge amounts in tax concessions to the rich, the Modi Government's gross tax revenues as a proportion of the GDP have risen from 10% in 2014–15 to 11.3% in 2016–17 RE. The Modi Government has increased excise duties petro-products by nine times since coming to power in 2014. The Central Government currently charges Rs 17.33 for every litre of diesel and Rs 21.48 for every litre of petrol as excise duty.¹²

Table 3: Contribution of Petroleum Sector to Exchequer (% of GDP)

	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Central taxes/duties on crude oil & petroleum products	0.94	1.02	1.53	1.61
Out of which, excise duty	0.69	0.8	1.31	1.41

The Finance Minister had given several interviews in December 2016/January 2017 highlighting that demonetisation had led to a jump in tax collections, and had even given detailed data showing that direct tax mop-up increased by 12.01% while indirect tax revenue grew 25% during the period April to December 2017.¹³ However, the budget papers belie his claims! They do not reflect any significant increase in tax revenues in the current financial year. In fact, the corporate and income tax numbers for the budget estimates and revised estimates of 2016–17 are almost the same; while the

revised estimates for 2016–17 show an increase in indirect tax revenues by only 10.1% over the budget estimates. This, despite demonetisation and the two income disclosure schemes announced in the current financial year! Even though the Union Budget was

advanced by a month this year, because of which it is possible that the government does not have proper revised estimates for tax collections for this year, it also means that the government expects revenue gains from all these measures to be negligible.

Table 4: Gross Tax Revenues of Central Government, 2015–16 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2015–16 (Actuals)	2016–17 (BE)(1)	2016–17 (RE)(2)	Increase, (2) – (1)	2017–18 (BE)(3)	Increase, (3) – (2)
Gross tax revenue	1,455,648	1,630,888	1,703,243	4.4%	1,911,579	12.2%
<i>Corporation tax</i>	453,228	493,924	493,924	0	538,745	9.1%
<i>Income tax</i>	287,637	353,174	353,174	0	441,255	24.9%
<i>Union excise duties</i>	288,073	318,670	387,369	21.6%	406,900	5%
<i>Customs duties</i>	210,338	230,000	217,000	– 5.7%	245,000	12.9%
<i>Service tax</i>	211,414	231,000	247,500	7.1%	275,000	11.3%
Non-tax revenue	251,706	322,921	334,770	3.7%	288,757	– 13.7%
GDP at Current Market	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429		16,847,455	
Prices (2011–12 series)						
Gross Tax Revenue as % of GDP	10.60%	10.82%	11.30%		11.34%	

The 2017–18 budget estimates too do not indicate any significant rise in gross tax revenues over the 2016–17 RE figures. The Finance Minister estimates the gross tax revenues to go up by 12.2%, mainly powered by an increase in income tax collections of 25%. This however seems to be too optimistic a projection. This is more so because the projected nominal increase in GDP of 11.75%, on which the direct tax growth will depend, also seems to be on the higher side, as nominal growth in GDP has ranged between 10% and 10.7% during 2013–14 to 2016–2017.

Fiscal contractionary path

The gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) in the economy has been falling ever since the BJP Government came to power. The *Economic Survey 2016–17* admits: Private investment, which had been soaring at the height of the boom, slowed sharply to a 5% growth rate by 2010–11. By 2015–16, it had actually started to shrink, and in 2016–17 so far it seems to have contracted by more than 7%. To cushion the impact on the overall economy, public investment has been stepped up considerably, but this has still not been sufficient to arrest

a fall in overall investment. The *Survey* admits that GFCF has slipped into negative territory in first half of 2016–17—and this was before the storm of demonetisation hit the economy.¹⁴

It is elementary mainstream economics that with the investment falling, what is needed to pull the economy out of the deepening crisis is an expansionary budget, that is, the government needs to step up public investment. However, the ‘ultra-nationalist’ BJP Government, led by the Modi–Jaitley duo, is more interested in pandering to the whims of India’s foreign creditors and multinational capital, rather than protecting the nation’s interests.

On the one hand, the Finance Minister is seeking to reduce the fiscal deficit to please global finance. On the other hand, Jaitley continues to generously pay back the debt the BJP owes to the big corporate houses and the wealthy for funding its 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign, by continuing to give them enormous tax concessions. With the result that despite receiving a bonanza on account of petroleum duties, the government’s tax revenues continue to be very low, much lower than

other emerging market economies. Despite admitting that GFCF is contracting, the government's budget outlay for 2017–18 has not seen any significant rise. As a percentage of the GDP, the government's projected

budget outlay for 2017–18 has actually fallen to its lowest level since the BJP came to power in 2014, and is much lower than the 13.9% reached during the last year of the previous UPA Government.

Table 5: Union (BJP) Budget Outlays of 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (Actuals)	2015–16 (Actuals)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
Budget Outlay	1,663,673	1,790,783	1,978,060	2,014,407	2,146,735
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455
Budget Outlay as % of GDP	13.38%	13.09%	13.12%	13.36%	12.74%

Further, as the increase in tax revenues projected by the government seems to be an overestimate, the revised budget outlay is in all probability going to be lower than this budgeted estimate.

More subsidies to rich

Even if the expenditure growth is slowing down, the budget outlay for the sectors that result in huge profits for the corporate houses that control the levers of power in the country cannot be affected. One of these sectors is investment in roads and highways. The allocation for the construction of highways has been stepped up from Rs 52,447 in 2016–17 RE to Rs 64,900 in 2017–18 BE, a huge increase of 24%! Virtually all of this is going to be doled out as grants to the private corporate houses in the name of Public–Private–Partnership (PPP). Let us explain this in greater detail.

The economists sitting in Washington/Paris/London keep coming up with innovative ideas about how to transfer government funds to the private sector. One such concept that has been embraced by the Government of India in a big way is this so-called PPP. Under this, the government invites the private sector to invest in infrastructure, provides the private investor a direct subsidy of up to 40% of the project cost, gives it land and other resources at concessional rates, guarantees the private partner a minimum rate of return on its investment (for instance, in the case of highways, the private investor is

allowed to collect toll charges from the users), and as if this is not enough, even the investment money is also often provided by the government in the form of long term loans at concessional rates. What a partnership!

Social sector expenditures

With growth in total budgetary spending slowing down, and the government continuing to dole out huge amounts to corporate houses, the sectors that have paid the price for the policy push to reduce the fiscal deficit are the social sectors.

But then how come Prime Minister Modi, leading intellectuals and the mainstream media hailed Jaitley's 2017–18 budget as a pro-poor and pro-farmer budget, and as a budget for the have-nots? The simple explanation: they are lying as usual.

Table 6 gives the BJP government's social sector expenditures for all the four budgets presented by Arun Jaitley, together with the last budget of the previous UPA Government. Strictly speaking, the figures for 2015–16 and later years are not comparable with the figures for 2013–14 and 2014–15. The reason is that in 2015–16, the Union Government accepted the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission and increased the share of the states in divisible pool of Central taxes from 32% previously to 42%, and simultaneously cut the allocations for social sector ministries sharply, arguing that these cuts would be more than compensated by the increase in states' share in Central taxes.

Table 6: Union Budget, Social Sector Expenditures, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2013–14 (A)	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18
Total Social Sector Exp.*	302,911	339,014	371,268	395,202	409,758	458,423
Budget Outlay	1,559,447	1,663,673	1,790,783	1,978,060	2,014,407	2,146,735
Social Sector Exp. as % of Budget Outlay	19.42%	20.38%	20.73%	19.98%	20.34%	21.35%
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	11,236,635	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455
Social Sector Exp. as % of GDP	2.70%	2.73%	2.71%	2.62%	2.72%	2.72%

*Note that there is no rigorous definition of what constitutes social sector expenditures. In our definition, we have taken the definition given by CBGA in its analysis of the Union Budget 2015–16 (*Of Bold Strokes and Fine Prints: Analysis of Union Budget 2015–16*, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, March 2015, p. 9, <http://www.cbgaindia.org>), and from this, excluded the figures for the Department of Urban Development to arrive at a figure comparable to the figure for social sector expenditure given in the 2017 Budget Speech of the Finance Minister. Then, to this, we have added the figures for Department of Rural Development and Food Subsidy. So, our calculation includes the figures for: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare+AYUSH, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Department of Rural Development, and Food Subsidy. A slightly different definition has been given in the *Economic Survey, 2013–14*, p. 232, and yet another definition has been given in *Economic Survey, 2014–15, Statistical Appendix*, Table 9.9, p. A140. Note also that our definition of social sector spending is a far more liberal definition than that adopted in the Budget papers for 2017–18, where the government has stated that its social sector expenditures for 2017–18 total Rs 195,473 crore.

From Table 6, it becomes evident that there is no significant increase in the government's social sector expenditures. They are projected to increase by only 11.8% over the revised estimates for 2016–17, which

means they will barely beat inflation. As a proportion of the budget outlay, they are expected to marginally go up by 1%, while as a proportion of GDP, there is no increase.

On the other hand, the budget documents also show that the total Central transfers to the States and Union Territories (including the States' share in Central taxes) as a percentage of the GDP are actually projected to fall in 2017–18 as compared to 2016–17 RE (Table 7). This fall in devolution of funds to the States is obviously going to adversely affect their social sector spending.

Table 7: Central Transfers to States, 2016–17 RE and 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2016–17 RE	2017–18 (BE)
Total Central transfers to States and UT, including State's share of Central taxes	981,148	1,075,558
GDP at current market prices	15,075,429	16,847,455
Total Union Resources transferred to States as % of GDP	6.51%	6.38%

As it is, the total Central and States expenditure on social services in India is very low. As per the *Economic Survey 2016–17*, this figure as a proportion of the GDP was 7.0% during 2016–17 BE. This is far below the average social sector expenditures of the 34 countries of the OECD, for whom this figure is 20%; for the 27 countries of the EU, this figure is even higher at around

30% of GDP. It is also way below the social sector expenditures of 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, for whom this figure is 18.6% (in 2009–10). The above data make it clear that the social sector expenditures of the Centre and States combined for India are going to remain at the same dismal level in 2017–18.

The demonetisation has had a devastating effect on the livelihoods of India's poor. Had the Modi Government had the slightest concern for the common people of the country, it would have taken steps to increase its allocations for those sectors that directly affect the people, that is, the social sector expenditures. The anti-people nature of the Modi government becomes evident from the fact that the total social sector expenditure of the Union government, even on the basis of the liberalised definition given by us above, at Rs 4.58 lakh crore, is less than the total tax exemptions given to the rich, which total Rs 5.5 lakh crore.

Even if we drop this fact-based critical examination of the budget from a socialist perspective, and examine it purely from the perspective of mainstream capitalist economics, at a time when the rate of investment in the economy has precipitously fallen into negative territory, the government should have increased social sector spending as it would have helped boost domestic demand. It is now fairly well established that government spending

on social sectors such as education and health has significant positive multiplier effects.¹⁵ [The fiscal multiplier is an estimate of the effect of government spending on economic growth. A multiplier greater than 1 corresponds to a positive growth stimulus (returning more than Re 1 for each rupee invested), whereas a multiplier less than one reflects a net loss from spending.]

The sole reason why the BJP–RSS Government led by the Modi–Jaitley duo is not increasing the country's social sector expenditures and give a boost to domestic demand is to please the country's foreign creditors, who are demanding "fiscal prudence". In the name of reining in the fiscal deficit, the World Bank and the giant corporations of the Western countries are demanding that the government reduce its social sector expenditures so that the country's welfare services can be taken over by private capital and enormous profits made. And the Modi Government is surrendering to their dictates.

Such is the nationalism of the BJP–RSS. It is confined to unfurling giant sized flags in universities, and forcing people to stand up while the national anthem is being played in cinema halls—while on the ground, it is bowing to the dictates of international financial institutions and running the country solely for the profiteering of giant foreign and Indian corporations, betraying the interests of the common people.

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Between The Lines**Racial Discrimination Returns to UK****Kuldip Nayar**

It's sheer racialism. Four British nationals of Pakistan origin committed a crime of sexual exploitation and were sentenced to imprisonment. But the judge McClosky, in his own wisdom, said that after serving the sentence they should be sent back to the country of their origin.

I wonder if this would have happened to a white man, especially to Europeans. The judge without demur said in his verdict that the convicts' nationality should be stripped. The ruling by an immigration tribunal subsequently also cleared the way for the Pakistanis to be removed from Britain. They had acquired British citizenship by naturalisation.

According to the *Dawn* from Karachi, they were among nine men of Pakistani and Afghan descent convicted of luring girls as young as 13 into sexual encounters using alcohol and drugs. They were based in Rochdale, in northern England. Five of the dual nationals deprived of their citizenship were British Pakistanis, while two were of dual British and Sudanese nationality. The remaining six were Australian, Iraqi, Russian, Egyptian and Lebanese dual nationals. To this date 10 of the orders have been appealed against.

Among the four facing deportation is ringleader Shabir Ahmed, sentenced in 2012 to 22 years in jail. The other three are Adil Khan, Qari Abdul Rauf and Abdul Aziz. Ahmed, who was convicted of rape as well as other charges, remains in custody, while the other three men have been released on licence. Khan, Rauf and Aziz were convicted on conspiracy and trafficking for sexual exploitation charges. Aziz was not convicted of having sexual intercourse with any child.

The judge at the hearing in the upper tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber described their crimes as "shocking, brutal and repulsive". His decision rejected claims concerning human rights laws and a complaint of "disproportionate interference" with their rights. The case centres on a decision by Prime Minister Theresa May, when she was home secretary, to take away the men's citizenship "for the public good".

The number of people subject to the power, under which the Home Secretary can deprive dual nationals of their British citizenship if it is deemed to be in the public interest, has increased since the coalition government came to power. The measure was included in the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act as a direct result of the July 2005 bombings in which 52 people died and more than 700 were injured. It was used only four times in the following four years, but has been used nine times since last year's general election.

The five victims of the gang who gave evidence in the 2012 trial were all white, and spoke of being raped, assaulted and traded for sex, being passed from man to man, and sometimes being too drunk to stop the abuses. The men, ranging in age from 22 to 59, used various defences, including claiming the girls were prostitutes. One British MP had demanded that the four men who appeared at the tribunal should be dep-or-ted "as soon as possible" saying "foreign-born criminals should not be able to hide behind human rights laws to avoid deportation."

This is somewhat similar to what President Donald Trump did soon after taking over. By an executive order, he temporarily blocked people from some Muslim-majority countries from entering the US on visas. This included the Green card holders who have the right to visit the US without having earned the nationality.

Like in the UK case, Trump's order did say that his order was to protect the American people from the threat of terrorism or criminal activities. But it doesn't necessarily do that. Instead, it points to the new president's serious thinking about putting the Islamophobia that was a central part of his campaign into practice. But Hillary Clinton who challenged him in the Presidential election has replied that they would defend the constitution of America. It does not debar anybody because America itself is a country of immigrants.

The very discussion on stripping nationality of a country's citizen is ominous. By declaring anybody anti-

national you can send him back to the country he once belonged. This will be very harsh on journalists and authors. They utilize the freedom of expression to run down their own country or politicians.

This is happening in India itself. Take the case of an online editor of a publication is facing the wrath of the Election Commission after the newspaper published the exit poll results after the first phase of election in UP. As many as 15 FIRs have been filed against the publication. Some time ago, even the owner of a national channel was arraigned by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry when he refused to tender an apology for what the channel had broadcast.

Some time ago, the ministry also defended the censorship. The minister explained that government had only one channel while the private sector had several. Therefore, the ministry had every right to use the official channel to put across the government point of view. I wish that this prerogative is used to describe the plight

of dalits or the minorities. But since the upper casts dominate the media, there is hardly any mention of the atrocities committed against the marginalized.

When it comes to India, at least there is no racialism. The attackers on the Parliament House and on Mumbai were tried by various courts and eventually sentenced. The convicts were Muslims. The emphasis on religion is itself bad. Saudi Arabia which is a Muslim country prefers Muslims to be in their midst. It is another story that they prefer Indian Muslims to Pakistani Muslims. Even the policeman there lets go the Muslims from India for any traffic violation while the Pakistanis are singled out for punishment.

The UK government will be blamed for racial discrimination if the order of the judge to send the convicts to their country of origin. Yet it must be admitted that racial discrimination is increasingly taking the centre of stage in the UK.

Mahatma Gandhi's Punyatithi

A function on January 30, 2017 at Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University in New Delhi, to observe the 69th death anniversary of the Father of the Nation, was jointly organised by JMI and the Society for Communal Harmony set up in 1990 by Dr. BN Pande and the eminent Islamic scholar Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi aka Maulana Ali Mian. An eminent social scientist, Prof. Anand Kumar, former Professor at JNU and at present a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, delivered a thought provoking lecture on Relevance of Gandhi Today. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Talat Ahmad, Vice-Chancellor of JMI, and the doyen of Indian journalists and columnists, Kuldip Nayar, President of the Society for Communal Harmony. Prof. Tasneem Meenai, Dean of Students' Welfare, JMI, took great pains to organise the function very efficiently and ensured that the auditorium of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology was fully occupied by the faculty, the students and some other persons not connected with JMI. It was heartening to note the enthusiasm among the youth to know more about and follow the teachings of the Mahatma about whom Einstein wrote at the time of Bapu's assassination on January 30, 1948 at the hands of a Hindu fanatic: "The generations to come will scarcely

believe that such a man in flesh and blood ever walked on this earth." Prof. Meenai welcomed the guests and the audience. Dr. Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, noted writer, educationist, activist in women's causes, former Member of the Planning Commission and Vice-President of SCH, introduced the subject. She and Dr. S. Farooq, Chairman, Himalaya Drug Company, had coordinated the programme on behalf of SCH.. Besides other constructive and positive activities the SCH has launched a programme of observing the birth or death anniversaries of some outstanding national leaders who not only played a key role in the freedom movement but also worked hard to bring unity and harmony among the various creeds and castes in this great subcontinent. Those who have been presently identified for this purpose comprise Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Acharya Narendra Deva, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Dr. Bishambhar Nath Pande and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. The Society invites intellectuals, cultural leaders and the youth to contribute towards achievement of its noble objectives of peace and harmony, social justice and egalitarianism.

– Chandrabhal Tripathi

Non-violent Action and Socialist Radicalism : Narendra Deva in India's Freedom Movement*

Anil Nauriya

The dynamic that linked non-violent movements for Indian freedom in the first half of the twentieth century with socialist participation in these movements along with socialist initiatives in peasant and workers' movements is reflected in the understanding that socialists led by Acharya Narendra Deva (1889–1956) developed especially on prevailing national and international class relations, particularly those between the imperial regime and dominant landed interests. While not wishing to confine themselves within a theoretical frame of truth and non-violence, Socialists theorized their participation in the non-violent movements. As the pre-eminent theoretician of the Congress Socialist Party established in 1934, Narendra Deva's understanding is of significance in providing an alternative Marxist and radical understanding of the Indian movement for freedom.¹ In writings on possible areas of agreement between Marxism and the Gandhi-led movements, Narendra Deva addressed matters concerning possibilities of convergence of the two strands of thought and method. This discussion traversed a fascinating range of issues, including matters concerning the ideological or organizational "ownership" of Marxism itself, ultimately confirming socialist participation in the Gandhi-led movements including the constructive programme of the Congress in the pre-independence period.

Born in the same year as Jawaharlal Nehru, Narendra Deva was to become a scholar of ancient India and of Buddhism, a lawyer and, after the Bolshevik Revolution, a keen student of Karl Marx and Lenin. He presided over the founding convention of the Congress Socialist Party held in Patna in May

1934. The early Indian socialists, like Narendra Deva, did not range themselves against the erstwhile Soviet Union or Marxism. The Congress Socialist Party came into being within the Congress as a Marxist party. Julius Braunthal notes, quite perceptively, that "(i)n its origins ... the Congress Socialist Party was not simply a Marxist party in the tradition of the European Social Democratic parties, but rather a party of the Bolshevik version of Marxism".² Narendra Deva stands at the head of the particular Indian Marxist tradition which was not part of the communist movement, associated itself organically with the national struggle, and also remained for a long time open to possibilities of co-operation with other Left groups, including the communists. Narendra Deva remained a Marxist throughout his life. Even as late as 1950 the Socialist Party was seen as a Marxist group having, in the words of Braunthal, "evolved from the Bolshevik version of Marxism to a Marxist version of humanitarian democratic socialism".³ In May 1952 at the Pachmarhi Convention of the Socialist Party, when Narendra Deva was away in China, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, who was voted to the chair, took the opportunity to expound his doctrine, widely seen as marking the party's departure from Marxism. In the ideological ferment and the political developments that followed, Narendra Deva shared his thoughts on 3 September 1952 in a letter to Asoka Mehta, his party colleague, making it clear that he would rather give up the party than abandon Marxism.⁴ The position adopted by Narendra Deva, who was to live only for another three-and-a-half years, was in contrast to that of other leading figures, like Jayaprakash Narayan, who had by this time already turned their back on Marxism.

* Revised version of the paper 'Non-violent Action and Indian Socialists: A study of Narendra Deva in the freedom movement' presented at a conference titled 'Non-violent Resistance in South Asian History' held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 20–21 February 2014, which was later published as NMML Occasional Paper.

¹ He has been appropriately described as "the leading exponent in the socialist movement in India of Marxism". See Paul Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 38.

² Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, Vol. 3, (1943–1968), London, Victor Gollancz, 1980, p. 224.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁴ Madhu Limaye, *Age of Hope*, Delhi, Atma Ram & Sons, 1986, p. 335.

Narendra Deva's place in the history of Marxist socialism in India may be gauged from the remarks made by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, at a function held at Teen Murti in New Delhi on 19 February 1989 to observe Narendra Deva's 33rd death anniversary. At this function, held around the time also of Narendra Deva's birth centenary year 1989–1990, Namboodiripad recalled that it was with Narendra Deva's speech at the Foundation Conference of the Congress Socialists held at Patna in May 1934 that he had first been exposed to Marxist socialism.⁵ Later he read Jayaprakash Narayan's "*Why Socialism?*", published in 1936.⁶ Another speech by Narendra Deva that influenced Namboodiripad was the one Narendra Deva made while seconding the Congress election manifesto at the All India Congress Committee in 1936.⁷

2. In the Freedom Movement

Brought up in an atmosphere suffused with patriotic feeling, Narendra Deva made an early translation into Hindi of Aurobindo Ghose's Bengali language articles on nationalism.⁸ He was drawn simultaneously to the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule League; of the latter Narendra Deva established in 1916 a branch in Faizabad district, United Provinces, where he was practicing as a lawyer, and became its secretary.⁹ Three years later he was a delegate at the Congress session held in Amritsar in the wake of the political crisis of 1919 and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.¹⁰ After the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920, Narendra Deva suspended his legal practice and joined the non-co-operation movement.¹¹ No pre-independence Congress

movement thereafter was without some significant contribution or participation by him.

From a relatively early stage, Narendra Deva discerned the interconnectedness of many incipient developments. In 1921, an agrarian agitation in the United Provinces culminated on 7 January in police firing at Munshiganj in the Rae Bareilly district.¹² At least seven persons were killed and many were wounded in the agitation and the firing incident. The *kisans* (peasants) had been demanding restrictions on evictions and on forced labour and abolition of illegal cesses and exactions. The movement affected Pratapgarh, Rae Bareilly and many districts of Oudh. Narendra Deva did not view the non-co-operation movement and the peasant risings as competing phenomena; he saw the dialectic between these movements:

The strongly organized *kisans* compelled the Oudh officials to reconsider the rent-revenue legislations. Evictions by notice were stopped. ... At that time the non-co-operation movement was at its height. The Government did not want the Kisan agitation to get linked up with that movement. For this reason also the Government became more responsive to the Kisan demands.¹³

An understanding of this symbiosis between the national movement and the peasant and workers' struggles illumines Narendra Deva's political and ideological positions. Narendra Deva's involvement with the non-co-operation movement was expressed also in his association with the "national schools" that emerged

⁵ Based on notes taken by the author at the meeting.

⁶ For text see *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Bimal Prasad (ed.), New Delhi, Manohar, 2001, pp. 1–89.

⁷ A report of this speech is available in Hari Dev Sharma (ed.), *Selected Works of Acharya Narendra Deva*, (hereinafter SW-AND), Vol. 1, New Delhi, Radiant Publishers, 1998, pp. 76–77.

⁸ See "Jatiyata", in Acharya Narendra Deva Papers (VI to X instalments, printed material, serial no. 2), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁹ See Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Varanasi, Acharya Narendra Deva Samajwadi Sansthan, 1967, p. 1; Vishvanath Sharma, *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Benares, Samaj Vigyan Parishad, Kashi Vidyapith, n.d.; and Raghukul Tilak, "As a Speaker and Writer", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds),

Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 111.

¹⁰ Sri Prakasa, "Combination of Greatness and Goodness", in Keskar and Menon (eds), op. cit., p. 121.

¹¹ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in *Socialism and The National Revolution* by Acharya Narendra Deva, Yusuf Meherally (ed.), Bombay, Padma Publications, 1946, p. xi (representative selection from political writings of Acharya Narendra Deva). On the evolution of the non-co-operation movement see *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, (Serial No 16: Loose Articles; Indulal Yajnik, "Memories of Non-co-operation"), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi.

¹² "Kisan Movement in the U.P.", *Congress Socialist*, 28 November 1936; reproduced in *Socialism and The National Revolution*, Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 56–61 at p. 60. See also H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1921–22, Vol. 1, [Reprint], New Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1990, p. 6 and p. 156.

¹³ "Kisan Movement in the U.P.", *Congress Socialist*, *ibid.*, p. 60.

at the time. At the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru, he joined the faculty of the Kashi Vidyapith, the national university founded in Benares in 1921, which evolved into a famous seminary of the Indian freedom struggle. Of this institution he became the Principal in 1926.¹⁴

Associated with the Independence of India League established in 1928 by Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, and others, Narendra Deva became, towards the end of the year, secretary of its UP provincial branch. In the midst of his commitments as an educationist, Narendra Deva also played a role in the agitation against the Simon Commission in Benares.¹⁵ The all-white Commission, intended to gauge India's "fitness" for further Constitutional development, had visited Benares in February 1928. Narendra Deva was thinking not merely in terms of Constitutional advance but also on the need for an economic programme that could be taken up or supported. In early 1929 he wrote to Nehru stressing the need for "providing intellectual food for our people"; towards this end he suggested that the Independence of India League should have a weekly paper, organize study circles and the like and also have a clear economic programme.¹⁶ Later in the year, the United Provinces Trade Union Conference was held under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru at Kanpur on 7 September 1929. At this conference Narendra Deva urged that "the future constitution of India should pay due regard to the rights of labour" and emphasized the need to guarantee a minimum living wage, free education, and medicine and to declare land as "the property of the community and not of any individual".¹⁷ While Narendra Deva had come early into contact with

Nehru, his close association with Gandhi dates, according to the Congress leader Sri Prakasa, from the annual convocation of Kashi Vidyapith in 1929 where Gandhi delivered the convocation address in the last week of September.¹⁸ Later the same month, within a few days of the convocation at Kashi Vidyapith, Gandhi was named as Congress President at the All India Congress Committee session held at Lucknow, a nomination which he declined. Thereafter the names of Vallabhbhai Patel, with the positive glow of his recent leadership of the peasant struggle in Bardoli, and of Jawaharlal Nehru were in the field for the office.¹⁹ Indicating his preference for Nehru, Narendra Deva joined Balkrishna Sharma of Kanpur in seeking to create some pressure, such as it may then have been, on Patel not to let his name go forward.²⁰ This perhaps caused the first of the strains that would occur between Narendra Deva and Patel.²¹ Irrespective of these events, however, Narendra Deva was invited to deliver the convocation address at Gujarat Vidyapith which followed barely over three months later on 11 January 1930, with Gandhi presiding over the event.²²

Narendra Deva participated in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930; he was arrested at Basti in the United Provinces in June 1930 and sentenced to three months rigorous imprisonment. News of the nature of the sentence, if not the arrest itself, seemed to have caused some surprise to Jawaharlal Nehru, then already incarcerated in Naini Central Prison, Allahabad.²³ Narendra Deva had already involved himself with peasant struggles and when, in the wake of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931, the Congress in UP appointed a

¹⁴ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. vii.

¹⁵ Narendra Deva does not refer to this. But Raghukul Tilak, an associate of Narendra Deva, and himself a freedom fighter from the then United Provinces, mentions Narendra Deva's role in the Simon Commission boycott in his note on Narendra Deva in S.P. Sen (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 3, Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1974, p. 237.

¹⁶ Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 9 February 1929, SW-AND-1, p. 3.

¹⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 8.

¹⁸ Sri Prakasa, "Combination of Greatness and Goodness", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 123. Sri Prakasa was the son of Dr. Bhagavan Das and close to Jawaharlal Nehru and Narendra Deva. He was general secretary of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee at this time. For Gandhi's convocation address on this occasion, see *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Vol. 41, pp. 463-466.

¹⁹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1929, Vol. 2, p. 262. Jawaharlal Nehru's name was proposed by Balkrishna Sharma of Kanpur, Patel's by Pandit Gourishanker. Apparently on Gandhi's intervention, Patel declined the consent to Pandit Gourishanker's proposal.

²⁰ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1991, p. 181.

²¹ Narendra Deva makes an allusion to the September 1929 events a decade later in his statement on the Congress Presidential election of 1939, asking, "... is it not a fact that Mahatmaji experienced some difficulty in persuading Sardar Patel not to contest the ... election with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru". (*National Herald*, 28 January 1939, SW-AND-1, p. 146).

²² See CWMG, Vol. 42, pp. 387-390.

²³ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Prison Diary", in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Vol. 4, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1973, p. 367.

committee to inquire into the prevailing agricultural situation and into such acts of the government as were in breach of the Pact, Narendra Deva became a member of the further inquiry committees set up for Gorakhpur and Basti districts.²⁴ The reports on Gorakhpur and on Basti documented, inter alia, police and administrative connivance in the reign of the zamindars and their illegal exactions.²⁵ In the following year when he led a batch of his students to participate in the no-rent campaign, Narendra Deva was again arrested in October and imprisoned in Benares District Jail from where he was released in June 1933.²⁶ At the beginning of 1934 Jawaharlal Nehru thought of Narendra Deva as a possible general secretary of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee in succession to Sri Prakasa who had wished, for personal reasons, to give up the assignment which he had held since 1928.²⁷ Narendra Deva's name was considered by Nehru particularly in the light of the fact that "the person who takes up the secretaryship must be prepared to go off to prison at any moment".²⁸

A few months later, in May 1934, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed within the Congress with Narendra Deva presiding over its founding convention at Patna. Various factors contributed to its formation, including the feeling among its initiators that the Congress was not doing enough to organize the peasants and workers. Nearly two decades later Madhu Limaye would point out yet another aspect which had contributed to the sentiment behind its formation, related not to Congress omissions as such but to an attitude taken up by the

Communists especially after 1928. Writing in 1952, Limaye observed: "Had the communists taken up a friendly attitude towards nationalism ... it is doubtful whether the CSP would have come into existence at all."²⁹ In July 1934, Gandhi visited Benares and a Socialists' deputation led by Narendra Deva called on him to press the socialist programme as outlined at Patna.³⁰ They had come to express their resentment especially of a Congress Working Committee resolution, adopted in June following upon the socialists' Patna conference of May 1934, and the reference in the resolution to "loose talk about confiscation of private property and necessity of class war", which the socialists saw as directed at themselves.³¹ Gandhi offered to place their suggestions before the Congress Committee but advised the socialists "to abide by the Congress decision without attempting to create unnecessary splits in Congress ranks or take over charge of the Congress machinery including its executive".³² The diary maintained by Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, suggests that there were at least two such meetings in Benares between Gandhi and the socialists on this occasion; Narendra Deva had made a number of observations and put some searching questions.³³ For example, he observed: "The constructive programme you drafted at Wardha is unable to lead towards the path of attaining freedom"; "(t)he Congress has made no effort to organize the Indian labour"; "(f)rom the viewpoint of independence a constructive programme is of no consequence"; "(i)f the political education of the people or their orientation about the economic principles is undermined, |freedom might not come for thousands of years"; and that "(i)f a mass organization of peasants and workers has

²⁴ *Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee to Enquire into the Agrarian Situation in the Province*, September 1931, republished, Gurgaon, Prabhu Publications, n.d., p. 49. The report can also be found as an appendix to B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 5, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996. The province-level committee comprised Govind Ballabh Pant, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, and Venkatesh Narain Tiwary. The police-zamindar nexus is also well-documented in the report and its annexures. In some other provinces there were at this time still more direct police interventions against the peasantry. See, for instance, Rev. Fr. Verrier Elwin, *In the Deserted Villages of Gujarat*, Bombay, published by Chimanlal J. Shah, 1931. Elwin wrote this a month before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

²⁵ *Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces*, op. cit., pp. 190–197.

²⁶ SW-AND-1, p. 330.

²⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 11 January 1934, SWJN, Vol. 6, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974, pp. 84–87.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁹ Madhu Limaye, *Evolution of Socialist Policy*, Hyderabad, Chetana Prakashan, 1952, p. 2. Cited after Braunthal, op. cit., p. 225. The language in the quote by Braunthal differs slightly from the words quoted by me here from Limaye's booklet but the meaning is the same.

³⁰ "Discussion with Socialists' Deputation", 27 July 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 253.

³¹ For the Congress Working Committee Resolution of 17–18 June 1934 see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 1, p. 300.

³² "Discussion with Socialists' Deputation", 27 July 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 254.

³³ "Dialogue with Narendra Dev etc...", 28 July 1934, Mahadev Desai [Mahendra Valjibhai Desai (ed.)], *Mahadevhai's Diary*, Vol. 19, New Delhi, National Gandhi Museum, 2010, pp. 11–17.

to take place, it can be only on the basis of class and therefore class consciousness must be created".³⁴

Narendra Deva reminded Gandhi: "Capitalism today is sustained by British imperialism. You have already said that you did not object if class consciousness is awakened by non-violent means. We have become socialists only to attain freedom."³⁵ In a letter to Narendra Deva a few weeks later, Gandhi described the conversations as "heartly" but advised him and other socialists to think in terms of a "practical socialism" as against their "scientific socialism".³⁶ Yet the dialogue with the socialists gave impetus to a reflexive thought process in Gandhi, a process already underway in his creative tension with Jawaharlal Nehru. Fifteen days later Gandhi wrote to Nehru about books that Narendra Deva and his socialist colleague Minoos Masani had recommended: "I have read one of the books Masani gave me and now I am devoting all my spare time to reading the book recommended by Narendra Deva."³⁷ And within the next fortnight, towards the end of August, Gandhi had begun to give expression to his idea of leaving the Congress.³⁸ In a letter to Patel in the first week of September, Gandhi explained the reasons: he felt he had become a dead weight upon the Congress and his presence was estranging the intelligentsia from it; he referred to "the growing group of socialists" among whom he counted many "self-sacrificing co-workers"; and he desired that their "reason must be set free".³⁹ Gandhi's political connection with the Congress and with many leading socialists remained strong despite his formal retirement from the Congress organization which he announced in mid-September and gave effect to at the end of October.⁴⁰

Contrary to the oft-projected image of radical political figures being pushed to the margin of Congress politics, Narendra Deva remained, as we shall see, strongly entrenched within the Congress for much of the period till March 1948 when socialists parted company with the parent party. In April 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had already had a fairly long association with Narendra Deva, included him in the Congress Working Committee that he constituted as Congress President; Narendra Deva would remain on it till March 1938.⁴¹ At this time Narendra Deva served also as the President of the UP Pradesh Congress Committee.⁴² The years 1937–39 saw Congress ministries being formed in various provinces, including UP, under the Government of India Act 1935. The CSP had decided not to join these ministries and Narendra Deva explained his position at the All India Congress Committee meeting at Delhi in March 1937.⁴³ He warned against the notion that the legislatures under the new Act would be "reservoirs of mass power"; he wanted the Congress to engage in such work as would be "conducive to strengthening the power of the masses".⁴⁴ In fact, the UP Premier, Govind Ballabh Pant had, in 1937, invited Narendra Deva, who had been elected to the UP Assembly, to join his government.⁴⁵ Narendra Deva, given his opposition to office acceptance, naturally declined the offer.⁴⁶ During these years he maintained the stance of a well-wishing critic, retaining his focus on mass struggle. The All India Congress Committee session at Delhi in September 1938 saw Narendra Deva lead a walk out on a resolution on civil liberties to which the Congress Working Committee had declined to accept an amendment of concern to kisans.⁴⁷

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁶ Letter to Narendra Deva, 2 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 274.

³⁷ Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 17 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 318.

³⁸ Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, 26/27 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 371.

³⁹ Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, before 5 September 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 405.

⁴⁰ Statement to the Press, 17 September 1934, CWMG, Vol. 59, pp. 3–12; Letter to Rajendra Prasad, 30 October, 1934, CWMG, Vol. 59, p. 270.

⁴¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. 1, p. 252; see also Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 106.

⁴² Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva: Jeevan Aur Siddhanta*, Varanasi, Acharya Narendra Deva Samajwadi Sansthan, 1971, p. 14; see also *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 1, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2002, pp. 400–401.

⁴³ *Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. 1, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ G.B. Pant to Jawaharlal Nehru, 19 July 1937 in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 7, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 189.

⁴⁶ C.B. Gupta, *Autobiography: My Triumphs and Tragedies*, Lucknow, published by Umakant Mishra, 2003, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 106; see also *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. 2, pp. 278–279.

The resolution moved by Bhulabhai Desai referred to the increasing advocacy of violence “in the name of civil liberty” by “some people, including Congressmen” and reiterated the support to Congress governments on measures for “the defence of life and property”.⁴⁸ Narendra Deva and others apparently felt that the resolution, if passed as it stood, “would give a handle to the CID and police to harass Congressmen”.⁴⁹

Anxious that the national struggle be resumed early after the resignation of the Congress governments in 1939, Narendra Deva was keen on the Civil Disobedience programme conceived in the following year. However, he raised questions about the Individual Satyagraha programme which he found wanting in some respects.⁵⁰ He felt that the proposed agitation ought not to be confined to a mere expression of India’s right to oppose the war, as Gandhi’s statement had suggested, but be directed against the utilization of Indian human and material resources for the war. Be that as it may, Narendra Deva was for a while, until he was arrested in January 1941, provincial “dictator” of the individual civil disobedience movement in UP and acting President of the PCC.⁵¹ Narendra Deva was taken from Lucknow, where he was arrested, to Gorakhpur District Jail and then to the Agra Central Prison; he was released from the latter in September. He had reportedly taken ill in prison and Gandhi had expressed much concern over his health during the incarceration.⁵² The following year found Narendra Deva in Gandhi’s Sevagram on the eve of the meetings leading to the Quit India movement and he was involved in the drafting of some of the preliminary

resolutions in 1942. A resolution drafted by Gandhi in April 1942 called upon Britain to “let go her hold on India”.⁵³ Of this, Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru: “Acharya Narendra Dev has seen the resolution and liked it.”⁵⁴ In the course of information-gathering by British intelligence on the financing of the struggle, at the end of 1942 it was also reported, inter alia, that “according to a CSP worker from Bombay”, Gandhi had in May 1942 handed over a sum of seven hundred thousand rupees, collected from a Bombay businessman for the Tagore Memorial Fund, to Narendra Deva and other CSP leaders “for the nationalist movement”.⁵⁵ Whether or not this was true, it attested to the growing acknowledgement of a closeness between the Gandhi and the socialists.

Given the state of his health, Narendra Deva’s presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference at Bedaul, Muzaffarpur in June 1942 had to be read out in his absence. He questioned the People’s War thesis canvassed by the Communist Party of India and asserted that the World War could cease to be an imperialist war only if India “could feel free and obtain a charter of freedom for her millions of Kisans and labourers”.⁵⁶ During Narendra Deva’s prolonged stay with Gandhi at his Ashram in the summer of 1942 there was much interaction between them. Whether or not Narendra Deva co-drafted with Gandhi a draft of the resolution asking for British withdrawal passed by the Congress Working Committee in July 1942, as one scholar has suggested, there is no doubt that he exercised appreciable influence on Gandhi’s thinking at this time.⁵⁷ On 8 August 1942,

⁴⁸ B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 8, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 305.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 305n.

⁵⁰ Acharya Narendra Deva, “Vyaktigat Satyagraha Aur Azadi ki Ladai: Mahatma Gandhi Ke Vaktavya par Ek Drishti”, *Sangharsha*, 28 October 1940.

⁵¹ See Bhupen Qanungo, “The Individual Civil Disobedience (October 1940–December 1941)”, in B.N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885–1985)*, Vol. 3, New Delhi, All India Congress Committee (I) and Vikas Publishing House, p. 422; and Visalakshi Menon, *From Movement to Government: The Congress in the United Provinces, 1937–42*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2003, p. 298n.

⁵² CWMG, Vol. 74, p. 268 and fn, p. 270, and p. 344.

⁵³ “Draft Resolution for A.I.C.C.”, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Vol. 76, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1979, pp. 63–65 at p. 64.

⁵⁴ CWMG, Vol. 76, p. 66. The resolution passed in May 1942 at the AICC meeting in Allahabad, not attended by Gandhi, was less direct, emphasizing merely what India would have done in relation to the War had the country been free. See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Vol. 12, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1979, pp. 276–279.

⁵⁵ P.N. Chopra, *Quit India Movement*, Vol. II, New Delhi, Interprint, 1991, pp. 50–51. A year later, the office of the Secretary of State informed a British MP in regard to reports of this kind that these were largely “based on hearsay” and most such information “certainly does not amount to proof” (Chopra, op. cit., pp. 88–89).

⁵⁶ SW-AND-2, p. 28.

⁵⁷ For the suggestion that a draft of the CWC resolution was done jointly by Narendra Deva and Gandhi, see K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi and the Congress Socialist Party, 1934–48*, Jalandhar, ABS Publications, 1986, p. 272. On this matter, Mahendru relies mainly on oral conversations or indirect materials. A noteworthy suggestion that Mahendru makes is of Narendra Deva acting at this stage as a bridge between Gandhi and Nehru.

Narendra Deva spoke at the All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay in support of the Quit India resolution and on the following day he was arrested and later detained in Ahmednagar Fort.⁵⁸ He would not be released until 1945 after being moved in March of that year first to Bareilly Central Prison and next, in June, to Almora Jail. He continued to view the Quit India movement as a “majestic struggle” which breathed “a lofty spirit of internationalism”.⁵⁹

3. Narendra Deva’s Theoretical Construct

It was Narendra Deva’s view that “The Zamindari system in India could not be destroyed unless British Imperialism in India was destroyed. With the end of British Imperialism would also end the princely order in India. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to concentrate on the ending of British Imperialism.”⁶⁰ That the colonial administration had utilized the landlords as the “underpinning” of their rule is well-documented.⁶¹ This alliance was not only embedded in the legal and economic structure but was also political. In the United Provinces too, Narendra Deva pointed out in 1938, the landlords’ party, the National Agriculturist Party, “was born as the result of the midwifery of Sir Malcolm Hailey”, the Governor of the province.⁶² That Hailey had put the weight of the “entire administrative machinery” behind the organization of this party is borne out by the evidence.⁶³ These efforts by Hailey went back virtually to the time of his appointment as Governor in 1928 and were made in the wake of the Report of the (nationalist) Motilal Nehru Committee to determine the Principles of the Constitution of India, which had recommended adult franchise entailing, if implemented, enfranchisement of millions of tenants; the Statutory

Commission headed by Sir John Simon was also then due to arrive in the UP.⁶⁴ Hailey’s efforts to build a landlords’ party became “the central theme of his governorship”.⁶⁵

The essential unity between Narendra Deva and other socialists, therefore, lay in their understanding that the socialist tradition could not cut itself off from or be at cross purposes with the national movement but should instead be in the vortex of it. As Narendra Deva would put it at a party conference held at Hardoi, United Provinces, in 1952: “...our party moulded Marxism to the conditions of our country and enriched it. Our party maintained that keeping distance from national movements in the colonies was not Marxist but opportunistic and reactionary; later the communists also accepted this”.⁶⁶

In an article and pamphlet written and published in 1950–1951 Narendra Deva observed that “no injustice is done to any Marxist principle by accepting Satyagraha. Neither does it amount to a synthesis of Marxism and Gandhism. Marxism has never been fond of violence. If the objective can be achieved by non-violent means, Marxism would give it (non-violence) topmost preference.”⁶⁷ Narendra Deva’s position was well-founded in his study of Marx and Marxism. In Marx’s speech at a meeting held in Amsterdam on 8 September 1872 at the time of The Hague Congress of the International Working Men’s Association, he had said:

We know of the allowances we must make for the institutions, customs and traditions of the various countries; and we do not deny that there are countries such as America, England, and I would

⁵⁸ A gist of Narendra Deva’s speech at the Bombay AICC on 8 August 1942 appears in *The Indian Annual Register*, July–December, 1942, Vol. 2, pp. 247–248.

⁵⁹ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 187.

⁶⁰ SW-AND-1, (Speech at Kisan Conference in Motihari, 29 February 1940), p. 212.

⁶¹ See, for instance, P.D. Reeves, “Landlords and Party Politics in the United Provinces, 1934–7”, in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1968, p. 262.

⁶² “Lecture on Political Parties in India”, Kanpur, 31 August 1938, SW-AND-1, p. 132.

⁶³ Reeves, “Landlords and Party Politics in the United Provinces, 1934–7”, in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, op. cit., p. 265.

⁶⁴ John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872–1969*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 156–161.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁶⁶ Acharya Narendra Deva, “Hardoi Socialist Sammelan Mein Bhashan”, *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 3 (1947–1956), New Delhi, Nehru Smarak Sanghralaya Evam Pustakalaya (NMML), 2004, p. 386. My translation of this speech was published as Acharya Narendra Deva, “The Socialists Prevented Perversion of Marxism”, *Janata*, 25 April 1993.

⁶⁷ Prem Bhasin, “The Heritage of Acharya Narendra Deva”, *Janata*, 21 February 1971. Bhasin quotes from Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva: Yug Aur Netritv*, p. 290. See, however, for the original source, Acharya Narendra Deva, “Marxvaad Aur Socialist Party”, *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 3, op. cit., p. 241.

add Holland if I knew your institutions better, where the working people may achieve their goal by peaceful means. If that is true, we must also recognize that in most of the continental countries it is force that will have to be the lever of our revolutions; it is force that we shall some day have to resort to in order to establish a reign of labour.⁶⁸

Marx's implication was clear: the existence of certain circumstances obviates resort to violence.⁶⁹ This is why Narendra Deva insisted that acceptance of Satyagraha did not mean a *synthesis* of Marx and Gandhi. Even in later years, the Congress Socialist tradition was prepared to conceive of situations where force might be required. The democratic socialist Asoka Mehta seems also to agree with the Narendra Deva's interpretation when he writes: "As I have already said, this is true of negative states (i.e., states without democratic traditions: A.N); in their case there is no other alternative. Surely, you cannot capture Nepal from the infamous Ranas by winning elections, for there are no elections! You have to resort to extra-parliamentary, even insurrectionary methods in Nepal."⁷⁰

In studies on the period, many scholars have in recent years tended to employ a vocabulary that denies a prominent place to the Congress Socialist and to unlabelled Congress traditions in the organization of the peasantry. This is probably a mistaken approach as in most provinces the peasantry had, especially after the

entry of Gandhi into national politics, gradually become the backbone of the Congress support structure. The role of the unlabelled Congress in bringing this about was significant. This was a point that Narendra Deva recognized when he said in 1939, while warning of the dangers of "peasantism" that the "Congress, if it claims to be a national organization, will have to become pre-eminently a Kisan organization because the Kisans constitute the bulk of the organization".⁷¹ In this context it may be noted that the expression "Left" even now is occasionally used, restrictively, for the communist tradition alone. Many members of the Communist Parties are not even aware of the unlabelled Congress and Congress socialist contribution because their party literature seldom mentions it.⁷² Moreover, many socialists themselves now use the term "Marxist" interchangeably with "Communist". That there was a strong and vigorous Marxist tradition outside the Communist Parties therefore is seldom acknowledged. There is also a post-independence nomenclature complication connected with prevalent tendency on the part of many to identify the socialist movement in India almost exclusively with the Lohia tradition. While Lohia was a prominent socialist leader before independence, the ideology associated with his name is largely a post-independence development. Historically speaking, it is not synonymous with the Indian socialist tradition. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP), founded in 1934, was defined expressly in Marxist terms. The socialist retreat from Marxism came much later, and largely after 1947.⁷³ Narendra Deva, the doyen of

⁶⁸ Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, pp. 292–294 at p. 293.

⁶⁹ Narendra Deva refers to Marx having "cherished the belief that in democratic England and America socialism could be achieved without recourse to violence". (Address of Acharya Narendra Deva, Chairman, Reception Committee, Fifth Annual Congress Socialist Party Conference, Cawnpore, 1 March 1947, reproduced in SW-AND-2, pp. 160–165.)

⁷⁰ Asoka Mehta, *Democratic Socialism*, Hyderabad, Chetana Prakashan, 1954, p. 63.

⁷¹ "Presidential Address at All India Kisan Conference", Gaya, 9 April 1939, SW-AND-1, p. 169 and p. 176.

⁷² For example, in his *The History of the Kisan Sabha*, Harkishan Singh Surjeet makes short work of the All India Kisan Conference held at Meerut in January 1936 under the Presidentship of the socialist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay at which the decision to establish an "All India Kisan Congress" was taken. Surjeet writes: "The formation of AIKS was preceded by a meeting in Meerut in 1936 where the necessary preparations were made..." (see Harkishan Singh Surjeet, *The History of the Kisan Sabha*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1996, p. 25). Yusuf Meherally, on the other hand, writes: "On the occasion of the Second Annual Conference of the Socialists at Meerut in January 1936, a Convention of Kisan workers from all over India was also held. Out of this meeting grew the All India Kisan Sabha." "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. xiii. The general secretary's report at the Socialist Party's annual conference in 1948 stated: "It was mainly on the initiative of the Party, assisted powerfully by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and later by Professor N.G. Ranga, that the All India Kisan Sabha was created". (*Report of the Sixth Annual Conference held at Kotwalnagar, Nasik, March 19th to March 21st, 1948*, Bombay, Socialist Party, p. 88).

In Sumit Sarkar's '*Popular Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership in Late Colonial India: Perspectives and Problems of a 'History from Below'*', (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, K.P. Bagchi & Co., 1983) the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) is mentioned a couple of times in 95 pages, though about half the work is concerned with the 1930s and 1940s, and seen essentially as a "legal cover" for the activities of leaders such as P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, and A.K. Gopalan.

⁷³ Even in 1948 aspects of the report presented by Jayaprakash Narayan, the Socialist Party general secretary, at the Nasik session of the party, were criticized by party members as tending toward abandonment of Marxism. See "Debate on the report

Indian socialists, did not give up his commitment to Marxism.⁷⁴

As we have noted, Narendra Deva's speech and later Jayaprakash Narayan's *Why Socialism?* brought E.M.S. Namboodiripad to Marxism and Congress socialism. In his contribution to the Narendra Deva Birth Centenary Volume, Namboodiripad wrote:

The first memory that comes to my mind is of the speech that he delivered at the first preparatory meeting of the Congress Socialist Party held at Patna in May 1934. Listening to his speech was, in fact, my first exposure to the ideology of socialism as applied to Indian conditions. That was long before I read JP's *Why Socialism?*⁷⁵

The text of the 1934 speech by Narendra Deva was later published in Yusuf Meherally's classic compilation.⁷⁶ Narendra Deva's address at the founding convention of the Congress Socialists at Patna in May 1934 created, in Yusuf Meherally's words, "quite a stir".⁷⁷ Narendra Deva stressed that "The Russian experiment is slowly though surely helping the masses to take the centre of the world

stage."⁷⁸ He wanted an intertwining of the emerging forces and the national movement, urging that working class struggles and Congress struggles must synchronize: "All the great national struggles that have been conducted by the Congress have been preceded by strikes and other forms of industrial unrest. It is only when the two struggles have synchronized with each other that the national struggle has reached its highest water-mark."⁷⁹ In 1919, for example, the agitation against the Rowlatt Act had coincided with railway workers' strikes.⁸⁰ The same had been the case during the non-co-operation movement in the early 1920s especially in the south.⁸¹ Likewise, when the workers of the Assam-Bengal Railway went on strike in 1921 Gandhi had lent support to them.⁸²

Narendra Deva saw how the working class movement and the national movement's mobilizations in the countryside could lend strength to each other. Explaining the benefits of policy co-ordination, Narendra Deva argued: "One more advantage would have accrued to us as a result of such a policy. In India where the labour force is drawn from villages and where the industrial worker remains a villager at heart the worker can act as a standard bearer of revolution in villages."⁸³

of the General Secretary presented at the Sixth Annual Conference of (the) Socialist Party, Nasik, 19–21 March 1948", in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Vol. 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library / Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp. 452–454.

⁷⁴ This is acknowledged, for example, in (i) N.G. Goray, "Father of Democratic Socialism in India", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 88. Goray was a leading socialist; (ii) Brahmanand, "A Marxist who understood the Indian situation", *Sunday*, Calcutta, 27 January 1980, pp. 28–29. Brahmanand had edited *Towards Socialist Society*, a compilation of some of Narendra Deva's writings, published by the Centre of Applied Politics, New Delhi, in 1979; and (iii) Hari Kishore Singh, "The Rise and Secession of the Congress Socialist Party of India (1934–1948)", in Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *South Asian Affairs: Number One*, (St. Antony's Papers: Number 8), London, Chatto & Windus, 1960, pp. 116–140 at p. 131.

⁷⁵ E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Acharya Narendra Deva: The Scholar Politician", in Prem Bhasin, Madhu Limaye, Hari Dev Sharma, and Vinod Prasad Singh (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: Birth Centenary Volume*, New Delhi, Radiant Publishers, 1990, p. 18. In his earlier work, *How I became a Communist* (Trivandrum, Chinta Publishers, 1976), Namboodiripad mentions the Patna Socialist Convention and Narendra Deva's address (p. 163). He does not here mention its influence upon him, while acknowledging further on the fact that Jayaprakash Narayan's *Why Socialism* "became our guiding document in our day-to-day activities for quite some time" (p. 166). However, this is spelt out in Namboodiripad's contribution dated 16 October 1956 sent to the editor of the socialist journal *Sangharsh*. Here Namboodiripad refers to various speeches by Narendra Deva, including the May 1934 speech, as having inspired not only him but all anti-imperialist young people who like him came into the socialist struggle in the fourth decade of the century. (E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Ek Samyavadi Neta Ka Patra", *Sangharsh* [Acharya Narendra Deva Ank], 1956, Number 26, p. 126).

⁷⁶ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., pp. 3–29.

⁷⁷ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. xii.

⁷⁸ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Lajpat Jagga, "Colonial Railwaymen and British Rule: A Probe into Railway Labour Agitation in India, 1919–1922", in Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

⁸¹ See, for example, C.S. Krishna, *Labour Movement in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi, K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1989, especially pp. 173–177.

⁸² "Speech to Railway Workers, Chittagong", 31 August 1921, CWMG, Vol. 21, pp. 24–28.

⁸³ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 11. Interestingly, when in the aftermath of the Meerut-Maliana incidents in Uttar Pradesh in the late 1980s this writer, along with some others, met the CPM leader, B.T. Ranadive, to urge a working class intervention, the

There was yet another vital factor. While admitting “that the Congress today has defects and shortcomings”, Narendra Deva argued that “yet it can easily be the greatest revolutionary force in the country”, reminding the delegates that “We should not forget that the present stage of the Indian struggle is that of the bourgeois democratic revolution and therefore it would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement that the Congress undoubtedly represents.”⁸⁴ There was here not merely depiction of the ideological stage of the national movement; there was also some introspection about those who made up the Left and what they themselves had gained from their involvement in the national movement: “Most of us today within the Congress are only intellectual socialists, but as our long association with the national struggle has repeatedly brought us into intimate contact with the masses, there seems to be no danger of our degenerating into mere theorists and doctrinaires.”⁸⁵

The 1934 speech by Narendra Deva is a basic and foundational document of Indian socialism, frankly Marxist in approach and hailing the Russian experience as “slowly though surely helping the masses to take the centre of the world stage”—a point Narendra Deva reiterates in 1939 at Gaya—and yet firmly locating the socialist forces in India in the vortex of the Indian national

movement. This was in accordance with the precepts initially set out in 1920 by Lenin,⁸⁶ whose writings had been studied very closely by Narendra Deva. The 1934 address also charted out the key role that peasants were expected to play in the Indian struggle. A few weeks before the Bombay session of the Congress, Narendra Deva advised that “mere diffusion of knowledge of socialist theories would not do” and it was necessary to move beyond a mechanistic approach: “We have also to study the Indian problems in a new light, i.e., from the Marxian point of view. We should not lose sight of the Indian background.”⁸⁷ That is, Marxism had to be applied to the specific conditions of time and place.⁸⁸ This did not mean that he was prepared to give up on the essentials of a Marxist understanding. Significantly, he opposed the proposal at the Bombay Congress in 1934 that “truth and non-violence” be substituted for “legitimate and peaceful means” in the Congress creed.”⁸⁹

Narendra Deva delivered the Presidential address at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference held at Ahmedabad on 23 and 24 June 1935. Skillfully maintaining the balance between internationalism and nationalism, he addressed the criticism that as internationalists they could not be depended upon in the fight for independence. Narendra Deva asserted that there was “no antagonism between independence and socialism.”⁹⁰

latter echoed a similar thought about the Indian working class being only “half a working class”, that is, rooted in the peasantry. The difference was that while Narendra Deva saw this fact as a basis for revolutionary mobilization in the villages, Ranadive used it to explain or plead for non-intervention by the working class in an inter-communal conflict. However, the mobilization done in the 1980s under the leadership of Shankar Guha Niyogi in the Chattisgarh area appeared to exhibit the possibilities that Narendra Deva had outlined in his 1934 speech. See in this context, Anil Nauriya, “What Chattisgarh Movement Means”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30 November 1991, pp. 2735–2736.

⁸⁴ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ See G. Adhikari, (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Volume I, (1917–1922)*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971 for Lenin’s Theses on National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 and also for M.N. Roy’s supplementary theses and the changes made by Lenin in the latter. See also M.N. Roy, *Memoirs*, Delhi, Ajanta Publishers, 1964 (Reprint 1984), p. 379. There is some discussion of Lenin’s and M.N. Roy’s views on the role of Communist Parties in relation to nationalist movements in colonial countries, in my articles “Gandhi and the Indian Resurgence”, *Janata*, Bombay, 27 February 1983 and “Criticising Gandhi”, *Mainstream*, New Delhi, 27 January 1996.

⁸⁷ Acharya Narendra Deva, “The Task Before Us”, *Congress Socialist*, 29 September 1934, SW-AND-1, p. 36.

⁸⁸ This point was made repeatedly by Narendra Deva till the end of his life. In June 1952, speaking at a provincial party conference at Hardoi he argued: “...our party moulded Marxism to the conditions of our country and enriched it. Our party maintained that keeping distance from national movements in the colonies was not Marxist but opportunistic and reactionary; later the communists also accepted this”. See my piece, “The Ideology of Narendra Deva”, and translation of Narendra Deva’s speech in *Janata*, Bombay, 25 April 1993.

Nor did the early socialists nurture an allergy towards the Soviet Union or Marxism. The CSP organ in undivided Punjab during the Second World War, for example, was known as the *Bolshevik* and was produced by socialists like Yamin Dar (see K.L. Johar, *Unsung Torchbearers: Punjab Congress Socialists in Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi, Harman Publishing House, 1991, pp. 368–370).

⁸⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 38.

⁹⁰ “Presidential Address at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference”, Ahmedabad, 23–24 June 1935 by Narendra Deva, Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

As a matter of fact, socialism cannot be built without the conquest of power and in the present conditions of India the anti-imperialist struggle is only a prelude to socialism. We are not lacking in national pride either. Of course we hate chauvinism and do not subscribe to the notion of “my country right or wrong”.... Lest it should be doubted in certain quarters whether I am correctly stating the socialist position, I would like to fortify myself with the following passage from the writings of Lenin: “Is the emotion of national pride foreign to the Greater Russian Class-conscious proletariat? Certainly not. We love our language and our native land ... and it is for that reason specially that we regard with a peculiar hatred our past serfdom.... (and) ... our present serfdom.”⁹¹

Narendra Deva responded also to another concern, raised “from the right”, about the socialist role in the national struggle: “The other criticism is that we are disrupting the struggle for independence ... by raising the issue of class struggle at this stage. We may be forgiven for pointing out that under present conditions it is impossible to win independence without mobilizing the workers and peasants for the political struggle....”⁹²

To the Congress he urged that it pay greater attention to the working class; to the working class he issued the reminder that it was still weak. He advised that

... the working class can extend its political influence only when by using its weapon of general strike in the service of the national struggle it can impress the petty bourgeoisie with the revolutionary possibilities of a strike.... Unfortunately some of the working class leaders do not seem to accept this point of view.⁹³

Labour, Narendra Deva believed, could “with the application of proper tactics ... easily develop into a

mighty political force and can establish hegemony over the national movement”.⁹⁴ He identified 1928 as the juncture in time after which the working class leadership initiated its isolationist policy: “Ever since 1928 they have followed a policy of isolation and it is this suicidal policy which has isolated them not only from the working masses but also from the national struggle ...”⁹⁵ Opposing such sectarianism, Narendra Deva argued that “A party which that wants to establish its hegemony over the national movement must send its members to all the classes....”⁹⁶ “We regard ourselves as custodians of Congress honour ...”, Narendra Deva declared.⁹⁷ Narendra Deva’s address in Gujarat was very well received, recalled Dinkar Mehta who had participated in the Salt Satyagraha in Gujarat, was Joint Secretary of the all-India CSP between 1935 and 1940 and who later joined the Communist Party.⁹⁸ Even so, the address did not, Mehta maintains, help soften the attitude of the local Congress in Gujarat towards the CSP and Narendra Deva was viewed by some of the, presumably regional, newspapers as a “communist agent”; Mehta suggests that it was on account of the unsympathetic attitude of the local Congress that he himself started to spend his organizational time mostly outside Gujarat and often in south India.⁹⁹ It was not merely one end of the political spectrum that was difficult to bring around. Problems of socialist unity would continue to frustrate Narendra Deva throughout his career. In 1938 we find Narendra Deva lamenting: “... our Communist friends were not prepared to concede the Marxist character of our party. Efforts at unity hence prove futile but they show that the CSP has ceaselessly striven for unity in (the) socialist movement from its inception”.¹⁰⁰ He often recalled that the Nazis in Germany had benefited from disunity among socialists and communists.¹⁰¹

In the August 1936 speech, mentioned by Namboodiripad, Narendra Deva described the Congress Election Manifesto of 1936 as a revolutionary and not a

⁹¹ Idem.

⁹² Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹³ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁹⁴ Idem.

⁹⁵ Idem. A similar idea had been expressed by Narendra Deva in his Presidential address at the First Session of the All-India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna on 17 May 1934; see “Socialism and the Nationalist Movement” (1934), Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁸ Dinkar Mehta, Oral History Transcript, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 120.

¹⁰¹ Narendra Deva, “Fascism ka Vastavik Roop”, in *Rashtriyata aur Samajwad*, Banaras, Gyan Mandal Prakashan, 1949, p. 719.

reformist document.¹⁰² Narendra Deva made a point here also about the “communal award” announced in 1932 by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, setting out, inter alia, the proposed legislative seat shares among various religious communities and, within the majority community, a demarcation on the basis of caste. Narendra Deva said he was aware that “a few handful of people whether Moslem or Hindu” wished to take advantage of the “award” and asserted that “... a few Hindus who had been strongly opposing the ‘award’ would be the first in the field demanding separate electorate as against joint electorate”.¹⁰³ The Congress manifesto according to him had taken these facts into consideration and was crafted in a manner “as not to give a handle to any reactionaries”.¹⁰⁴ On “office acceptance” (in the provincial governments established under the Government of India Act of 1935), Narendra Deva differed with the election manifesto, saying that the question should be decided by the Faizpur Congress coming up in December 1936 rather than after the provincial legislative elections were over.¹⁰⁵ We have seen above that Narendra Deva declined to join the Congress Government that came to be formed in the United Provinces in 1937.

4. Kisans, Land Reforms And Land Struggles

With the enforcement of the Government of India Act, 1935 and particularly as a sequel to the provincial elections that followed in which Congress governments came to power in several provinces, peasant expectations from the new dispensation grew exponentially. The constitutional and political background to these developments was set out prior to government formation in a note by Narendra Deva, K.T. Shah, and Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁰⁶ This reiterated the Congress Working Committee resolution of 7 July 1937 which had clarified that although the Congress would accept cabinet responsibilities, it did not subscribe to the doctrine of partnership as according to it “the proper description of the existing relationship between the British Government

and the people of India is that of exploiter and exploited....”¹⁰⁷ Narendra Deva was conscious of the limitations of the political and statutory framework in which these governments functioned. In his presidential speech at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference in June 1935 he made a thorough criticism of the 1935 Act and more particularly for its protection of vested interests.¹⁰⁸ In his speech on the Tenancy Bill in the United Provinces Assembly on 11 November 1938, Narendra Deva attacked the Zamindari system. The Zamindars had been given rights not based on equity and these rights must now go.

The Zamindars were not doing anything for promoting the good of the society. They were merely tax gatherers. The Congress was out to kill imperialism and since landlordism was the creation of Imperialism both of them must perish. In fact landlordism would live in India so long as Imperialism lasted. There should be no sympathy for the landlords who had all along joined hands with Imperialism to crush national movements.¹⁰⁹

Pleading for abolition of Zamindari (which happened subsequently) Narendra Deva declared that the Kisans were not satisfied with the Tenancy Bill.¹¹⁰ Even so, Narendra Deva had, as member of the Select Committee which examined the Bill’s provisions, influenced the drafting to no small extent. Ajit Prasad Jain who, as Parliamentary Secretary in the Congress government, had helped steer the Bill through the Legislative Assembly, would recall: “There was not one proposal which he had made that was not accepted, and there was no proposal which he had disapproved that was included; yet when Rafi asked Narendra Deva to sign the Select Committee Report, he declined. We felt annoyed. What other reason could there be except that the Congress Socialists wanted to show off their extremism?”¹¹¹

Actually, Narendra Deva’s concerns lay outside committee rooms on the need to strengthen the

¹⁰² SW-AND-1, pp. 76–77.

¹⁰³ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ “Note on the Constitutional Impasse”, SW-AND-1, pp. 250–253.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁰⁸ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 78–84.

¹⁰⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 141.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹¹¹ Ajit Prasad Jain, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1965, pp. 49–50.

movement outside. Although various kisan demands were pressed on the Congress, it is quite evident, as we have seen, that Narendra Deva was conscious of the statutory constraints within which the Congress governments were functioning. He did not wish to cede the opposition space to others. In his tour of UP in December 1938, Narendra Deva described the Hindu Mahasabha and the Nationalist Agriculturist Party as “dead organizations which had failed”; they “had no programme for the uplift of the masses, who were being ruthlessly exploited by capitalists and taluqdars and the zamindars with the help of British Imperialism”; the reason for their failure lay in the fact that “the leadership of those bodies was in the hands of capitalists and wealthy persons who hardly found time to attend to the needs of the masses”.¹¹² Earlier, in April 1938 Narendra Deva had spoken at the Delhi Provincial Congress Socialist Conference. He stressed the need to build class organizations and was equally firm that these organizations must not lose their anti-imperialist thrust by getting into an antagonist relation with the Congress. On the contrary, they must strengthen and reinvigorate it. They must also “quicken the pace of the social struggle in this country”.¹¹³ Similar points were being made at this time by Jawaharlal Nehru in his speeches

at Kisan meetings.¹¹⁴ As President of the All India Kisan Conference held at Gaya in 1939, Narendra Deva returned to the theme, acknowledging that it is the peasants’ support which had placed the Congress in power.¹¹⁵ He was able to add now that “Kisans constitute the bulk” of the Congress.¹¹⁶ Narendra Deva’s brief survey, in his address, of the growth of peasant organizations across the country and the origin of the All-India Kisan Sabha is significant as one of the authoritative socialist accounts of the growth of the kisan movement.¹¹⁷ In an article in November 1936 and in the Gaya address of 1939, the role of the non-communist and even pre-socialist peasant organizations is mentioned and frankly acknowledged by Narendra Deva. N.G. Ranga, a leading socialist and peasant leader in the pre-independence years, has also written lucidly about the path-finding struggles by peasants in south India and elsewhere.¹¹⁸

Interestingly, Narendra Deva, in his Gaya address lauds the Bihar Kisan movement as the “best organized unit of the All-India Kisan movement.”¹¹⁹ “The Kisans of Bihar,—men, women and children—have fought the grimmest fights against the Zamindar and have won many victories.”¹²⁰ About the United Provinces, Narendra Deva observed:

¹¹² “Speech at Partabgarh”, *National Herald*, 17 December 1938, SW-AND-1, p. 142.

¹¹³ SW-AND-1, p. 124.

¹¹⁴ See e.g., an official report of Nehru’s meeting with peasants at Doiwala, Dehradun in 1937 [subject files: Part IV, (D) Reports (1937), serial No. 22, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, NMML]; for Nehru’s meetings in Bihar see Walter Hauser, “Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement”, Doctoral dissertation, Chicago, 1961, p. 126 (Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi).

¹¹⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 163.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹¹⁷ See, SW-AND-1, especially pp. 170–178.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, N.G. Ranga, *Revolutionary Peasants*, Amrit Book Co., New Delhi, 1949.

In North India, particularly Bihar and UP, organizations going by the name Kisan Sabha were active by 1928. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and the UP Kisan Sabha were represented at the All Parties National Convention held at Calcutta in 1928. The fact of pre-Congress peasant mobilizations (i.e., say, pre-1917 mobilizations) is more readily acknowledged in current writings than the fact of simply *Congress* or even *Congress Socialist* mobilizations of peasants prior to independence. A somewhat rare reference—to the role of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in relation to the Punjab peasantry—is to be found in Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol. 2*, New Delhi, People’s Publishing House, 1984, p. 187. The Frontier Gandhi’s visit to rural Punjab in August 1931 drew more than a lakh persons, mostly peasants. Bilga came to be known as the “Bardoli” of Punjab. Ryot Sabhas were set up in several Assam districts by the 1930s largely on Congress initiative. (See K.N. Dutt, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, Lawyers’ Book Stall, 1958, pp. 69–70.) Also, Purshottam Das Tandon, identified in later years primarily as a “Hindiwallah” and conservative, emerged on the political scene in UP as a mobilizer of the peasantry. (See, for example, Majid Hayat Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918–22*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978, pp. 121–122; for the 1930s see also, “The Allahabad Tenants’ Conference”, *Indian Annual Register*, 1931, Vol. 2, pp. 304–308). Narendra Deva acknowledges Tandon’s role in taking up the cause of the Kisans (SW-AND-1, p. 171). Similarly, socialist leaders like Yusuf Meherally were also constantly on the move in later years. Meherally “had presided over a big Kisan conference held in Central Punjab in mid-1936”. (See Prem Bhasin, “Yusuf Meherally”, *Janata*, Bombay, Annual Number, 1997.) The Utkal Congress Samajwadi Karmi Sangh was formed in February 1933. This later became the provincial branch of the All-India Congress Socialist Party and the promoter of the *Krushak Sangh* in the province.

¹¹⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Since the Congress took the reins of administration in its hands in these provinces the Kisan movement has looked up. The Kisans of U.P. are politically developed and can easily become the backbone of the peasants' fight for economic freedom but they have lacked organization so far.

This drawback is being remedied by the re-organisation of the U.P. Provincial Kisan Sangh, which has started functioning effectively.¹²¹

He identified Bengal as "a weak spot" in kisan organization and advised kisan organizations there to work with the various socialist parties and as far as possible with the Krishak Praja Movement.¹²² It is noteworthy that he does not in this context in Bengal suggest alliance with the Congress as a whole. The reason was obvious. The Congress in Bengal was known to be landlord dominated. In his address Narendra Deva acknowledged contradictions between the Congress and kisans in some areas where "the Congress organization is controlled by professional men, merchants and moneylenders of the city and as their interests collide with those of the rural population, they cannot be expected to safeguard the interests of the peasantry".¹²³ He recognized that

the level attained by the Congress organization is uneven in different provinces and as several committees are controlled by Zamindar elements... (i)n such places, peasants will not receive that assistance from the Congress committee to which they are entitled.... It is exactly in such places that the existence of the Kisan Sabha will be mostly needed...."¹²⁴

These inter-provincial comparisons need pursuing especially because of the paradox that Congress-initiated land reforms fared badly in Bihar where the Kisan Sabha, according to Narendra Deva, was strongest; the reforms were relatively more successful in UP both before and after independence. Was this related in part to the differential strategies pursued by kisan organizations in

the two regions? In his speech at the kisan conference at Motihari in February 1940, Narendra Deva made a critical point, often lost sight of in many later studies of pre-independence peasant struggles: "The Zamindari system could not be destroyed unless British Imperialism in India was destroyed."¹²⁵ According to him, "(i)t was impossible to remove poverty and unemployment without first removing British domination over India".¹²⁶ Essentially, as Narendra Deva maintained in his Gaya address in 1939, "the colonial exploitation from which the peasant suffers cannot be ended without achieving complete independence" and "as he cannot enjoy political freedom without political power, so long as India is in bondage it is necessary that peasants should strive for national freedom in co-operation with other classes".¹²⁷ So the Congress, as the "biggest anti-imperialist front working in India for the last 54 years" had to be strengthened:

We have great expectations from the Congress. If a few Zamindars manage to enter into this great organization, there is no danger; but, when the number is large and the Congress organization is captured and its policy and programme guided by the Zamindars then the danger becomes grave. It would be a bad day when Kisans and Kisan Sabha workers would sever their connection with the Congress. They should continue to be with the Congress in spite of the grave provocation. *They could not alter the Congress programme by walking out of the Congress.* (emphasis added)¹²⁸

Particularly after the outbreak of the Second World War, Narendra Deva was keen on resumption of the anti-colonial struggle; he found it odd that the United States, otherwise closely aligned with England, "is neutral while India is dragged into the war!" and attributed this to India's status as a "slave country".¹²⁹ While deploring the delay in resuming the struggle, he criticized "attempts to lower the Congress in public estimation":

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 172.

¹²² Ibid., p. 174.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 168–169.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

¹²⁶ Idem.

¹²⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 164.

¹²⁸ SW-AND-1, p. 212.

¹²⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 213.

We have full confidence in the Congress. We can make our voice intensely heard and its influence keenly felt through this great organization of ours. We can change its leadership if required, but we should not disturb the solidarity of the same. Let us strengthen the Congress. *Let the organization feel our strength.* It is a bad policy to have a separate organization other than the Congress. The Indian National Congress is the only all-India Indian political organization on national lines. This is the only national organization. The Kisan Sabha is a class organization, but class organization is not the only thing which is wanted; what is wanted is a truly national organization competent to speak in the name of the nation as a whole and this is the Congress. (emphasis supplied)¹³⁰

Congress initiatives on reform of land relations in the immediate pre-war were not inconsiderable; so also were peasant expectations from the Congress, often without adequate consideration for the statutory restraints under which Congress regimes functioned. In provinces like the UP, the reforms had the support of the bulk of the Congress. Some of the ground had been prepared for this by the report of the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee which submitted its report in November 1936.¹³¹ It was not always smooth sailing. In Orissa the reform Bill of 1938 was reserved by the Governor for consideration by the Governor General under Section 299 of the Act of 1935 and assent was withheld. The Bill had sought to reduce rents in Zamindari areas in parts of Orissa to the rate of land revenue payable in the nearest ryotwari areas with a compensation for the zamindars to be computed at 2

annas in the rupee.¹³² In Madras province the Congress government was considering that in the areas under the Permanent Settlement the ryot was the “owner of the soil” and also opted for restoration of the levels of rent existing in 1802 when the Settlement was made.¹³³ This could not be implemented before the Ministry resigned. The UP Tenancy Act of 1938 provided for security of tenure by giving all statutory tenants hereditary rights and placing restrictions on resumption of lands by the zamindars.¹³⁴ Provisions for arrest on failure to pay rent were done away with.¹³⁵ In the Bihar legislation rent increases made since 1911 were done away with, as were provisions for damages on arrears; interest was also reduced by 50 per cent.¹³⁶ The rent relief in Bihar was given on the basis of an assessment of areas where the rents had gone up steeply; in such cases rent reduction could go even to eight or ten annas in the rupee.¹³⁷ Occupancy tenancies were protected and ejection for non-payment of rent was restricted.¹³⁸ Sub-tenants could become tenants if they had been cultivating the land for 12 years.¹³⁹ Illegal exactions by landlords became penal offences.¹⁴⁰ Transfer of holdings by Kisans was made lawful subject to a fixed rate of commission to be received from the tenant upon the transfer.¹⁴¹ Rajendra Prasad claimed that the reforms in Bihar were “a solid achievement which perhaps no other province could boast of” and that “had the kisan leaders acted more wisely and in greater concert with the Ministry, they might have gained even more”.¹⁴² This claim can be questioned and it has been suggested that in Bihar, where the reforms were based on a compromise arrived at with the landlords, it was not possible for the peasants “to extract concessions like their UP counterparts”.¹⁴³ This is to some extent a

¹³⁰ Idem.

¹³¹ The Committee, appointed by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee in May 1936, was headed by Govind Ballabh Pant and had as its members, Purushottam Das Tandon, Sampurnanand, Venkatesh Narain Tiwary, and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

¹³² Reginald Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India, [Part II: Indian Politics, 1936–1942]*, London, Oxford University Press, 1944, pp. 137–138.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 137.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 138.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

¹³⁶ Idem.

¹³⁷ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1994 (First published, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1957), p. 456.

¹³⁸ Coupland, op. cit., p. 139; See also, Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 457.

¹³⁹ Thomas A. Rusch, *Role of Congress Socialist Party in Indian National Congress, 1931–42*, Doctoral dissertation, Chicago, (Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi), p. 232.

¹⁴⁰ Idem.

¹⁴¹ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 457.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁴³ Kaushal K. Sharma, “Nationalist Struggle and Agrarian Movement in Bihar, 1927–1947” in Kaushal Kishore Sharma, Prabhakar Prasad Singh, and Ranjan Kumar (eds.), *Peasant Struggles in Bihar, 1831–1992*, Patna, Centre for Peasant Studies, 1994, at p. 112.

paradox because of the strength of the kisan movement in Bihar to which Narendra Deva drew attention. One major source of conflict in Bihar was provided by the inability of the provincial government to prevent zamindars from keeping fallow such lands as they had purchased in execution of court decrees so as to prevent the creation of any other tenancy rights upon them.¹⁴⁴ An effort was made to deal with this problem through the Restoration of Bakasht Land Act of 1938 which was intended to restore lands sold in execution of decrees for arrears of rent during the depression years.¹⁴⁵ Bakasht lands were the “lands in possession of landlords, in which tenants had acquired occupancy rights ... which would be revived if given to settled Ryots”.¹⁴⁶ The working of the Act of 1938 was weakened on account of certain provisions of which the landlords took advantage.¹⁴⁷ Narendra Deva spoke in support of the struggles in Bihar for restoration of such lands “to the actual tillers of the soil” and in this connection condemned the incident at Amwari, in Saran district, where there had been a “brutal and cowardly assault, in police custody, on the renowned Buddhist scholar Shri Rahul Sankrityayan by the goondas of the local Zamindar”.¹⁴⁸ Narendra Deva paid tribute also to the “brave and dauntless Kisans of Rewara, where the biggest Bakasht fight was fought and won....”¹⁴⁹

One difference in the Bihar and UP situations was in the psychological atmosphere created by the Congress in UP; Narendra Deva’s observation in his presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference at Gaya in April 1939 about kisans constituting the bulk of the Congress organization was especially true of the United Provinces. In a letter to Nehru sixteen months earlier,

Narendra Deva had, as we note below, foreseen trouble in Bihar on account of the attitude of some Congressmen there. It is probably true that many kisan leaders too did not adequately recognize the constitutional constraints under which the ministries functioned. Interestingly, this omission continues to be reflected in some contemporary scholarship which proceeds on an implicit assumption of unlimited possibilities of reform and even revolution within a constitutional context of colonialism. The thought that it might have been useful and even rational to keep some measures for legislation in an independent India (much as several aspects of land relations in China would change *after* the 1949 revolution) does not figure significantly or at all in the scholarship on the period; there is a tendency to categorize the Congress-oriented movements into two mutually exclusive camps, usually described as “left” and “right” (or classified as non-compromising, revolutionary or, “popular” on the one hand and “compromising”, “reformist” or ‘elitist’ on the other), these appellations being determined merely or mainly on the basis of positions taken by specific individuals or groups within the colonial context of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁵⁰ This tendency is to some extent a reflection of the specific left-wing politics of this period which often, by not paying adequate attention to the limitations of the colonial context, virtually outed itself by the time, on conclusion of the colonial period, that the new objective context might have enabled such political groups to have made a greater difference.¹⁵¹

Given the colonial ambit within which the provincial governments functioned, the debt relief measures proposed by the Congress governments were also fairly

¹⁴⁴ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 459.

¹⁴⁵ Kaushal K. Sharma, op. cit., at p.118.

¹⁴⁶ Narendra Deva’s Presidential address at the All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, 9 April 1939; SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹⁴⁷ There is an illuminating discussion in Kaushal Sharma’s work, cited above, of some aspects of this legislation. One provision was that the land in question would not be restored to the original tenant if it had already passed to another tenant. This also enabled landlords to introduce dummy tenants and defeat the legislation. See Kaushal K. Sharma, op. cit., at p.118.

¹⁴⁸ Narendra Deva’s Presidential address at the All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, 9 April 1939; SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹⁴⁹ Idem. On the struggle in Reora (Rewara) and the role of Jadunandan Sharma, see Sho Kuwajima, “The Reora Satyagraha (1939): Its Contemporary Relevance”, in William R. Pinch, *Speaking of Peasants: Essays on Indian History and Politics in Honor of Walter Hauser*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2008, pp. 233–246.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, D.N. Dhanagare, *Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics*, Agra, Institute of Social Sciences, Agra University, 1975; Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: Class, Community and Nation in Northern India, 1920–1940*, London, Anthem Press, 2002; and Maya Gupta, *Experiment with Swaraj: The U.P. Legislative Politics, 1937–1939*, NMML monograph, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2003. For Narendra Deva’s account of post-revolution land reforms in China, see “Land Reform in China”, *Bulletin No. 19 of the National Geographical Society of India*, Benares, May 1953, being the text of his lecture delivered at the Society on 20 November 1952; also reproduced in SW-AND-4, pp. 3–8.

¹⁵¹ This is precisely the denouement that Narendra Deva had wished to avoid, but which in the end would overwhelm the socialists as well in 1947–48.

drastic. In UP, for example, the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee Report in 1936 had paid special attention to this matter, apart from questions of land tenure, tenancy, rents, and illegal exactions.¹⁵² An examination of some of the debt relief legislation brought forward at the time suggests appreciable progress in this sphere.¹⁵³ The UP Agriculturists and Workmen Debt Redemption legislation and the Money-Lenders' legislation of 1939 sought to scale down debts according scheduled rates of interest between 5 per cent and 8 per cent; it was also provided that debts would not exceed "the difference between twice the principal and the amount paid by the debtor towards the principal or interest, or both of the loan".¹⁵⁴ The Madras Debt Relief Act of 1938 abolished outstanding interest on debts incurred before 1 October 1932 until 1 October 1937.¹⁵⁵ The North West Frontier legislation closely followed the Madras law with some variations.¹⁵⁶ Caps were specified to the rates of interest at 6.25 per cent simple interest in Madras (as in the North West Frontier Province) and 9 per cent in Bihar.¹⁵⁷

Bad health dogged Narendra Deva. His Presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference in June 1942 at Bedaul, Muzaffarpur had to be read out in his absence. A report with some details of the Bedaul address has been reproduced in the second volume of his *Selected Works*.¹⁵⁸ According to Narendra Deva, the Second World War could cease to be an imperialist war only if India could "feel free and obtain a charter of freedom for her millions of Kisans and labourers". However, such differences over the characterisation of the war cast their shadow over the Kisan Sabha. Tall leaders like N.G. Ranga and Indulal Yagnik had dissociated themselves

from the Sabha by 1944. After the 1942 movement in particular, with the arrest of those then engaged in the struggle against British rule, the Kisan Sabha had come to be dominated by those who were affiliated with the communist movement. Narendra Deva expressed his deep disappointment with this state of affairs at a meeting of kisan leaders at Bombay after his release in 1945. A short report regarding this is reprinted in his *Selected Works*.¹⁵⁹ It is based on M.A. Rasul's account.¹⁶⁰ Narendra Deva's concern was understandable. The implications of this disarray in the Kisan movement would be serious, especially in the context of the evolving CPI line on the Pakistan scheme. Even otherwise, the split in the kisan movement between the socialists and Swami Sahajanand, the leader of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS), was "reflected by 1941 in the division of the BPKS".¹⁶¹ This year marked also the break between Congress Socialists and the Communists in the All India Kisan Sabha, with rival organizations coming into being.¹⁶² This was prior to the still more severe socialist-communist differences which surfaced over the Quit India movement initiated in August 1942. As Walter Hauser points out about the break in 1941:

This left Sahajanand alone at the head of the Bihar movement and when he assumed the anti-national 'People's War' position with the communists in 1941–42 and stood apart from the popular August rising, the BPKS was to all intents and purposes dead; it could not sustain the loss of popular support which the Swami's actions incurred despite his subsequent break with the communists and his effort to seek new associations with the Congress.¹⁶³

¹⁵² *Report of the Committee Appointed by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee to Enquire into the Agrarian Situation in the Province*, 1936; republished Gurgaon, Prabhu Publications, n.d.

¹⁵³ K.G. Sivaswamy, *Legislative Protection and Relief of Agriculturist Debtors in India*, Poona, published by D.R. Gadgil, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1939.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 367–368. The sequel to the Debt Redemption Bill was the UP Debt Redemption Act, 1940 which was enacted with changes by the Governor under his special powers in 1940, after the Congress ministries had resigned on India being dragged, without proper consultation, into the Second World War; the legislation was re-enacted after Indian independence through U.P. Act XIII of 1948. There are some differences in the interest rates specified in the original legislative proposals and the Act as passed.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁷ Coupland, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁸ SW-AND-2, pp. 27–28.

¹⁵⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 89.

¹⁶⁰ M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1989, p. 339.

¹⁶¹ Walter Hauser, "Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁶² N.G. Ranga, *Kisans and Communists*, Bombay, Pratibha Publications, n.d., p. 4.

¹⁶³ Walter Hauser, "Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

There was now hesitation even in the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal to associate with Sahajanand. Humayun Kabir, representing the Krishak Praja Party, put his finger on the crux of the problem when he assessed the post-1945 scenario:

Our party is the strongest organisation composed of Kisans alone. It has been there since 1936–1937. Our party fought the elections in 1936 and is going to do so this time. When Swamiji visited Bengal, we told him we were ready to affiliate with his AIKS but not now. We will do so after the elections. *We have to fight the League in the elections, and affiliation at this moment will have an adverse effect on us. The question of Pakistan is to be decided in Punjab and Bengal.*¹⁶⁴ (emphasis added)

Narendra Deva and Humayun Kabir understood the critical role that the Kisan movement could have played by strengthening forces that may potentially have helped keep the subcontinent together. N.G. Ranga has written about the anti-sectarian struggle that had to be waged at this time in the Kisan movement.¹⁶⁵ Congress Socialists waged a spirited struggle among peasants and workers in the 1946–47 period against the divisive ideologies. Obviously disillusioned with the erratic policies pursued by the CPI, Sahajanand resigned as President of the All-India Kisan Sabha in March 1945 and established an all India Kisan body of his own.¹⁶⁶ By this time Sahajanand was veering round to Narendra Deva's position on Congress-Kisan relations. In January 1945 Sahajanand, in a letter to the Gujarat-based peasant leader, Indulal Yajnik expressed satisfaction at a statement made by the latter: "I am also glad that you emphasized the point that the Kisan Sabha would not come in conflict with the Congress in matters political and this also appeared in the Press."¹⁶⁷ A few days later in a statement of his own, Sahajanand said on 17 February 1945:

It must be borne in mind by all concerned that I want very much and am trying my level best for the consolidation, if possible, of both the Congress and the Kisan Sabha, the former as the national organ of Indian people fighting for complete freedom and full democratic rights and symbolizing our collective revolt against and resolve to fight out slavery and subjugation and the latter as the independent class organ of the Indian peasantry, fighting for their rights and interests and symbolizing their revolt against and resolve to fight out feudalism, capitalism and their allies and supporters.¹⁶⁸

In the event, these developments perhaps came too late in the day to make an adequate impact on the now fast-moving developments.

5. Religious-Sectarian Questions

Narendra Deva had warned in his Presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference in Gaya in 1939:

In certain parts of the country, where the bulk of landowners are not of the same religion as the mass of peasants, Kisan organizations have assumed a communal character. Such organizations have come into existence chiefly because the Congress organization of the province grossly neglected the interests of the peasants. The All-India Kisan Sabha has to contend with real difficulties in such places.¹⁶⁹

Religious-sectarian questions became important and would have a bearing on aspects of the Kisan struggles as well as the manner in which the socialists and the Left as a whole would relate themselves with the non-violent struggles for freedom. Narendra Deva was forthright on the religious-sectarian question. In June 1934 he had demanded that no member of any communal

¹⁶⁴ M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 340. As is evident also from Rasul, op. cit., p. 329, Swami Sahajanand developed differences related to such issues as the CPI's policy on the Pakistan scheme and this contributed to a schism in the All India Kisan Sabha at least by February 1945, if not earlier.

¹⁶⁵ See N.G. Ranga, *Revolutionary Peasants*, New Delhi, Amrit Book Co., 1949.

¹⁶⁶ Rakesh Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, p. 177. Gupta acknowledges: "Another crisis came in AIKS when Swami Sahajanand left it on questions relating to 'organization' and Communist Party's policy on 'Pakistan'."

¹⁶⁷ *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, File No. 23, "1942–45: Correspondence exchanged between Indulal Yajnik and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati regarding All India Kisan Sabha", (Letter dated 25.1.1945 from Swami Sahajanand Saraswati to Indulal Yajnik), pp. 16–17, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi.

¹⁶⁸ *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, File No. 23, "1942–45: Correspondence exchanged between Indulal Yajnik and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati regarding "All India Kisan Sabha", pp. 20–21, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

¹⁶⁹ SW-AND-1, p.168.

party should be a member of the Congress. He stressed the economic factor in resolving the Hindu-Muslim question. Speaking at a public meeting in New Delhi, he was reported to have attacked the Hindu Mahasabha who had no following and whose only aim seemed to be straining the relations between the communities¹⁷⁰

The UP Provincial Hindu Sabha and National Agriculturist Party, he saw in 1936 as being the “bulwark of reactionary forces”.¹⁷¹

According to M. Hashim Kidwai, among others, the proposal for a coalition government between the Congress and the Muslim League in UP in 1937 fell through on account, *inter alia*, of the opposition of “Congress-Socialists” and “Congress Communists”, both of whom feared that the land reforms programme of the Congress might be stalled as a result of such a coalition.¹⁷² This question, of whether to oppose the League or to ally with it, remained a classic Congress dilemma. Hashim Kidwai names Narendra Deva from among the Congress-Socialists, and Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Z.A. Ahmad from among the “Congress Communists” as being partly responsible for the alliance proposal not coming through. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Rajendra Prasad on the subject on 21 July 1937. Nehru referred to a meeting between himself, Maulana Azad, Narendra Deva, Govind Ballabh Pant, and others in which it was decided to “offer stringent conditions to the UP Muslim League group...”.¹⁷³ Interestingly, the autobiography of Dr. Z.A. Ahmad is silent on the subject.¹⁷⁴

On 10 December 1937, Narendra Deva suggested in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru that in the elections to the *local* bodies due in 1938 possibilities might be explored for a “bloc of the Congress and the League for the specific purpose of these elections on the basis of a common ... programme”.¹⁷⁵ The letter is noteworthy for many reasons. Narendra Deva wanted to avoid a clash with the League in the elections to the local bodies. He was wary of Congressmen doing anything that might give a “handle” to the League to alienate the Muslims

from the Congress. He would have preferred Congressmen not to contest these elections at all. Hence the loud thinking on a possible “bloc” with the League. The proposal is not made without reservations; he was not sure if the arrangement would be “feasible” and was not quite clear about its desirability. Narendra Deva shared his doubts with Nehru over the question of a larger alliance:

It is clear in my mind that there can be no question of a compromise with the Muslim League as it is constituted today. That will mean compromise with the fundamental principles which govern us today for although the League has changed its creed and broadened its programme the truth is that there is no fundamental change either in its objective or in its programme. The leadership continues to be reactionary as before and unless it is altered no one can believe that the new programme will be put into action or honest efforts will be made to achieve the new objective.¹⁷⁶

The suggestion made by Narendra Deva in December 1937 with regard to *local bodies* (in contrast to his position in June–July 1937 when Ministry-making in the province as a whole was being discussed) appears to have been based on the expectation that the rest of the League could be isolated from its leadership. Ironically, while this may have been a possibility in UP in and around June 1937 it was perhaps no longer so in December 1937 even on a limited local body scale.

Narendra Deva questioned the position of the Muslim League and other communal-sectarian organizations with growing emphasis in the next few years. The crunch appears to have come with the land reform legislation of the UP Government. By November 1938 the Tenancy Bill was before the UP Legislative Assembly. Narendra Deva made some hard-hitting points. Continuing a theme he had dwelt on in May 1938 when he questioned the Muslim League’s commitment to independence, he saw the League as being the “props and pillars” of the Zamindari system. He argued that if the League was

¹⁷⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 34.

¹⁷¹ SW-AND-1, p. 80.

¹⁷² M. Hashim Kidwai, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, New Delhi, Publications Division, Government of India, 1986, p. 104.

¹⁷³ See Valmiki Chowdhury (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents, Vol. I, 1934–38*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1984, pp. 63–67.

¹⁷⁴ Z.A. Ahmad, *Mere Jeewan Ki Kuch Yadein*, Lucknow, Sankalpa Systems, 1997.

¹⁷⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 109.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

really in sympathy with the kisans as claimed in its manifesto, there was no reason why it should not support the proposals made.¹⁷⁷

A month later Narendra Deva was in Partapgarh, declaring that organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the National Agriculturist Party were being exploited by zamindars with the help of British imperialism. Yet, while criticizing the Muslim League, he had still not lost hope. He was reported to have said that “the day was not far off when both the Congress and the League would march hand in hand, forgetting all communal differences, with the common object of fighting British imperialism and capitalists alike.”¹⁷⁸

A year later, in October 1939, he was moved increasingly to stress the similarities between the League and the Hindu Sabha, both of which he saw as representing vested interests.¹⁷⁹ In a lecture in February 1940 on communal problems, Narendra Deva observed that the League’s demands “were not only increasing but were being changed from time to time with the result that the League... was seriously thinking of dividing India....”¹⁸⁰

Unlike the organized communist movement, he saw through the fallacy of defining ‘nation’ on the basis of religion. As a Marxist, he realized that this was not secular nationalism. He therefore emphasized other factors in addition. He argued:

The language of the communities was not different, and in provinces, like Bengal and the Punjab, Hindus and Muslims spoke Bengali or Punjabi. Even in UP, where the problem of Hindi and Urdu was more acute, the two languages were really one, possessing the same grammar, the same style and the same vocabulary. In any literature *which had to be written for the masses*, this difference had to cease and neither of the tendencies to enrich

Hindustani with Sanskrit or Arabic words would succeed.¹⁸¹ (emphasis added)

Narendra Deva emphasized the role and importance also of other Muslim organizations apart from the League. He noted, for example, that the “Shias had disclaimed the Muslim League and so also (had) the Momins”.¹⁸² Earlier, in May 1938, he had observed that the Shias led by Wazir Hassan disfavoured separate electorates because with Sunni predominance they “had no chance of being returned”.¹⁸³ Later, in June 1945, he reiterated the authority of the Shia Conference to speak in the name of Shias.¹⁸⁴ The British authorities, in their bid to strengthen the League, never conceded this and similar facts. In his lecture on the communal problem in 1940, Narendra Deva stressed the Colonial role in dividing the communities, a continuing theme in Narendra Deva’s writings and speeches.

Narendra Deva differed sharply from the communist line after 1940 of equating Hindu-Muslim unity with “Congress-League unity”. According to him, “...unity between communities is essentially the result of a long process of integration. Pacts are, however, temporary expedients to serve temporary ends. But the unity of communities is a different affair. It is a slow and painful process”.¹⁸⁵

Pakistan, he maintained in June 1945, was no solution: “Pakistan or no Pakistan, the communal problem will have to be tackled all the same and can be tackled only by laying emphasis on the economic issues which equally affect the Hindu and Muslim masses of the country.”¹⁸⁶

He added:

I shall no doubt welcome a settlement of the communal question with the League, but this does not mean that I should advocate unity of action in the political field. Without identity of outlook and objectives such a unity will be either short-lived or

¹⁷⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 141.

¹⁷⁸ SW-AND-1, pp. 142–143.

¹⁷⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 200.

¹⁸⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 207.

¹⁸¹ SW-AND-1, p. 208.

¹⁸² SW-AND-1, p. 209.

¹⁸³ SW-AND-1, p. 135.

¹⁸⁴ SW-AND-2, p. 69. Wazir Hasan’s concern at the propagation of the idea that there were very few Muslims in the Congress and that the League was the true representative of the Muslims was set out early in his letter dated 11 February 1938 to Jawaharlal Nehru. (See *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1960, pp. 276–277.)

¹⁸⁵ SW-AND-2, p. 68.

¹⁸⁶ Idem.

will only end in strengthening the reactionary forces in the country. Congress-League unity in the political sphere will prevent a new orientation in the League itself and will stabilize the present reactionary leadership. This, of course, does not exclude a joint front with the League on specific issues on which an agreement is possible.¹⁸⁷

In October 1946, he repeated this position.¹⁸⁸

At the Meerut Congress, in November 1946, Narendra Deva spoke at length on the nature of the League and characterized it as a “fascist body” with “gangster methods”. “The present hate complex must be ended. Mr Jinnah on the one hand says that he deplors riots but in the same breath says if Pakistan is not conceded the present riots will continue.”¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, Subhas Bose’s understanding of the League had been similar. He had described it as a backward clique with plutocratic vested interests.¹⁹⁰ While agreeing with Abul Hashem of the Bengal Muslim League that “the British imperialistic hand was behind the Bengal riots” (of August 1946), Narendra Deva was not willing to exculpate the Muslim League Ministry.¹⁹¹ At the same time, speaking at the Meerut Congress, Narendra Deva warned Hindus against a tit-for-tat policy. The Bihar riots had taken place only a few days before the Meerut session.¹⁹² Narendra Deva’s critique of Colonial policy on the inter-communal question and of communal-sectarian parties including the League and the Hindu Mahasabha is relentless.¹⁹³ He criticized the Hindu Mahasabha as a preposterous movement “launched by a group of reactionaries to mislead the masses in the name of religion”.¹⁹⁴ “Where were these people,” he asked, “when Mahatma Gandhi launched his campaign against untouchability and rejuvenated about six crores of Hindus?”

And further:

“Will these reactionaries support the economic programme of the Congress Government for abolition of

Zamindari and nationalization of the industries, which would ameliorate the lot of 98 per cent of the Hindu masses who are at present being exploited by barely 2 per cent of supporters of the Sabha?”

And that:

“The Sabha is trading on communalism of the middle classes who were fighting for the crumbs of petty offices for amongst the masses there was no difference between a Hindu Kisan or Muslim Kisan as both were equally exploited by Hindu and Muslim Zamindars.”¹⁹⁵

(To be concluded)

Books by Surendra Mohan

1. **Vikas Ka Rasta: Nai Arthik Neetiyon ka vishleshan..** Price 600 rupees.

2. **Samajwad, Dharma Nirapekshata aur Samajik Nyaya** Reissued as second edition; Price 500 rupees

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3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chnautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.

4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

Published by Anamika Publishers and Distributors. Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

¹⁸⁷ Idem.

¹⁸⁸ SW-AND-2, p. 121.

¹⁸⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 133.

¹⁹⁰ T.R. Sareen, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Nazi Germany*, Delhi, Mouto Publishing House, 1996, p. 301. See also, *Subhas Chandra Bose: Pioneer of Indian Planning*, New Delhi, Planning Commission, 1997, pp. 138–139.

¹⁹¹ SW-AND-2, p. 130.

¹⁹² Report of the 54th Session of the Indian National Congress, Meerut, 1946, pp. 80–81 (Microfilm) Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

¹⁹³ For example. SW-AND-2, p. 130 and pp. 141–46.

¹⁹⁴ SW-AND-2, p. 191.

¹⁹⁵ Idem.

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Seeming peace on border
Kuldip Nayar

**Voting choices are based
on needs, greed and security**
Irfan Engineer

**Non-violent Action and
Socialist Radicalism**
Anil Nauriya

**Veerendrakumar,
now an octogenarian**
Varughese George

**Remembering
Kaci Kullmann Five**
B. Vivekanandan

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RSS—biggest threat to democracy

Once again the forces using terror and violence have prevailed over culture and tradition of reason, debate and discussion. It is a dark day in the history of Indian higher educational institutions. Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, a name now becoming synonymous with vandalism on academic campuses, forced the cancellation of seminar on 'Cultures of Protest' organized by a literary society of the English Department at Ramjas College in Delhi on 21 February, 2017. Umar Khalid and Shehla Rashid of Jawaharlal Nehru University fame were two of the scheduled speakers. Others included Professor Bimol Akoijam, also of JNU, and filmmaker Sanjay Kak. ABVP was objecting to Umar Khalid as a speaker.

Why is the ABVP, student wing of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, averse to engaging in intellectual dialogue to express their different viewpoint if they think they have anything of substance to say? Merely raising 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram' slogans does not serve the purpose. Do Umar Khalid and Shehla Rashid as citizens of this country not have a right to express their opinion? Umar Khalid was organizer of the event on JNU

campus to commemorate last year the hanging of Afzal Guru when a huge controversy broke out. Khalid and four others Anirban Bhattacharya, Anant Prakash Narayan, Ashutosh Kumar and Rama Naga were charged with sedition. Shehla Rashid, former Vice President of JNU Students' Union, was part of the student agitation demanding their release. Umar Khalid is on bail. His charge has not been proved yet. How can he be called anti-national? Is he more anti-national than Dhruv Saxena, the Bhartiya Janata Party's Information Technology cell district coordinator of Bhopal recently arrested by Madhya Pradesh's Anti-Terrorist Squad for links with Inter State Intelligence, the Pakistani intelligence agency? Why doesn't ABVP protest against Dhruv Saxena who was a real threat to the country? Comparatively, Umar Khalid is a harmless intellectual.

ABVP and mainly its parent organization, the RSS, should reflect on what they are doing. By curbing academic freedom they want to produce individuals who would be either incapable of rational thinking or afraid of expressing their opinion, both of which will take the society intellectually backwards. There is no

genuine academic activity possible without the freedom to think. With the kind of parochial thinking and the arrogance of a legacy of some superior tradition that prevails in RSS, it can lead only to mediocrity. There will be no creation of new knowledge nor be any innovation. There will be no development of science and technology. We will continue harping on our great past and keep importing knowledge and technology from rich countries. The RSS is causing permanent damage to the autonomy and quality of academic institutions. They probably want institutions which can produce more of their type, who can at best parrot statements about some vague glorious past. After all, slogans and symbols can take you only so far. The proponents of the right wing ideology must think whether they want to remain limited only to exhibitionist display of knowledge or want the educated to acquire some depth in thinking?

This madness in the name of cultural nationalism must stop. The battered professors and students of

Ramjas College who have dared to stand up to this hooliganism have exhibited rare courage which is needed to protect the right to freedom of speech and expression, spirit of enquiry and culture of dissent, all of which are essential to existence of democracy as well as for an enlightened society.

How could we have achieved our freedom without a culture of protest? All the stalwarts of freedom struggle were engaged in dissent against the British government. Had there been no culture of protest Mahatma Gandhi could not have given a call for boycott of British goods, could not have taken out the Dandi march or Bhagat Singh could not have undertaken a revolutionary exercise. Nor could Dr. B. R. Ambedkar have been able to launch his Mahad movement for emancipation of dalits. There would have been no Civil Disobedience movement nor the Quit India movement. Neither Jayaprakash Narayan would have been able to free this country from the clutches of Emergency. The ideals of Justice,

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity embodied in our Constitution have informed our freedom movement. They are the foundation stones of Indian nation. Nationalism based on any other ideology contrary to these values is anti-Constitutional.

RSS and its various affiliates can never understand the importance of 'culture of protest' as they never participated in the freedom struggle and got a free ride during the JP movement. JP is criticized by some for having accorded legitimacy to the RSS. Now they have captured power using a democratic system which itself is a product of freedom struggle and now they want to stifle the soul of democracy. By cannily using an idea of religious nationalism they have confused the people in the process of mobilizing their support. So that people don't question their actions they have a system of doctrination for their cadres which conditions them to accept regimentation. It is hoped that people will see through this design otherwise democracy may become a history in our country.

Mayawati set to return in Uttar Pradesh

Six months prior to the 2017 assembly elections the battle for power in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh was seen as between Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) led by Mayawati and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which is presently ruling at the centre. BJP's chances had slightly dwindled after its state vice president Daya Shankar Singh made some inappropriate comments against the dalit leader of BSP. At this point Samajwadi Party, the party presently in power in the state, was predicted to be out of race.

Then after a series of family melodramatic incidents Akhilesh Yadav was catapulted from the status of half chief minister to a full chief minister and the sole leader of the party. Earlier he was often taunted to be half in the four and a half chief ministers UP had, his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, uncle Shivpal Yadav, another uncle Ram Gopal Yadav and senior leader Azam Khan being the four full chief ministers. There was an impression that since Mulayam Singh was publicly taking the side of his brother Shivpal, the party cadres would

remain loyal to Shivpal if it came to choosing between him and Akhilesh. However, Akhilesh proved everybody wrong and now is the undisputed claimant to the office of chief ministership on behalf of Samajwadi Party with Shivpal and even Mulayam having been marginalized. The state has witnessed a silent coup by a serving ruler who has been able to unshackle himself now.

There is a perception in the society that this was a drama masterly scripted and directed by Mulayam

Singh to end all challenges to his son from within and outside the party. There is no doubt that Akhilesh has emerged as a mature leader improving upon his 'please all' but weak image prior to the drama. Additional gain was free publicity in terms of the space taken up by family controversy in media to compete with the hi-tech campaign of his opponents.

Akhilesh Yadav started making public pronouncements even while the controversy was on that he would be able to win over 300 seats if he were to have an alliance with Congress Party, the fourth contender for power in the state. It is unusual for a bigger party to seek alliance with a smaller party, in terms of number of seats the two parties were expected to win. Whether it was the strategist Prashant Kishore working behind the scenes or the understanding that it would make easier for Muslims to choose between Bahujan Samaj Party and their alliance, Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi finally struck an alliance and immediately they were in the race for power.

Now BJP slipped to the third place and question was who would finish first, BSP or the SP-Congress alliance? The Muslims have belied the hopes of SP-Congress and chosen BSP as an instrument to decisively defeat BJP. The uncertainty in SP till the last moment before the election made them take an early decision to support BSP this time. Mayawati has not spared any efforts to get Muslims to her side by reassuring them that she will not enter into an alliance with BJP at any cost to form the government. In the event of BSP falling short of majority by some seats it is quite likely that Congress will break its alliance with

SP and offer support to it. Rahul Gandhi has already indicated that he respects Mayawati as the leader of dalits.

The reason BSP has an edge over SP-Congress is an allegation against SP that it did not do anything to prevent the communal riots in Muzaffarnagar in which Muslims were clearly the losers. President of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asduddin Owaisi has claimed that there was no difference between Gujarat in 2002 and Muzaffarnagar in 2013. About 50,000 people, mostly Muslims, were displaced from their villages, many of whom have not been able to return.

Akhilesh Yadav failed to prevent communal and criminal incidents, some of them involving his ministers, and thus rule of law did not always prevail in his regime. He was, however, forthcoming in disbursement of compensation after the incidents as a relief to the families of victims. He'll go down in history as a 'compensation chief minister'. He overdid the act and also gave awards to people who were openly flouting important laws like the Right to Free and Compulsory Education of Children. Bharti Gandhi, the owner of the largest commercial chain of schools in Lucknow, City Montessori School, received honours from the state after she and her husband Jagdish Gandhi refused admission to children from disadvantaged Valmiki community of sanitation workers on an official order. After 13 children from this community were admitted by a court order in 2015, Gandhis refused to again admit 58 students in 2016.

On the other hand BJP is suffering from the setback of change

of big denomination notes. UP is not like the home state of Prime Minister. In Gujarat people may not have an option and tolerate any inconvenience to them. But people in UP have been irritated by the ban on old Rs. 500 and 1000 notes because of the inconvenience it caused them. Long queues and repeated visits to Banks has been a humiliating experience for many. Moreover, the purpose of the exercise doesn't seem to have been fulfilled. Narendra Modi's closeness with emirs of United Arab Emirates and Qatar, when he and his party and parent organization, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sanghare avowedly anti-Muslim, is perplexing.

Because of listless performances of Akhilesh Yadav in UP and Narendra Modi at the centre, it appears that people are not averse to giving another chance to Mayawati, who has dealt with law and order and communal situations with a heavy hand in the past, something which goes in her favour at this point.

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Between The Lines

Seeming peace on border

Kuldip Nayar

The good news from the India-Pakistan boundary is that it is calm. Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar has said in an interview that “the temperature has come down on the border.” This could mean that India and Pakistan seem to be settling down to a relationship which was expected 70 years ago when partition took place.

If this is the case, both countries should cut down on the defence expenditure. We have not introduced the real cut which, at present, is only marginal. Unfortunately, the defence minister’s statement of “India much better armed than before” indicates how much we are still spending on the defence. Pakistan, too, has not made any significant reduction in its defence expenditure. This reminds me of cold war era when America made the Soviet Union to spend most of its resources on the defence. The result was that there was very little left for schools, hospitals and people’s councils.

This led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the country got divided into several parts. For example, Ukraine became independent. The Soviet President Vladimir Putin has said many a time that Ukraine is part of Russia. But the independence movement belies his statement. Most of the Russian troops are posted on that front.

The effect on Pakistan has been the dilution of whatever democracy exists there. Now the new Army

chief is superior to the elected Prime Minister. The pictures that show Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also depicts that the person in khaki is the real boss. The Pakistan Prime Minister has accepted the arrangement.

Islamabad’s worry is that the Taliban are using the soil of Afghanistan to attack Pakistan. Islamabad is no longer safe. Every second day, one incident of bombing or the other takes place in Pakistan, killing several innocent people. There has been exodus from the insecure Islamabad to other parts of Pakistan.

Thanks to UN pressure, China has agreed to declare Hafiz Saeed as a terrorist. Pakistan’s defence minister Khawaza Asif has admitted that Pakistan faces danger from terrorists like Saeed who is now under house arrest. This has been a sham so far but the number at the UN Security Council was predominantly for declaring him as a terrorist.

Now Islamabad has finally realized that Harif Saeed is linked with militancy in some way but it is to be seen how long Islamabad can keep him under house arrest. In fact, in 2008 the mastermind of Mumbai attacks was placed under house arrest but was freed by a court in 2009. The question before all of us is whether we should read too much into Pakistan’s arrest or take defence minister Asif’s statement seriously?

The observers in Pakistan are well aware that the action against the Lashkar-e-Taiba chief is not a new step or the most serious measure taken against him over the past two decades. Since 2001, the LeT chief has been in and out of detention at least on five occasions. If, indeed, Pakistan is too serious about the UN list, action against Saeed should have been initiated in 2008 itself when he and Jammat-ud-Dawa were put on the UN list of terrorists.

The recent action seems to have been timed for the Financial Action Task Force’s meeting to be held in Paris where the Pakistan’s terror funding record is likely to come up. Even otherwise, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif must be worried with the decision of US President Donald Trump who has banned travel from seven Muslim countries. For Pakistan, its nationals will be given visa only after a close scrutiny.

Muslims living in America are a worried lot because they could also be sent out if the President decides to include them on the banned list of Muslim countries. In the case of Indian Muslims, there is no apparent danger but the immigration officials may think different and tar them with the same brush. There are sad occasions when top Indian actor Shah Rukh Khan was stripped and the Indian embassy had to intervene to get his entry into the US.

I, too, had a tough time some years ago while entering the US from

the west coast. I had a diplomatic passport but still they insisted on searching me bodily. The immigration official explained that most of my visas stamped on the passport were to Pakistan and Bangladesh. He could not make out why I should be often visiting these countries.

I wish New Delhi has picked up the thread from where it had left off when Nawaz Sharif met Prime Minister Narendra Modi the last time in China. They were reported to have a positive dialogue. But

things have not moved further because New Delhi asked Islamabad to ensure that the Pakistani soil would not be used by the terrorists. But then incidents like Uri and Pathankot attacks have falsified hopes.

Now that Pakistan has detained Hafiz Saeed and Defence Minister Asif's admission of the dangers from terrorists like the LeT chief, the dialogue can probably resume between the two countries. To go forward, India may have to resile its position that it would have no talks

unless there was a foolproof guarantee on curbs against terrorists' operation from their soil.

Probably, India may wait and watch for a while before moving ahead. Even Israel has wished it. Nevertheless, it is in the interest of both India and Pakistan to sit across and thrash out the issues. Pakistan, on its part, should put the Kashmir issue on the backburner for the time being. They should, instead, address the immediate problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment.

Remembering Kaci Kullmann Five

B. Vivekanandan

Kaci Kullmann Five, Chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo, which annually awards Nobel Prizes to distinguished achievers in the world, is no more. She passed away on Sunday, 19 February 2017, in Oslo at 65. She is survived by her husband, Carsten O Five, and two children, Christine and Christian, and four grand-children.

My meeting with Kaci Kullmann Five was on 26 July 1985, during my first visit to the Scandinavian countries - Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland - for writing my book, *Pathfinders: Social Democrats of Scandinavia*. During that visit, she invited me to meet her, over lunch, in the *Storting* (Norwegian Parliament). She was, then, a 34-year old dazzling, young and up-and-coming Member of Parliament, with great promise, radiating enormous confidence, wisdom and humility, brimming with enthusiasm. At that time, she was

also the Deputy Chairman of the Norwegian Conservative Party.

As soon as I reached the *Storting* to meet her, she took me straight to the Parliament Canteen for lunch, where I got my first surprise. Unlike in the Canteen at the Parliament House in New Delhi, where a plethora of waiters are kept to take orders from MPs and serve them food on the table, like in a feudal set-up, this Parliament Canteen had a self-service system for MPs and their guests who had to collect their requirements themselves from the counters. After taking lunch together, we got into a serious discussion on the texture of Norwegian politics. Being a graduate in Political Science as well as in Law from the Oslo University, she had a good grasp of how the political system in Norway worked. That was the time when I saw the grace, wisdom and dignity of this charming woman member of parliament, who was equipping

herself to take-up higher responsibilities in Norway's national life. The sense of purpose in her basic approach to politics was very much discernible at that time itself. She vehemently championed the causes of gender equality and women's rights, and was quite active on issues pertaining to environment and ecology. She was a strong supporter of the Norwegian membership of the European Union.

During our discussion on Norway's party politics, she gave me an insight of how principal political parties in the country had given up taking extreme positions, and built-up an ethos of consensus politics, and how the Welfare State system got rooted in the country as a result. She made it clear that, by and large, these political parties had come down to the middle ground, to play centrist politics, with slight tilt towards right or left. This metamorphosis has considerably reduced, she said, the

gap between the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA) and the non-socialist parties on a number of important issues, including on the Welfare State system. By reeling out several examples, she summed up that, as a result, the differences between the Labour (DNA) and Conservative Parties in Norway are mainly on details, rather than on fundamentals. And, they accept the same infrastructure, including the Welfare State System.

My meeting with Kaci Kullmann Five took place long before she attained new heights in her career. It was much later that she became a Cabinet Minister (1989-90), the first Chairwoman of the Conservative

Party (1991-94), a decision maker in the Norwegian Nobel Committee (since 2003), and, finally, the first Chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee (2015). Since 2009, she was one of the seven key Board Members of the Nobel Foundation, which has the overall responsibility of all five Nobel Prizes. For 16 years, from 1981 to 1997, she was a Member of Parliament.

Though three decades have passed after my meeting with Kaci Kullmann Five in Oslo, the grace, the warmth, the humility, wisdom and vision which she radiated during our conversation remain fresh and green in my mind. Undoubtedly, she was an outstanding world stateswoman,

who could make a notable impact on developments in the world during the last four decades. As the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg rightly said, "she was a role model for many young women" of our times. She was a wonderful human being, straightforward and unpretentious. There was no false touch in this great unifier. Though Cancer caused the untimely death of this great daughter of Norway, she will be remembered for long as a lodestar of generations to come.

From India, my heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family, and to the people of Norway, over the premature loss of this great world stateswoman.



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Veerendrakumar, now an octogenarian

Varughese George

M. P. Veerendrakumar, who was decisive in shaping the course of the socialist movement in Kerala for decades turned eighty years. His father, Padmaprabha, a planter was an activist of Socialist Party and the first to have started a branch of HMS in Wayanad. To rescue plantation workers from the exploitation of kankanis, who were ruthless supervisors, Padmaprabha organized plantation workers and widened the base of HMS. Wayanad was part of Madras which was a British Province and when the Madras government decided to evict farmers from their cultivable land in Noolpuzha, he organised the peasants and resisted it. When the peasants had launched an agitation in Muthukad in Calicut for ownership rights, Padmaprabha sent volunteers from Wayanad to Muthukad to help their struggle. Veerendrakumar's mother was Marutha Devi, a pious lady.

In the elections to the Madras legislature in 1952 Socialist Party delegated Padmaprabha to contest from Wayanad constituency. The Congress candidate was Kozhipurath Madhava Menon, a senior Congress leader and minister in Madras government. For this reason the contest attracted national attention and Jayaprakash Narayan came to Calicut to campaign for Padmaprabha. He was elected to Madras legislature for a majority of 18000 votes.

Veerendrakumar, after his higher studies in United States, also

became a full time activist of the Socialist Party taking a cue from his father. His house in wayanad was an amiable abode for socialist leaders including JP and Lohia during their sojourn in Malabar. Padmaprabha's death at the age of forty eight was a cause of great sorrow for the socialist community in Wayanad. The party itself was going through threefold split including PSP, SSP and ISP. In the elections to the Kerala legislature in 1970, these three parties together secured twelve seats. Veerendrakumar was elected to the national executive of SSP the same year and appointed the national treasurer.

After the formation of broad united front by the party in 1971, Veerendrakumar was asked to contest for Lok Sabha from Calicut though the chance was least. He accepted the decision of the party and contested unsuccessfully but this was the beginning of the joint opposition movement against the Congress and SSP candidates were the symbols of it. The three socialist parties that suffered heavy electoral defeats since then had realigned at the national level and formed the Socialist Party in 1971. In Kerala also the three parties united and formed an ad hoc committee of SP with P. Viswambharan as chairman and Veerendrakumar as secretary. In the first state conference of SP that was held in Calicut in 1973 this election was ratified.

In September 1973 SP and CPI(M) together decided to form a

united opposition at the national level to counter the authoritarian and capitalist policies of the Congress. In Kerala it was known as LDF and Veerendrakumar became its convener after P. Viswambharan. When national Emergency was declared the party asked Veerendrakumar to go underground and the government confiscated his house and estate. Later he was arrested and put in Central Jail, Kannur till the relaxation of emergency. Other socialist leaders including K.Chandrasekharan, K.K.Abu, P.K.Sankarankutty, V.Kuttykrishnan Nair, V.K. Achuthan, Abraham Manuel and K.P.Muhammad were also kept at the Kannur Central jail.

It was a decade since then Veerendrakumar stood for election and in 1987 he won with a huge majority from Kalpetta to the Kerala Legislative Assembly. He was sworn in as minister for forests in the E.K.Nayanar ministry. His first order was to ban tree felling from Kerala's depleted forests and he resigned within forty eight hours from the cabinet due to an internal rebellion of three legislators who were aspirants to that post of ministership. His close friend Ramakrishna Hegde was so sad that he had asked Veerendrakumar to withdraw the resignation, but he did not yield to the affable pressure.

In 1993 Veerendrakumar became the president of Kerala unit of Janata Dal. This was the launching period

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Voting choices are based on needs, greed and security

Irfan Engineer

The assembly elections in UP began on 11th February 2017 in several phases. The Samajwadi Party in alliance with Congress is hopeful of second term under the leadership of the incumbent Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav recently emerged victorious in the family feud sidelining his uncle Shivpal Yadav and leaving no option for his father but to hand over predominant role in running the party to him. The SP-Congress alliance is campaigning on the programme of development. The SP traditionally relied on the Muslim-Yadav social alliance with some other OBCs also being mobilized. Akhilesh seemed to have won over the bulk of support of the Yadavs as well as Muslims along with a section of youth, campaigning on the issue of development, implementation of welfare schemes like distribution of laptops, service of ambulances for the sick, etc.

The BJP, which had won in 71 out of the 80 Lok Sabha constituencies in the year 2014 in 16th General Elections and two more for its alliance partner - Apna Dal -, is fighting a tough challenge to win majority or near majority in this election, let alone repeating its performance in the General Elections. The BJP is trying every trick in the book — rubbishing the claims of development done by the SP government and asserting that it alone is capable of developing UP.

There seems to be a neat division of labour within the BJP. Prime Minister Modi talks of development

agenda in order to win over the youth. The Prime Minister also arouses aspirations of the people through *jumlas* to make a point that those benchmarks were not achieved by the incumbent government and that his party would fulfil them. For example, number of jobs, investments, infrastructure like roads, electricity, etc. Other BJP leaders and RSS — ideological parent of the BJP — indoctrinated leaders have been kicking up every possible issue to communally polarize the electorate since a while in run up to the Assembly elections. BJP MP Hukum Singh claimed that Hindus were forced to migrate out of Kairana, a Muslim majority town in Shamli, by Muslim gangsters and their extortion racket. Sakshi Maharaj has been problematizing higher population growth rate of Muslims which, according to them, would demographically marginalize Hindus. Sangeet Som and Suresh Rana, BJP MLAs from western UP stigmatized Muslims as cow slaughterers and supported the lynch mob of Dadri killing Mohammed Akhlaq and seriously injuring his son. They have been stigmatizing Muslim youth as eve-teasers, entrapping Hindu women into marital alliances for sexual exploitation and demographic advantage. BJP leaders have been exploiting the issue of triple talaq and promising Uniform Civil Code as a measure to “Hinduize” the Muslims. BJP has raised the issue of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya in order to assert the political hegemony of “Hindus” undermining the Constitutional pledge of equal citizenship.

Demonizing the Muslim community has led to high occurrence of communal violence in UP. The state of UP has the dubious reputation of highest number of communal violence every year and particularly as election approaches. There were several instances of communal violence, particularly in the western region of UP since 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots which resulted in 64 deaths and displacement of about 150,000 Muslims. In the year 2016, of the 8 deaths were reported in media monitored by CSSS in communal riots all over India. As many as 6 took place in UP alone. UP also returned highest number of incidents of communal violence reported in the media in the year 2016 — 18 out of 62. Most of these riots were in Western UP. Communal violence had led to rupture in the social fabric in Western UP, particularly between the jats and the Muslims. BJP leaders have been accused of abetting, instigating and/or leading the riots, e.g Sangeet Som in Muzaffarnagar and Ismaria Choudhary in Bijnor riots.

Projecting Muslim community as an existential threat to Hindus, the BJP intends to position itself as the defender of “Hindu interests” and mobilize votes of all castes without jeopardizing caste based hierarchy and hegemonic interests of elite of upper castes. In fact, by posing Muslims as existential threat to Hindus, the BJP undermines the struggle of the dalits and the oppressed sections of OBCs for equality and blunts their

consciousness despite having equal political rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The BSP is trying to achieve social alliance of Dalits and Muslims by distributing large number of tickets to Muslim leaders — over 98 out of 403 seats (more than 24% of seats) even though Muslims constitute 19% of the population.

Visit to Western UP

Our visit to Western UP on 4th and 5th February 2017 was undertaken to understand the electoral process, mobilization of communities and its impact on inter-relations between various communities. The exercise was neither to survey nor to predict electoral outcomes. We visited and talked to members of various castes and communities in groups to understand their perspectives and issues they thought were important influencing their voting choices.

The notion that Muslims constituted one community or the community behaved as a vote bank melted away in no time. The community neither voted as a vote bank in last elections nor did it appear it would do so in this election. The Muslim community is as diverse as any other community is — along caste lines as well as class lines and their electoral choices are influenced by their social location and not only on their religion. In the last Assembly elections, Suresh Rana, BJP won the Assembly elections from Thana Bhavana Constituency in Shamli District even though Muslims constitute about 55% of the electorate with a narrow margin of 265 votes! Muslim votes were divided between Rashtriya Lok Dal's Abdul Waris Khan and Samajwadi Party's Kiran Pal. The

Muslim community is divided along caste lines as well. Muslims are from Rajputs, Jats, Gujjars, and there are other backward biradarries among Muslims.

Talking to various members of the Muslim and Jat communities, it appeared that they have put the communal riots in 2013 behind them. The Jats said they were misled by the BJP leaders and recalled long history of fraternal bonds between the two communities. They remembered participation in each other's marriages, last rites and festivals and had shared cultural ethos. The shared cultural ethos includes keeping women in veil (the nature of veil may change), no marriages within the village, restricted liberties to women, etc. Both the communities were mobilized together on issues faced by the farmers.

The members of Jat community were perturbed by the demonetization in particular and marginalization of the peasantry in general. The fundamental issue for them was un-remunerative minimum support prices for farm produce or lack of it. Waiver of loans did not attract the Jats we talked to, on account of their inability to pay back loans as the incomes of the farmers had taken a big hit in the last 2-3 years. The Jats were certainly not inclined to support the BJP. They seemed to be divided on whom they would vote for — Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) seemed to the choice of majority but some were also supporting Sudhir Panwar, SP-Congress alliance candidate and a Jat himself.

The Muslims we talked to too seemed to have at least for now, and

for the purpose of this elections, put the communal conflict and violence associated with it behind them. They too, like the Jats did not buy the propaganda that demonetization would ultimately lead to benefits of any significance to the nation or the economy and underlined the hardships caused by the measure. We talked to two groups of Muslims — one were group of Rajput Muslims and some dalit Muslims. The Rajputs were staunchly supporting the Rashtriya Lok Dal party and desired Jat-Muslim unity to revive the RLD's fortunes as in the past.

However, there was equally strong voice in favour of SP-Congress alliance supporting the developmental work done by Akhilesh's Government. When asked what development the Govrment had done, they pointed out towards distribution of laptops, ambulance service, electric supply and better roads. Abdul Waris Khan's supporters were equally confident that Muslims would vote for them. Waris Khan is a Rajput Muslim contesting from the BSP. In the last elections in 2012, Waris Khan lost to BJP's Suresh Kumar Rana but polled 50001 votes whereas Suresh Kumar polled 53,719 votes and Ashraf Ali Khan of RLD had polled 53454 votes. Waris Khan won in 2007 contesting on RLD ticket. In 2012, Suresh Kumar of BJP won only by a thin margin of 265 votes as Muslim votes were divided between Waris Khan and Ashraf Ali Khan — both being Rajput Muslims.

The poorer and labouring class Muslims seemed to be supporting the BSP — seen as a dalit party. The upper caste Rajput Muslims nurture a separate community feeling and solidarity with the land owning Jats and Rajputs when there is absence

of communal polarisation whereas they seek solidarity of the backward caste Muslims when communal polarization is heightened.

When we visited SP-Congress alliance candidate — Sudhir Panwar's (a Jat) election tent in Thana Bhawan, we saw Jats, Muslims, Sainis in the tent planning for election campaign. The Muslims in the tent were sure overwhelming majority of them will be voting for the Alliance. The Jats in the tent too were confident of the Jats voting Sudhir Panwar who was contesting on the plank of communal harmony and peace as one amongst many others.

When we visited the upper caste Hindus — Sainis and Rajputs, their issues in the elections were different than that of the Muslims or Jats we met. They were problematizing regional issues. Western UP was kept backwards by the ruling dispensation as they were largely from the Eastern UP. They felt left out of the development agenda of the state. All the jobs went to the youth from Eastern UP and particularly to the Yadavs and Muslims. All the state contracts,

educational institutions, and other institutions were cornered by the other regions being represented by the politicians of the ruling clan in general and Yadav-Muslims in particular. They felt alienated and marginalized from the state power (though they appeared much better off in reality). The youth problematized reservations in jobs, education and other affirmative action. To them it was unfair discrimination against the upper caste youth and reservations should only be based on economic criteria. They supported BJP and trusted that BJP's victory would lead to development of Western UP on priority basis as political leaders from the west would dominate. There was no talk of justice or equality — only perceived injustice and aspiration of reversing the equations — belief that BJP's victory would lead to reverse discrimination. Now they needed to benefit from political nepotism with *their* leaders being in power. According to them, demonetization was a good action though it temporarily led to problems. In the long run, demonetization would check corruption, black money and counter terrorism.

Conclusion:

The above discourse shows that no community or caste is a vote bank. There is diversity and voting choices are dependent on variety of factors, including religious, socio-cultural and economic factors. Social location of the individual influences voting choices and not religion alone. There are three factors that can influence voting choices — need, greed and security. Those whose basic human needs are not met, they are dependent on welfare. State provides only a tiny fraction of social welfare needed by large sections of poor in the country. Through whom social welfare can be accessed may determine the choice of the needy voters — dalits, adivasis, landless, etc. Those whose needs are fulfilled, need social networks to access their aspiration for upward mobility and more riches and privileges. Which social network helps this objective may determine electoral choices for some. Victims of communal and caste violence and high handedness of security forces vote for the party or leader that promises security to them. These factors were playing the voting choices of the people we met and interacted with.

—*Secular pespective;*

(Continued from Page 7)

of the policies of globalization in India by the P.V.Narasimha Rao government. Veerendrakumar was a vociferous critic of globalization and the book he wrote along with Prof. P.A.Vasudevan, *GATT and its unseen ties* became the text book of anti-globalisation activists in Kerala. Hundreds of party men and women went to jail in Kerala protesting the policies of globalization.

In 1996 and 2004 Veerendrakumar was elected to Lok Sabha from Calicut Parliament constituency. He was also the deputy minister for finance and later minister for labour with independent charge in the Deve Gowda ministry. But when Deve Gowda's son H.D.Kumara Swamy made an alliance with BJP in Karnataka, the Kerala unit of the party immediately insulated its

relationship with Janata Dal (Secular) and Veerendrakumar took initiative in electing a new president, Surendra Mohan in a large gathering at Trivandrum. Since then the Kerala unit led by Veerendrakumar merged with Janata Dal (united) and presently he is a member of Rajya Sabha from Kerala. He is a versatile writer in Malayalam and a recipient of many distinguished awards including Kendra Sahitya Academy.

Non-violent Action and Socialist Radicalism: Narendra Deva in India's Freedom Movement—II

Anil Nauriya

6. Beyond Non-Violence

At this stage we may take a step back and consider Narendra Deva's positions in relation to Subhas Bose (1897—1945?) as these provide an interesting study in his political perspectives on modes of struggle. As Subhas Bose was a votary of militant and even armed struggle, the extent to which the socialists were or were not willing to ally with him, and he with them, is revealing. Gandhi had suggested the name of Narendra Deva, among others, for the Congress President towards the end of 1938 (for 1939). In January 1939 Subhas Bose also offered to withdraw from the contest for the Congress President if Narendra Deva were chosen.¹⁹⁶

Jawaharlal 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.¹⁹⁷

Evidently, the contest for the presidency of the Congress between Bose and Pattabhi Sitaramayya in 1939 had been avoidable. It obviously weakened the Congress at a critical time in India's history. It is therefore

of significance that it was the socialist Narendra Deva on whose name the contending sides had been in agreement. Narendra Deva's own sympathies were initially with Bose. In a statement issued in January 1939 he said "(w)hen elders are not ready to take up the burden, Mr Subhas Chandra Bose seems clearly marked out for the Presidential *gaddi*".¹⁹⁸

At the Tripuri Congress session in 1939, Narendra Deva's approach differed with both groups. He was not prepared to accept the Bose group's description of certain members of the Working Committee as "Rightists". While not abjuring this usage in his own speeches and writings, Narendra Deva sought to relativise such expressions to the struggle at hand. According to the Press report of his speech at the Tripuri Congress on 9 March 1939:

Defining the Rightists, he said that they were those who were prepared to align with British Imperialism and if anybody could think that a member of the old Working Committee could be called a Rightist in that sense, there could be no hope of freedom for this country. They were not Rightists, they were anti-Imperialists to the core and revolutionaries. The question of Rightists and Leftists could only arise after there was a social revolution.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. 5, New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, First edition, 1952, pp. 29—30.

NMML Occasional Paper

¹⁹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings, 1937—40*, London, Lindsay Drummond, 1948, p. 127.

¹⁹⁸ "Statement on Congress Presidential Election", SW-AND-1, p. 148.

¹⁹⁹ "Speech at the Subjects Committee Meeting", SW-AND-1, p. 148. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote similarly to Subhas Bose on 4 February 1939:

There has been a lot of talk of Leftists and Rightists, of Federation etc., and yet, so far as I can remember, no vital matters affecting these questions have been discussed by us in the W.C. during your Presidentship. I do not know who you consider a Leftist and who a Rightist. The way these words, were used by you in your statements during the Presidential contest seemed to imply that Gandhiji and those considered as his group in the W.C. are the Rightist leaders. Their opponents, whoever they might be, are the Leftists. That seems to me an entirely wrong description. It seems to me that many of the so-called Leftists are more Right than the so-called Rightists. Strong language and a capacity to criticize the old Congress leadership is not a test of Leftism in politics. (Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, Second Edition, 1960, p. 318).

This caution against mechanical labeling is not infrequently encountered in the Congress context. Seven years later, in 1946, P.R. Ramachandra Rao, an artist, advocate, and progressive intellectual, was sent by V.V. Giri, then Minister for Planning in the Government of Madras, to tour Congress-ruled provinces and "make a report on their plans"; on his conversation with Keshav

Yet Narendra Deva had misgivings at the time about the Congress “high command”, which he set out in a letter to M.R. Masani, one of the founders of the CSP, written a few days later, on 19 March 1939:

Undue condemnation of Subhas Bose and praise of the High Command should be ruled out. I do not understand why we should go out of our way to praise them when we know that they have no consideration for us. Is it not clear to you that when they talk of purge they mean to eliminate the left-wing from the Congress?²⁰⁰

But Narendra Deva became increasingly critical of the positions taken by Subhas Bose thereafter. In 1940, a Congress Socialist tract by Narendra Deva offered this sharp comment:

It is difficult to grasp the theory that underlies the activities of Shree Subhas Chandra Bose...He talks of an immediate struggle and does all that lies in his power to make it difficult...If one were to believe him, the greater obstacle today is the present leadership of the Congress and not British imperialism.²⁰¹

There is in this tract a passage which may be quoted at greater length because it represents a point of view now seldom referred to:

It is difficult to say how much of his (Subhas—A.N.) anti-compromise talk is serious. It may, of course, just be a good stick to beat the Congress High Command with. Shree Subhas Chandra Bose has not always stood out against compromise like this. During his Presidentship he was for negotiations

with the British Government over the issue of the war. Today, he asserts that the Constituent Assembly can only be convened after the conquest of power.

But he conveniently forgets what he wrote in his organ, the *Forward Bloc* on September 9, under the caption ‘Lead from Wardha’. He says there that the ‘Congress must press the national demand on the government and insist on its immediate **fulfilment**’. In the same article he proceeds to observe: ‘Let not our leaders who are now deliberating at Wardha ask for a whit less than what is our inherent birthright. If they are called on to negotiate, let them do so honourably.’

A year back at the Malda Divisional Conference and the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Jalpaiguri, Subhas Babu framed a resolution which foreshadowed the possibility of the government conceding the demand of the Congress, in which event a Constituent Assembly was to be convoked for framing a Constitution to be embodied in a treaty of alliance between India and Great Britain. This, according to him, could happen very well without recourse to a struggle. How can he now condemn Gandhiji for meeting the Viceroy or negotiating with him?

It is [sad?] however, that such things appeal to the average Leftist. He has been fed upon slogans and his political education has been neglected. He is politically immature. He acts, therefore, as an unwise ally. Proper schooling of political workers and youngmen is the greatest need.²⁰²

Deva Malaviya, a leading radical Congressman from UP, Rao would write: “In U.P., he said, the Rightists were more Left than the Socialists...” (P.R. Ramachandra Rao, *First Person Singular*, Hyderabad, Akshara, 1989, p. 37). Whether this was actually so or not, Malaviya’s remark was a reflection of the fact that on kisan issues the mainstream, or “unlabelled”, Congress in UP (and many other provinces) was itself in the forefront of the struggle. It was often such leaders who had reached the peasantry first and organized it though not necessarily or always on a class basis. This is evident in the case of UP also from accounts even by CPI figures such as Z.A. Ahmad (see Z.A. Ahmad, *Mere Jeewan Ki Kuch Yadein*, Lucknow, Sankalpa Systems, 1997). The matter is not free from ambiguity and there is yet another aspect that may be worth bearing in mind in the context of Malaviya’s remark. A scholar of 20th century UP writes about the Narendra Deva, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Tandon relationship: “Acharya Narendra Deva and his band of followers, strangely enough, were closer to Tandon than to Kidwai.” (Paul Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 39.) Had Brass expanded the geometry by adding Nehru, to whom too Narendra Deva was close, it might have puzzled him even more. If academic “types” or categories break down often, it may be because these are too rigidly applied in the pre-independence context, or because, alternatively, the “types” themselves might require greater scrutiny.

²⁰⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 151.

²⁰¹ “The Indian Struggle: Next Phase”, SW-AND-1, p. 219.

²⁰² SW-AND-1, pp. 223—224. The source has “said” in place of “sad” and is possibly an error.

Narendra Deva's critique of Bose in the 1940 tract centered on the need to maintain the unity of the Congress as an instrument of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle:

This is our grievance against Shree Subhas Chandra Bose. We had trusted that he would not try to break the integrity of the Congress. The passionate appeal for unity that he made at the outbreak of the war is still ringing in our ears. He opposed in the past the present leadership but never worked against the Congress itself. A great change has come over him since. He seems to be bent upon splitting the Congress now.

He wants the present Congress to be converted into a rightist Congress out and out and asks leftists to leave the Congress and help him in creating a new Congress of leftists. He seems to have taken a dangerous turning on the road to independence.²⁰³

In this tract Narendra Deva asserted that the "task is to move the entire Congress" and this required working for unity.²⁰⁴

Towards the end of the 1930s, Bose had desired that the national struggle be resumed early. As the Congress gradually veered around to this position in the next three years, Bose, and also Gandhi, came to a relatively greater appreciation of each other's role. This is reflected in their statements and particularly, on the part of Bose, from the time of his broadcasts from Tokyo and Bangkok on 24 June and 2 October 1943.²⁰⁵ In the 1940s, how did Narendra Deva view the struggle being conducted overseas? For much of this period Narendra Deva himself was in prison successively in Ahmednagar Fort, Bareilly, and Almora (1942—45). But we have his perspective on the war through a pamphlet he wrote in 1942.²⁰⁶ Here Narendra Deva refutes the people's war thesis:

A genuine people's war should lead to the destruction of both imperialism and of capitalist

democracy and of fascism. But he will indeed be a bold man who would say that the present war is being fought to destroy imperialism. That would mean that the British and the American governments are waging war to destroy themselves.²⁰⁷

He refers to a similar argument made at the time of the First World War and Lenin's refutation of it.²⁰⁸ Narendra Deva reiterated this view three days after his release from prison on 15 June 1945.

A couple of months later followed the report of Subhas Bose's death and Narendra Deva in his statement did not gloss over their differences. The whole nation mourned Bose, he said: "Though they did not agree with some of the methods of Mr Bose, nobody could question the purity of his motives. India would feel strengthened in the idea that the memory of Mr Bose would be cherished and the lessons of his life learnt."²⁰⁹

While with Bose there were differences in method, with the communists Narendra Deva's differences turned on their dismissive approach in treating the Congress organization as bourgeois in opposition to which another organisation was required to be built. Although he felt that a healthier Communist attitude towards the Congress had emerged after 1936—37, this too had undergone a relapse with the old communist line having resurfaced during the Second World War. Narendra Deva rejected as illogical the notion of "united front from below", that is unity with the Congress "rank and file as against the leaders".²¹⁰ He argued that "...it should be plain to the meanest understanding that it is impossible to call the Congress-minded masses to a common struggle without the co-operation of those to whom they give their confidence and look up for guidance".²¹¹ This idea, Narendra Deva pointed out, was self-defeating: "In short, they aspire today to acquire influence over the masses in the fold of the Congress by attacking the present leadership and trying to undermine its influence. They seem to stand

²⁰³ SW-AND-1, p. 223.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁰⁵ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1962, pp. 170—173 and pp. 200—204.

²⁰⁶ "The War: Imperialist or People's", SW-AND-2, pp. 8—23.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17—18.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁰⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 80.

²¹⁰ "The Indian Struggle: Next Phase", Bombay, Congress Socialist Party, 1940, reproduced in SW-AND-1, p. 218.

²¹¹ *Idem.*

for an immediate struggle but, in effect, they produce disorganization in the forces of struggle.”²¹²

This understanding governed also Narendra Deva’s attitude towards M.N. Roy (1887—1954), a leading figure in international communism and intellectual who had on return to India gradually branched out to establish the Radical Democratic Party in 1940. At least till 1940 both Narendra Deva and Roy, so far as acceptance of the Congress as an instrument for struggle was concerned, seemed to be on the common ground “that ultimately by a process of transformation the Congress can become a fit instrument for the achievement of our objective”.²¹³ The vital difference between them was that Roy believed that no relentless struggle was possible until there was a change in the leadership of the Congress.²¹⁴ For Narendra Deva, on the contrary, it was the struggle itself that would throw up new leaders. In the socialist view as propounded by Narendra Deva, Roy appeared to disregard the impact and dynamics of mass struggle. Narendra Deva argued that:

The pressure for struggle releases forces that move and metamorphose the leadership. New leadership is created in the course of the struggle. A mass struggle always throws up new leaders of the masses. It is only by showing qualities of leadership, by leading the masses from victory to victory, that one can win their confidence and achieve a place in the national leadership.²¹⁵

A practical demonstration of this would come about in the next round of struggle in 1942 when socialists emerged as prominent leaders of the national movement. For Narendra Deva the Quit India movement of 1942 was an advance in the national struggle. He acknowledged also the role played by the Indian National Army (INA). In November 1945, he reportedly remarked:

...had the revolution of August 1942 not taken place, there would not have been so much enthusiasm in the country... He made particular reference to Mr Jai Prakash Narain, Dr Lohia and

others... (who) were subjected to various forms of torture... (He) made a feeling reference to the INA men and said that there was widespread resentment amongst all sections of people against their trial.²¹⁶

It was not of course a philosophical commitment to the idea of non-violent struggle that made Narendra Deva carefully mark out his positions in relation to Bose, the communists, and M.N. Roy, though of course, his preference was to accord primacy to the non-violent struggle. It would be relevant to recall Narendra Deva’s opposition at the time of the Bombay Congress in 1934 to the proposal that “truth and nonviolence” be substituted for “legitimate and peaceful means” in the Congress creed.²¹⁷ No one has ever suggested that falsehood ought to be part of our creed, he argued. Nonviolence, he maintained, was subject to varying interpretations and was a metaphysical concept. If in substance and meaning it did not differ from “peaceful means”, there was no need for the new phraseology. Three years after the Bombay Congress, Narendra Deva had written on 10 December 1937 to Jawaharlal Nehru: “Truth and nonviolence are noble ideas and as such every decent man must have high regard for them. But I feel that they are so much being misused today in India that the day is not far distant when they will begin to [stink] in our nostrils.”²¹⁸ Narendra Deva’s approach to the question of relations between the Congress and the kisan movement was different from that which characterized the movement in places like Bihar. He thought that both violence and consequent tensions between kisan organizations and the Congress could be avoided with some tact, sensitivity, and vigilance. In his letter to Nehru, Narendra Deva remarks:

So far as the agrarian situation is concerned I have every hope that with a little goodwill combined with firmness we can succeed in avoiding a conflict with the peasant organizations. The way in which some of our Behar Congressmen are proceeding is the sure way of inviting trouble which is bound to weaken the Congress organization.

²¹² “The Indian Struggle: Next Phase”, Bombay, Congress Socialist Party, 1940, reproduced in SW-AND-1, p. 219.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

²¹⁶ SW-AND-2, p. 97.

²¹⁷ *Congress Socialist*, 29 September 1934, SW-AND-1, p. 38.

²¹⁸ SW-AND-1, p. 106.

We can also easily prevent outbreaks of violence in the countryside if we only tighten up our organization & keep a watch on the activities of our workers.²¹⁹

Yet, so far as the colonial power was concerned, Narendra Deva was prepared to countenance a degree of violence. In his reminiscences Narendra Deva recalls telling Gandhi when he met him in Poona in 1945, after being released from Ahmednagar Fort Prison and Almora Jail, that while truth was fine, he did not think that state power could be snatched from the British without resort to a modicum of violence.²²⁰

7. Socialists and Constructive Work

Narendra Deva had given up his legal practice after the passage of the resolution on non-co-operation at the Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920.²²¹ Associating himself with the reconstruction effort to nurture national educational institutions, he joined, at the suggestion of Jawaharlal Nehru, the faculty of the newly-established Kashi Vidyapith.²²² Narendra Deva found the work here more to his taste than the legal practice at Faizabad; later, in 1926, he would succeed Dr. Bhagvan Das as the head of this national institution. Although Narendra Deva had been involved with the educational aspects of the national movement, even as late as 1929 he had observed that “the constructive programme of the Congress is regarded as dull & tame” by many who “cared more for a live programme of immediate work”.²²³ This did not, however, prevent his involvement in these activities. For example,

in May 1930 he had himself organized charkha training classes in Banaras in support of the khadi, that is, hand-spun cloth, promotion programme.²²⁴ In this matter the socialists came gradually to be influenced by Gandhi. Likewise, Gandhi too kept evolving and expanding his conception of constructive work. Born essentially out of the non-co-operation movement of the 1920s, the programme was later explained in a small compendium by Gandhi in December 1941 listing activities connected with communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, khadi, other village industries, village sanitation, new or basic education, adult education, women, education in health and hygiene, leprosy, provincial languages, national language, that is, Hindustani (inclusive of Hindi and Urdu), economic equality, kisans, labour, adivasis, and students.²²⁵ This was further revised and enlarged in 1945.²²⁶ The political implications of such constructive activities were vividly underlined by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the “Frontier Gandhi” as he was known, at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1934. Referring to his tour of Bengal, the leader from the North West Frontier Province said that in subdivisions where the khadi programme had reached, resulting in some increase in incomes howsoever small, people were willing to come forward to attend Congress meetings; the contrary was true in other subdivisions where *charkha* activities had not reached and where people were fearful of associating with Congress activities.²²⁷

It was Gandhi who had in 1934 initially drawn the attention of socialists through Narendra Deva to what

²¹⁹ SW-AND-1, pp. 107—108.

²²⁰ “Mere Sansmaran”, *Rashtriyata Aur Samajwad*, Banaras, Gyan Mandal, 1949, p. 691. An account of this visit to Pune by Narendra Deva, along with Suraj Prasad Awasthi, also an MLA, and some of this conversation with Gandhi in late August or early September 1945, appears in CWMG, Vol. 81, pp. 209—210. Narendra Deva and Awasthi had inquired whether the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh like the Indian National Congress could use the words “peaceful and legitimate” instead of “truth and nonviolence”. Gandhi told them that “truth and nonviolence” were also political terms though “in the political context, the words ‘peaceful and legitimate’ were considered to be more appropriate”. Reminding them that even these latter words had been introduced by him in the Congress constitution, Gandhi seemed to indicate, in answer to their query, a preference for the expression “truth and nonviolence” as, in a working class context, the “workers must be told in a straight and direct way as to what they should or should not do”.

²²¹ “Mere Sansmaran”, *Rashtriyata Aur Samajwad*, Benares, Gyan Mandal, 1949, p. 686. For the text of the non-co-operation resolution passed at the Nagpur session, see CWMG, Vol. 19, Appendix 1, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1966, pp. 576—578.

²²² “Mere Sansmaran”, *Rashtriyata Aur Samajwad*, op. cit., p. 686.

²²³ Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 9 February 1929, SW-AND-1, p. 3.

²²⁴ Jagdish Chandra Dikshit, *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Lucknow, Soochna Evam Jansampark Vibhag, Uttar Pradesh, 1989, p. 27.
²²⁵ CWMG, Vol. 75, pp. 146—166.

²²⁶ M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Trust, 1945.

²²⁷ Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s speech reproduced in *Report of the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress: Proceedings*, Bombay, 1934, pp. 111—112. By this time the spread of the movement for handspun cloth was widespread enough for the Viceroy Irwin to acknowledge after the Gandhi-Irwin pact that “although the boycott has been dropped as a political weapon, Lancashire must realize that the movement against foreign cloth has attained great influence which it is going to retain”. (Irwin to Viscount Goschen, 30 March 1931, National Archives of India, Halifax Papers, Microfilm, Accession No. 3898.)

he described as a “glaring omissions” from their draft programme; these omissions included, according to Gandhi, untouchability removal, communal unity, khaddar and prohibition.²²⁸ Having been more attentive to Gandhi and the evolution of his ideas than many writers and ideologues of the communist tradition, Narendra Deva, like most socialists of his time, was aware, for example, of Gandhi’s attempts at breaking social barriers and of his critique of caste.²²⁹ He pointed out that Gandhi advocated “interdining and intermarriage not only between different castes but between different communities”.²³⁰ Narendra Deva noted of Gandhi that “He is in no sense an orthodox Hindu. On the contrary, he breaks almost every rule and practice enjoined by orthodox Hinduism. He does not believe in the institution of caste and its observances and practices. He advocates widow marriage... He has devised his own marriage ritual and in this matter pays no regard to the existing laws.”²³¹

It is true, however, that leading socialists did not accord the importance to constructive work that many others in the Congress were prepared to give it. Years later Jayaprakash Narayan would recall:

Looking back it seems to me that we would have done well to associate ourselves with the constructive work of the Congress to a far greater extent than we did. We were responsible—and I more than others perhaps—in creating the feeling that all constructive work was unrevolutionary and, for socialists, a waste of time. I should like to put on record that that was an immature and mistaken

view. Possibly, if we had come into the field of constructive work we might have developed aspects or types of it that would perhaps have enriched it. But whether that would have happened or not there is no doubt that we have impoverished ourselves a great deal by keeping out of that valuable field of activity, which would have given us experience and wider mass contact and enabled us to understand rural India in a more intimate manner.²³²

Many aspects of the “constructive programme” formulated by Gandhi gained the support of Narendra Deva who was included in the body set up by the Congress to prepare a plan for the development of Hindustani.²³³ Narendra Deva urged also that the educational system be remodeled “on the lines suggested by the Wardha scheme”.²³⁴ This was the scheme drawn up, on Gandhi’s inspiration, by a Committee appointed in 1937 with Dr. Zakir Husain as its President, for free and compulsory education and with emphasis on handicraft/vocational training.²³⁵ This was reflected in Narendra Deva’s work on basic education in the United Provinces and in the report of the UP Primary and Secondary Education Reorganisation Committee (1938), headed by him. This report had potentially significant ramifications. The Committee came down heavily against the distinction between “vernacular” and “Anglo-vernacular education”.²³⁶ After the Committee submitted its report in February 1939, the United Provinces Government recorded in August that it had “already accepted the proposal of the Committee regarding the introduction of Basic Education—a term embracing education through

²²⁸ Letter to Narendra Deva, 2 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 274.

²²⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 119. See also Madhu Limaye’s work, *Manu, Gandhi and Ambedkar, And Other Essays*, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 1995. One may make an instructive comparison between this work and B.T. Ranadive’s *Caste, Class and Property Relations*, Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1982. While Ranadive’s understanding of Gandhi’s position on untouchability, caste, and on *varna* distinctions remains frozen in the early 1930s, the socialist leader Limaye makes an attempt to understand the evolution of both Gandhi’s and Ambedkar’s ideas. In his *Atmakatha* (New Delhi, Bharatiya Prakashan Sansthan, 1998, p. 229), Limaye makes the point that the weaker Dalits, even in Maharashtra, which was Ambedkar’s base, were not against the Congress.

²³⁰ SW-AND-2, p. 119.

²³¹ *Idem*.

²³² Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003 pp. 229—230. More than forty years later this would be echoed by the socialist Limaye, who said of Gandhi: “Through his constructive programmes he penetrated the village India.” (Madhu Limaye, “Gandhi, Nehru and Quit India”, *Janata*, Quit India Number, Bombay, 1991, p. 13.)

²³³ See *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Volume 2, p. 279.

²³⁴ SW-AND-1, p. 140.

²³⁵ The report of the (U.P.) Primary and Secondary Education Reorganisation Committee is a document of abiding relevance, even today, nearly eight decades later. Its observations on (i) compulsory and primary, that is, basic education, (ii) the unnatural distinctions between education intended for rural and urban populations, (iii) the examination system, and (iv) the high drop-out rate in schools, could have been made with today’s situation in mind.

²³⁶ Report of the Primary and Secondary Education Reorganisation Committee, Lucknow, Government of the United Provinces, Department of Education, 1939, p. 35.

concrete life situations and co-related with one or more forms of manual and productive work and the social and cultural environments of the child”.²³⁷ The first Basic School was established in Begumsarai near Allahabad and speaking at inauguration in August 1939, UP Premier Govind Ballabh Pant said: “Gandhiji must be thanked for the idea, and Acharya Narendra Deva for the scheme and Mr Sampurnanand for putting the system into practice in U.P.”²³⁸ The Committee’s proposals were actually not confined to U.P. alone but were formulated with a view to being useful for other Indian provinces as well. As the U.P. Government noted: “Among the several recommendations made by the Committee one of the most important is that compulsory primary education should be imparted on a nation-wide scale free of charge and should extend for a period of seven years beginning from the age of seven.”²³⁹ In the south, N.G. Ranga too accorded great significance to the constructive work movement and its impact. According to Ranga, “Gandhi and the nationalists outstripped the Liberals through revolutionary action and constructive work...”²⁴⁰ In Orissa, Malati Choudhury and Rama Devi had been active in the salt satyagraha and the former played an important role in establishing a branch of the Congress Socialist Party; Malati Choudhury was active also in the Kisan movement, presiding over various peasant conferences in 1938.²⁴¹ This positioning fitted well with Narendra Deva’s perspective. He appreciated and supported constructive work but felt that unless these activities were supplemented by mass organizations they could not lead to mass action.²⁴² The villages, according to him, needed to be the focus of a “New Life

Movement” that “should have in view the removal of the cultural backwardness of the people” so as to give them “new aims and aspirations and developing co-operative and democratic habits among them”.²⁴³

On the question of inter-communal relations, a cardinal element in the constructive programme, Narendra Deva, like Gandhi and Nehru, accorded importance to local neighbourhood-level work. Speaking in September 1946 at a meeting of Faizabad residents, Narendra Deva emphasized the need to organize Mohalla Committees: “...it was the poor people who suffered most during a communal riot. *Educated gentlemen goondas, more than anybody else, were responsible for riots.* It must be the concern of every Mohalla Committee to prevent communal disturbances from breaking out or extending to that Mohalla” (emphasis added).²⁴⁴ The importance of such neighbourhood groups has been neglected in recent decades as was evident yet again in the events in Muzaffarnagar in 2013 where neighbours were incited to turn upon their neighbours.

8. The Socialist Departure from the Congress

Soon after Indian independence in August 1947, the All India Congress Committee met in November at Delhi where the then Congress President, Acharya Kripalani announced his resignation. Gandhi, who attended the Working Committee meeting at which the new President was to be chosen, suggested Narendra Deva’s name as Kripalani’s successor.²⁴⁵ It was the second time that Gandhi had proposed Narendra Deva’s name, the first

²³⁷ Paragraph 4 of the Government of U.P., Education Dept resolution, 4 August 1939.

²³⁸ B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Volume 9, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 250.

²³⁹ Paragraph 5 of the Government of U.P., Education Dept. resolution, 4 August 1939.

²⁴⁰ N.G. Ranga, *Outlines of National Revolutionary Path*, Bombay, Hind Kitabs, 1945, p. 132.

²⁴¹ Bina Kumari Sarma, *Indian Historical Review*, Volume XXI, Numbers 1—2, pp. 78—112 at p. 94.

²⁴² The Swarajists in the 1920s had taken a similar position though without the emphasis on mass action that Narendra Deva had in mind. Motilal Nehru wrote in 1924: “We believe in the Constructive Programme, but we do not believe that by itself and without any other activity it will or can lead to Swaraj within a reasonable period of time.” See Ravinder Kumar and Hari Dev Sharma (eds), *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library/Vikas Publishing House, 1986, p. 223. Such reservations served to explain the focus of interest evinced by particular groups but do not appear to be moot or germane as Gandhi’s own political activities made it amply clear that he himself did not believe that the constructive programme, *by itself*, would bring about swaraj.

²⁴³ Acharya Narendra Deva [Yusuf Meherally (ed.)], *Socialism and The National Revolution*; Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946, p. 183.

²⁴⁴ SW-AND-1, p.117. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Shah Nawaz Khan make similar suggestions. See (i) *Harijan*, 2 April 1938, 18 June 1938, and 15 September 1940; extracts compiled in M.K. Gandhi, *The Way to Communal Harmony*, Navajivan Trust 1963, pp. 288—291; and (ii) Jawaharlal Nehru’s and Shah Nawaz Khan’s statements after the Calcutta riots in 1946, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Volume 15, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1982, p. 316 and *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Volume II, pp. 112—113.

²⁴⁵ D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Volume 8, New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Edition, 1963, p. 191.

occasion having been in the late 1930s. This episode and Gandhi's reasoning are recorded by his secretary and biographer, Pyarelal:

Gandhiji would have liked a Congress Socialist to be the President as there was no outstanding Congress leader outside the Government to take charge and he did not want the Congress to be turned into a mere rubber-stamp of the Government in power. He suggested the name of Acharya Narendra Deva but it was not acceptable to the Congress leaders.²⁴⁶

According to Kripalani's own account, this time Gandhi's choice of Narendra Deva had been supported by Nehru but was opposed by Sardar Patel.²⁴⁷

What kind of India was to be built? Tensions between the socialists and Sardar Patel in particular had been mounting. The Congress Socialists were usually in dissonance with Patel and resented his influence over the Congress organizational machinery. As Narendra Deva appeared to have foreseen, there was a symbiotic relation between the Left-wing propensity to plough their own respective furrows, in isolation from the national struggles, and the growth in "right-wing" influence within the movement and party. On his part, Patel viewed the socialists as the "sappers and miners of the Communist Party" in the context of the united front the socialists had formed with the communist group at the end of the 1930s.²⁴⁸ The widespread resentment that came about within the Congress on account of the attitude of the Communist Party of India both on the Pakistan question and on the Quit India movement of 1942, came ironically to be translated into a resentment against the socialists as well even though the latter by now shared the negative sentiment towards the communists in even greater measure than did the rest of the Congress.

Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948. Barely eight or nine weeks after the assassination, the socialists resigned from the Indian National

Congress. Jayaprakash Narayan had charged Home Minister Patel with communal bias and also with neglect of Gandhi's security.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the changes in the Congress constitution ensured that though persons belonging to non-communal organizations could enrol as members of the Congress, they could not hold any office in it. The socialists saw this as affecting their influence in the party.²⁵⁰ Instead of resisting and seeking to reverse this change, they decided to quit the Congress. On the eve of the socialists' departure, the Sixth Annual Conference of the Socialist Party was held at Nasik from 19 to 21 March 1948. Narendra Deva spoke his mind:

There is a vast disparity between what the Congress stands for and what the Congress governments do. The Congress claims that communalists have no place in it. And yet rank communalists are members of the government. Sardar Vallabhai Patel assures the capitalists by telling them that Shanmukham Chetty (the Union Finance Minister—A.N.) is their representative and therefore they need have no apprehensions. He wants the Leaguers to disband the League and join the Congress. He welcomes Hindu Mahasabhaites into the Congress. He pats the RSS and welcomes them too. By one door the Congress expels the socialists. Through another, it admits in capitalists and communalists. God alone can save the Congress.²⁵¹

One who was a strong defender of the Congress as the country's premier anti-imperial organization was now preparing to sever his ties with it. Eight years earlier, Narendra Deva had cautioned some of those in favour of leaving the Congress that as a result of their actions the party could be "converted into a rightist Congress out and out".²⁵² Now he was on the verge of following suit. The logic of his politics so far had implied that once British power was removed, the Congress including the socialists would fashion the country along the lines of the economic programme that they had conceived and

²⁴⁶ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Part 2 [Volume XI], Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, First Edition, 1958; Reprint, 1997, p. 520.

²⁴⁷ J.B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Revised Edition, 1991, p. 297.

²⁴⁸ M.R. Masani, *Bliss Was It in That Dawn ...: A Political Memoir Upto Independence*, 1977, New Delhi, Arnold-Heinemann, p. 96.

²⁴⁹ Jayaprakash Narayan's speech at Surat, 29 February 1948, reproduced in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp. 219—221.

²⁵⁰ Hari Kishore Singh, *A History of the Praja Socialist Party*, Lucknow, Narendra Prakashan, 1959, p. 99.

²⁵¹ SW-AND-2, p. 225.

²⁵² "The Indian Struggle: Next Phase", Bombay, Congress Socialist Party, 1940, reproduced in SW-AND-1, p. 223.

supported. The socialists had emerged as nationally acclaimed personalities, especially after the Quit India struggle. Had they dug in their heels, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to dislodge them from the Congress. Yet Narendra Deva's strategy of 'moving the entire Congress' had apparently come to naught, perhaps not for any intrinsic fault of his own but for causes and reasons that he was unable to control, effectively influence or perhaps even foresee.

In the couple of years immediately before independence, the Congress leadership had been in talks seeking to bridge the gulf even with the CPI; suggestions had been made by both Nehru and Patel that if the CPI's Pakistan line could be given up, past issues such as differences over the Quit India movement, would be put aside leaving little to hinder normal relations between the CPI and the Congress.²⁵³ These efforts did not fructify as the CPI appeared to be unwilling to change its line. But considering the fact of this approach towards even the CPI, a question arises as to what precipitated the breach between the Congress and the Socialists and whether this breach need necessarily have resulted in an organizational rupture.

Apart from Sardar Patel's general resentment towards the Left-wing as a whole, differences between him and the Socialists had been growing over individual issues in the post-war period. In August 1946 there were reports that some workers' unions affiliated to the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, which was committed to non-

violence, were resorting to violent methods in Jamshedpur. Sardar Patel wrote to the Socialist and trade unionist, Prof. Abdul Bari, cautioning him about this.²⁵⁴ Prof. Bari was not only a founder, along with Rahul Sankrityayan, Jayaprakash Narayan, and others, of the Bihar Socialist Party formed in July 1931, but was also the first President of this party, a precursor of the Congress Socialist Party.²⁵⁵ Sardar Patel appears to have had a high opinion of Prof. Bari.²⁵⁶ Apparently, Prof. Bari had developed differences with Jayaprakash Narayan and Bari's appointment as President of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee in 1946 became a sore point with Narayan in his relations with Patel.²⁵⁷ Incidentally, Prof. Bari was assassinated in March 1947 in an unconnected incident.²⁵⁸ Sardar Patel appears also to have accepted official reports that the Congress Socialists were undermining police discipline in Bihar and felt embarrassed by these as a member of the Interim Government.²⁵⁹ As prospects for independence grew, Patel took an interest in efforts to bring the non-communist trade unions together under one platform and this led to the formation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. In this connection he appears to have been put out by the fact that "Socialists, except Pandit Harihar Nath Shastri of Cawnpore, have not been able to make up their mind to join the INTUC".²⁶⁰ The matter seems to have assumed some importance for Patel as a week later he wrote to the Congress General Secretary about it and referred to "the direct or indirect hostility" of the socialist group.²⁶¹ A few weeks later Patel wrote to Sampurnanand, a socialist and at the time Minister of

²⁵³ Javeed Ashraf, "Pakistan Movement and the CPI", *Secular Democracy*, March 1997, pp. 13—18.

²⁵⁴ Sardar Patel to Prof. Abdul Bari, 15 August 1946, in G.M. Nandurkar (ed.), *Sardar's Letters—Mostly Unknown*, Volume IV, Ahmedabad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Bhavan, 1977, p. 288.

²⁵⁵ Hari Dev Sharma, "The Formation of the Congress Socialist Party", *Samata Era*, 1984, Volume 4, Nos 5—7 (Special Issue on Fifty Years of Socialist Movement in India), pp. 1—13, at p. 2.

²⁵⁶ For Sardar Patel's opinion of Bari and his work, see letter from Patel to Jayaprakash Narayan, 15 August 1946, reproduced in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 2, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1972, p. 400 and letter from Patel to Bari, 12 June 1946, reproduced in G.M. Nandurkar (ed.), *Sardar's Letters—Mostly Unknown-I*, Ahmedabad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Bhavan, 1977, p. 287. On the establishment of the Bihar Socialist Party in 1931, see Hari Dev Sharma, "Acharya Narendra Deva: A Biographical Sketch", in SW-AND-1, p. xxix.

²⁵⁷ See Jayaprakash Narayan to Patel, 29 May 1947, in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp. 153—158. Clearly, the Patel—Socialists' dispute had wheels within wheels.

²⁵⁸ For Gandhi's warm tribute to Prof. Abdul Bari on 29 March 1947 upon his death earlier in the month, see *Harijan*, 13 April 1947, CWMG, Volume 87, pp. 177—178; see also Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, op. cit., p. 156n. Earlier, the internment on 28 January 1945 of Abdul Bari (who was then Deputy Speaker of the Bihar Legislative Assembly), along with some other Bihar leaders, "on the charge of open preparation for another struggle" had led to an eloquent defence of Bari and others by Gandhi who said they were only carrying out the constructive programme (see CWMG, Volume 79, pp. 129—132).

²⁵⁹ Sardar Patel to Lord Mountbatten, 8 May 1947 and Sardar Patel to Sri Krishna Sinha, 8 May 1947 in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 5, pp. 100—101 and pp. 102—103.

²⁶⁰ Sardar Patel to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, 14 May 1947, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 5, p. 330.

²⁶¹ Sardar Patel to Shankarrao Deo, 22 May 1947, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 4, p. 98.

Education and Finance in U.P.: “If our friend Narendra Dev could be persuaded to change his attitude, the Socialist Party would throw in its weight” in favour of the INTUC.²⁶² Apart from such organizational matters, the socialists had also been in disagreement with Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel over the attitude to be taken towards the proposals made by the British Cabinet Mission to India in the summer of 1946.²⁶³ The socialists were not enthused by the proposals or by the kind of Constituent Assembly that was under consideration; they therefore wanted to prepare for another round of struggle.²⁶⁴ Even in February 1947, Narendra Deva insisted that it was “by pinning our faith on the organized strength of the masses and not in negotiations that we shall win”.²⁶⁵ In July 1946 Sardar Patel in a letter to D.P. Mishra, a Congress leader from the Central Provinces, had remarked sarcastically in an obvious reference to some of the Socialists and their role in 1942: “The underground variety of Congressmen, who call themselves ‘Augusters’, think they created the August revolution. Like a dog walking under a fully loaded cart they feel that the whole load is on their shoulders and they are dragging the whole cart”.²⁶⁶

With the approach of independence, pressure was brought upon the socialists to make certain changes in their organizational functioning. Changes were made at the Annual Party Conference of the Socialists that took place at Kanpur in late February and early March 1947 after a gap of nine years. The word “Congress” was now dropped from the name of the Congress Socialist Party and a decision was taken to admit non-Congressmen also into the party. At the same time it was claimed by Jayaprakash Narayan on behalf of the socialists that “(o)ur relation with the Congress will remain the same as before and, and the question of snapping the bonds of the Socialists with the Congress

has not arisen”.²⁶⁷ The Kanpur decisions do not appear to have been thought through and were obviously self-contradictory. The changes were made in the wake of criticism that the socialists were acting contrary to Congress policies. If the Socialists wished to retain the Congress connection as before the decision to admit non-Congressmen into the party was quite illogical. The decision to drop the appellation “Congress” and to admit non-Congressmen was consistent only with preparing to break the organizational link with the Congress. That break came at Nasik a year after the Socialists’ Kanpur session of February—March 1947. The resolution passed by the socialists at Nasik referred to the “role of the Congress as a joint front of the Indian people” as having come to an end and also maintained that the “new constitution of the Congress specifically outlaws, for the first time in its historic career, organized groups and parties from functioning in the Congress”.²⁶⁸ Though the onus for the break was sought to be placed in Nasik largely on constitutional change within the Congress, Kanpur had already paved the way for it. How did Narendra Deva, given his ideological understanding throughout the years of struggle, countenance the internal inconsistency of the Kanpur decisions taken a year earlier? Narendra Deva’s speech as chairman of the reception committee at Kanpur furnishes no clue to this as it focuses primarily on the question of democracy being consistent with socialism and on problems of socialist unity.²⁶⁹ The socialist Madhu Limaye who was present at the Kanpur session has shed some further light on Narendra Deva’s position. Replying to the debate at Kanpur on the question of continuing relations with the Congress, Narendra Deva had denied that the decisions being taken there were a first step towards leaving the Congress.²⁷⁰ According to him the reference to the Congress was being deleted from the name of the

²⁶² Sardar Patel to Sampurnanand, 18 June 1947, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence*, Volume 5, pp. 331—332.

²⁶³ Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, p. 18.

²⁶⁴ Jayaprakash Narayan’s speech at Public Meeting, Bombay, 11 May 1946 reproduced in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003 pp. 11—12.

²⁶⁵ Narendra Deva’s interview to the Press, *National Herald*, 24 February 1947, reproduced in SW-AND-2, p. 159.

²⁶⁶ Sardar Patel to D.P. Mishra, 29 July 1946 in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence*, Volume 3, p. 155.

²⁶⁷ Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Volume 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library/Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp. 117—118.

²⁶⁸ *Report of the Sixth Annual Conference held at Kotwalnagar, Nasik, March 19th to March 21st, 1948*, Bombay, Socialist Party, pp. 39—40.

²⁶⁹ *Address of Acharya Narendra Deva, Chairman, Reception Committee, Fifth Annual Congress Socialist Party Conference, Cawnpore, 1st March 1947*, reproduced in SW-AND-2, pp. 160—165.

²⁷⁰ Madhu Limaye, *Atmakatha*, New Delhi, Bharatiya Prakashan Sansthan, 1998, p. 492.

Party only because some Congress members had said that socialists tend to misuse the Congress name; he indicated also that the change was being made after consultation with leading Congress figures.²⁷¹ Narendra Deva in fact maintained at Kanpur that the Congress still had great capacity to serve as a vehicle for change and for running the state in a proper manner.²⁷² Madhu Limaye records that listening to Narendra Deva at Kanpur he understood the meaning of the whole of Narendra Deva's speech; but Limaye himself doubted whether the fast-changing situation would permit the socialists to remain in the Congress for long.²⁷³ Clearly, Narendra Deva was not inclined towards the socialists leaving the Congress. There were other forces pushing and pulling in that direction. Minoo Masani, who tried in vain to prevent a split, hinted at this in a letter to Patel requesting him to ensure that a lack of contact between Patel and the socialists did not result in a new alignment which "would be unfortunate for both the Congress and the country".²⁷⁴ At this time Patel was pre-occupied with negotiations that would lead to the partition of India itself. Indeed, the acceptance of the Mountbatten plan would also become a point of contention between the socialists and the Congress leadership, particularly Patel. Gandhi told the socialists that the need of the hour was to counter communalism, not create new parties: "You have simply not understood what socialism means.... Even in Russia their policies have not succeeded completely. Why don't you try to save the country from the calamity that has befallen it today? So long as this communal virus has not been eradicated, socialism will never come."²⁷⁵ He asked them to talk things over, writing in July 1947: "If we do not unite and work together, I think neither the Congress nor the Socialists will succeed."²⁷⁶

In the following year Narendra Deva in his speech at the Nasik session of the Socialists would say:

It is not that we are in a hurry to quit the Congress. The Congress is compelling us to get out of it. Once the Congress President asked us to drop the prefix 'Congress' from our Party name. He also pleaded that our Party doors be thrown open to non-Congressmen. He suggested that this would enable us to continue in the Congress. We did all that at Kanpur. Today they have adopted a constitution which has left us no other alternative.²⁷⁷

If Narendra Deva did not wish to leave the Congress, it was apparently a somewhat strange and counter-intuitive piece of advice for him and the socialists to have accepted from the then Congress President, J.B. Kripalani, resulting in the changes made at Kanpur. As Limaye's account of Narendra Deva's speech at Kanpur indicates, Narendra Deva was in fact reluctant to part company with the Congress. It went against what he had stood for; yet he ultimately went along with the dominant view among socialists as represented by Jayaprakash Narayan who had by now burnt his boats with Patel and the organizational machine of the parent party. Later Narendra Deva would write that it was the new rule that was sought to be introduced in the Congress constitution that made him decide to quit; for him that became the litmus test after which "all my doubts cleared up".²⁷⁸ Years later Jayaprakash Narayan would have second thoughts. He was reported in July 1964, a few weeks after Nehru's death, to have said that "leaving the Congress in 1948 to form the Socialist Party" was a mistake committed on account of "the wrong assessment of the character of the Congress".²⁷⁹ According to him "(m)ost of his partymen thought at that time that the Congress would slowly develop into a conservative-cum-liberal party just like 'what the Swatantra Party is today'. But history belied this assessment".²⁸⁰ Ironically, the then assessment may have provided an accurate description of the *later*

²⁷¹ Idem.

²⁷² Madhu Limaye, *Atmakatha*, op. cit., pp. 492—493.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 493.

²⁷⁴ Minoo Masani to Sardar Patel, 26 May 1947, reproduced in Ganesh M. Nandurkar (ed.), *Sardar's Letters—Mostly Unknown*, Part 2, Ahmedabad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Bhavan, 1980, pp. 214—215.

²⁷⁵ Discussion with Socialist Workers, 7 June 1947, CWMG, Volume 88, pp. 96—97.

²⁷⁶ Letter dated 22 July 1947, CWMG, Volume 88, p. 396.

²⁷⁷ SW-AND-2, p. 224.

²⁷⁸ Narendra Dev, "My Recollections", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 16. This piece is a translation of Narendra Deva's article, "Mere Sansmaran" published in *Janvani*, in September 1948.

²⁷⁹ *The Hindustan Times*, 4 July 1964, cited in Girja Shankar, *Socialist Trends in the Indian National Movement*, Meerut, Twenty-First Century Publishers, 1987, p. 294n.

²⁸⁰ Idem.

Congress towards the last two decades of the twentieth century. By then, several possibilities and alternate policies the socialists could have meaningfully expanded and expounded and to which they might conceivably have made a greater contribution, were lost to them.

9. Some Further Post-Independence Developments

Not all socialists left the Congress. Many stayed on but this is not the place to trace their story. We may conclude this essay, without going into subsequent organizational and electoral twists and turns, with a brief reference to such post-independence developments as may be necessary to appreciate how socialist politics came subsequently to stand in the context of Narendra Deva's ideas. Narendra Deva reiterated the relevance of non-violent struggle and Satyagraha even in the post-independence years. In 1949, on the occasion of the agitation carried on by Ram Manohar Lohia in favour of the democratic forces in Nepal, Narendra Deva commended Lohia not only for the peaceful satyagraha that Lohia led outside the Nepal embassy in Delhi; he backed Lohia also on the civil liberties questions about the way the protest was handled by Delhi's Police.²⁸¹ In later years too, Narendra Deva lent support to Lohia on various civil liberties issues such as those related to the Farrukhabad peasants' agitation and the struggle for democratic rights in Manipur in India's north-east in 1954.²⁸² The differences between them over a political crisis that arose in Travancore-Cochin and on other matters that soon followed were also marked. Some of these issues, which assumed an organizational-disciplinary form, have been dealt with adequately elsewhere and do not fall within the scope of this essay.²⁸³ In post-independence Indian socialism, Lohia was the principal figure associated with the socialist retreat from Marxism and the attempt

to offer another ideological framework which came to be associated with later Indian socialists. The principal intellectual reason for this retreat was the increasing material that was becoming available on political intolerance and restriction of individual liberty within the Soviet Union. The Pachmarhi Convention of the socialists in May 1952 which was presided over by Lohia can be said to mark the socialist break with Marxism.

Narendra Deva and Lohia had had close personal relations from the days of the latter's father Hiralal Lohia who had been jailed in various nationalist struggles.²⁸⁴ In his writings, such as *Saptakranti*, or "seven revolutions", published in 1963, Lohia may be seen in relation to Narendra Deva somewhat as Antonio Gramsci may be in relation to Karl Marx, that is, in certain respects, an extension, though by no means a replacement.²⁸⁵ Narendra Deva (and Lohia in such writings), placed emphasis on the dissolution of caste which the former quite clearly regarded as an anti-democratic institution. Both believed that in a socialist society civil liberties ought to be deepened, not curtailed. In actual policy and praxis the differences between the approaches represented by them become further marked for, in his anti-Congressism, Lohia later sought and pursued alliances even with forces that Narendra Deva had shunned.

Both Narendra Deva and Lohia had come into close contact with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. But Lohia has left behind among his followers a largely post-independence legacy of often bitter anti-Nehruism, which tendency is absent in Narendra Deva. With Narendra Deva's political life in the pre-independence Congress entwined with Nehru's, the two remained personally close even after the socialists as a party left the Congress in 1948.²⁸⁶ On their geopolitical

²⁸¹ Narendra Deva, "The Weapon of Satyagraha", *National Herald*, 26 June 1949, reproduced in Acharya Narendra Deva, *Towards Socialist Society* [Brahmanand (ed.)], New Delhi, Centre of Applied Politics, pp. 362—364.

²⁸² "Statement on Dr Lohia's Arrest", *National Herald*, 28 July 1954, SW-AND-4, pp. 67—68; "Statement on Manipur Satyagraha", 24 December 1954, published in *Janata*, 2 January 1955, SW-AND-4, pp. 84—86.

²⁸³ See, for example, Hari Kishore Singh, *A History of the Praja Socialist Party*, Lucknow, Narendra Prakashan, 1959, pp. 200—215 and Hari Dev Sharma, "Acharya Narendra Deva: A Biographical Sketch", in SW-AND-1, pp. xl-xliv for two interpretations of the events that led to an internal split among the socialists.

²⁸⁴ SW-AND-2, p. 98.

²⁸⁵ For a broad summary of some of the ideas in Lohia's *Saptakranti*, see "Seven Revolutions", *Janata*, 9 August 2009 (excerpted from the latter part of the preface to Lohia's, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, Hyderabad, Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyala Nyasa, 1963). He refers to various "revolutions", including that for national freedom, the *satyagraha* against weapons and armed might, the social revolution, including the struggle for gender equality, and the struggles against caste and against racial and colour discrimination, the economic struggle of the poor against the rich and the "revolution" aiming to protect privacy against encroachment by the collective.

²⁸⁶ See also in this connection Narendra Deva's article on Nehru, written in April 1949 more than a year after the former's departure from the Congress: SW-AND-3, pp. 147—154.

perspectives, the differences between Narendra Deva's ideas and those of Ram Manohar Lohia can, of course, be discerned in their stated ideological positions; but these become more visibly evident in the actual post-Narendra Deva political trajectory of the socialists. Narendra Deva was not inclined to embrace the Western alliance even as a response to what he saw as some grave provocations to Indian nationalism and Indian socialism from the pre-independence Indian communist movement which had sought simultaneously to claim a sole-spokesmanship on behalf of Marxism. Although a critic of certain aspects of Soviet development, Narendra Deva was emphatic that socialist criticism of the Soviet Union must be friendly and must not lower her image in the eyes of the world. This did not, of course mean that he was uncritical of the Soviet Union. For example, in his presidential address at the Bihar Congress Socialist Party Conference on 16 February 1947 he had referred disapprovingly to the "undemocratic nature of the Soviet Russian administration".²⁸⁷ Two weeks later, in his address at the Kanpur session of the socialists on 1 March 1947, Narendra Deva was again critical of the absence of political freedom in Soviet Russia.²⁸⁸ As Narendra Deva died a few days before Khrushchev's disclosures in February 1956, this has given rise to hypothetical propositions about how he would have reacted to these; but given the criticisms he had already made, it is

implausible to utilize Khrushchev's revelations to set Narendra Deva on a posthumous path of anti-Marxism and pro-Americanism of the kind that a section of later Indian socialists took. He had made a sharp critique of American imperialism and, in his correspondence with Asoka Mehta, had also made it clear that he would rather leave the party than give up Marxism. Narendra Deva's article in *Janvani* on "America's New Imperialism" was published in 1947.²⁸⁹ Even prior to Indian independence, when the United States had appeared in the 1940s to be pressuring Winston Churchill on Indian independence, Narendra Deva cautioned against relying too much on the US: "The tendency exhibited during the war to count too much on the goodwill and support of the USA is to be deprecated. It seems as if in the days to come the USA would more and more refuse to interfere in the domestic affairs of the British Empire."²⁹⁰ In like manner, though Narendra Deva left the Congress in 1948, he was not prepared to be pushed on the rebound into unsavoury alliances or platforms that could encourage or politically strengthen the sectarianism of any religious community or other group whether for electoral or for other tactical purposes. He had understood also the complexities of peasant movements and warned against acquiescing in the development of these struggles along casteist or religious-communal lines.

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²⁸⁷ SW-AND-2, p. 158.

²⁸⁸ SW-AND-2, pp. 162—163.

²⁸⁹ An English translation was published decades later. See Narendra Deva, "American Imperialism", *Janata*, Bombay, 15 January 1989. The 1947 article, *America Ka Naya Samrajyavad*, was translated from the Hindi by H.B. Mehndiratta.

²⁹⁰ Narendra Deva, "India and the Post-War World", *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Annual Puja Number, 1945, reproduced in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., pp. 162—167, at p. 164.

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Budget 2017–18 and the Social Sectors

Neeraj Jain

We had pointed out in our previous article on Jaitley's Budget 2017–18 that despite the devastating impact of demonetisation on the livelihoods of the poor, the government's social sector expenditures—aimed at providing essential services to the poor at affordable rates—have not seen any increase. A significant increase in these welfare expenditures could have provided some relief to the distress caused by this disastrous policy. On the other hand, the government continues to dole out huge subsidies to the rich, in the name of 'tax incentives to promote growth', 'Public–Private–Partnership' and so on. Just the tax incentives/concessions to the rich amount to an astronomical Rs 5.5 lakh crore, an amount that is nearly three times the government's social sector expenditures (Rs 1.95 lakh crore) as mentioned in the finance minister's budget speech.

In this article, we first take a closer look at the two most important allocations within the government's social sector expenditures, on education and health. After that, we examine the

allocations for two of the most marginalised sections of Indian society, Dalits/Adivasis and women.

No country in the world has developed without making provisions for providing free, compulsory, equitable and good quality elementary education to ALL its children in the initial stages of its development, and later expanded it to secondary and higher secondary education. (And all developed countries have done this entirely through public funding; they are aware that the private sector will only invest for profits.)¹ Unfortunately, India has not been able to provide this to a majority of its children after seven decades of independence. The Twelfth Plan (2012–17) admits that even after three years of the passage of the Right to Education Act which is supposed to guarantee free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6–14, the drop-out rate at the elementary level is still as high as 42.39%!² According to freshly released 2011 Census data, of the total school age population (age group 5–19 years) of 38.01 crore

children in the country, as many as 6.54 crore children (17.2%) have never attended any school, while another 4.49 crore (11.8%) have dropped out of schools in the last decade.³

Even for those going to school, the conditions in a majority of the schools are so bad that it is a national shame:

- More than 50% of the primary schools in the country are single, or at best, two teacher schools! And 57% of the primary schools function with 3 classrooms or less. Implying that a single teacher is teaching two or three different classes at the same time in a single room, in a majority of the primary schools in the country!
- A shocking 19% of all regular teachers in elementary schools in the country are not professionally trained; another 14% teachers are working on contractual basis, of whom more than one-third are not professionally trained.
- 35% of elementary schools do not have usable toilet facilities, and 44% do not have separate toilet facilities for girls—an important reason for girls dropping out of schools.
- 24% of all elementary schools in rural India do not even have functional drinking water facilities.
- Given this state of our schools, is it any wonder that a survey found that 52% of Class V students were unable to read Class II-level text and 49% could not solve simple two-digit subtraction problems (that they are expected to learn in Class II)!⁴

So far as higher education is concerned, the Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER (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 20, whereas for developed countries it is above 60, with several countries having a GER above 70.⁵ 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. The overall budget for the education sector (2017–18 over 2016–17 RE) has been increased by just 8.3%, which means no increase in real terms. And as compared to the GDP, it has actually decreased from 0.49% in 2016–17 RE to 0.47% in 2017–18 BE.

Let us examine the budget allocations for school education. The school education budget for 2017–18 has actually suffered a cut in real terms: it has been increased over the revised estimates for 2016–17 by a mere 5.6%. In his previous budgets, Jaitley had slashed the school education budget so sharply that the budget for this year is more than the budget for 2014–15 (Actuals) by just 1.4%!

The Parliament passed the Right to Education (RTE) 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. Six years after the passage of the RTE Act, barely 10% of the schools are RTE compliant.⁷ But the government is simply not willing to allocate funds for this scheme. Its allocation has been increased by only Rs 1,000 crore over 2016–17 RE; in the previous years, Jaitley had actually reduced the allocation for this scheme so steeply that the allocation for 2017–18 continues to be less than the allocation for SSA made in 2014–15 even in absolute terms!

The allocations made for the SSA by the Centre are much less than the amount of Central funds sought by the Ministry for Human Resource Development (MHRD) for implementation of the RTE Act. The MHRD prepares a budget for implementing the SSA every year, which is based on annual work plan and budgets prepared by the districts and submitted to their respective states. A part of this budget is supposed to be funded by the Centre, as its share of the SSA budget. The gap between the Central funds sought by the MHRD and the actual allocation by the Centre for SSA has been increasing every year, and in the four budgets presented by Jaitley so far, has fallen from 78% in 2014–15 to just 43% this year.

Table 1: Budgetary Allocations for Education, 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)⁶

	2014–15 (A) (1)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–(2) 17 RE	2017–18 BE (3)	(3–1)/1 %
Department of School Education and Literacy of which:	45,722	41,800	43,554	43,896	46,356	1.4%
<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>	24,097	21,661	22,500	22,500	23,500	–2.5%
<i>Mid-Day Meal Scheme</i>	10,523	9,145	9,700	9,700	10,000	–5.0%
Department of Higher Education	23,152	25,439	28,840	29,703	33,330	44.0%
Ministry of Human Resource Development: Total	68,874	67,239	72,394	73,599	79,686	15.7%
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455	
MHRD Budget as % of GDP	0.55%	0.49%	0.48%	0.49%	0.47%	
Higher Education budget as % of total MHRD Budget	33.6%	37.8%	39.8%	40.4%	41.8%	

Table 2: Central Allocation for SSA vis-à-vis Demand from MHRD⁸

	<i>Funds sought by MHRD for SSA (Central Share) (Rs crore)</i>	<i>Budgetary allocation (BE) for SSA by Ministry of Finance (Rs crore)</i>	<i>Allocation as % of approved outlay</i>
2013–14	31,016	27,258	87.9%
2014–15	36,391	28,258	77.7%
2015–16	40,200	22,000	54.7%
2016–17	46,702	22,500	48.2%
2017–18	55,000	23,500	42.7%

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is another very important scheme for elementary education, designed to combat the huge malnutrition levels among children in the country; another equally important purpose is to improve school enrolment and child attendance in schools. The allocation for this has been marginally increased this year, implying a cut in real terms, and as compared to the budget three years ago (2014–15), has actually fallen by 5%. The country's ruling classes are not willing to spend money even on providing a decent nutritious meal once a day to the country's children!

All this clearly indicates that the Centre is just not interested in universalising elementary education in the country. We have argued in detail in our earlier writings that the aim of the Right to Education Act passed by the previous UPA Government was never to universalise elementary education in the country; on the contrary, its aim was to abandon the Constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education of equitable quality to all children in the country, subvert the Unnikrishnan Judgement of the Supreme Court making education a fundamental right, and create conditions for demolishing the government school system and gradually

privatise school education—thereby fulfilling the dictates of the World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programme.⁹ The BJP Government has continued with this anti-child and anti-nation policy of the UPA Government. It has in fact accelerated privatisation and commercialisation of school education by a simple stratagem—squeezing the already low allocation of funds for school education.

Coming to higher education, this year, the allocation has been increased by about 12%, or Rs 3,600 crore, over last year's revised estimate.

Usually, an increased allocation for higher education would be a reason to cheer, but if we look at the various components of the allocation made for the MHRD, it becomes clear that this increased allocation is a case of misplaced priorities and is very iniquitous. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, it is evident from the last column in Table 1 above that the BJP Government is clearly shifting its priority to funding higher education as compared to school education. Within the budget allocation for MHRD, the allocation for higher education has been steadily going up, from 33.6% in 2014–15 to 41.8% this year. In other words, this increased allocation for higher education is at the cost of reduced allocation for school education.

And secondly, of this increased allocation of Rs 3,600 crore for higher education, more than Rs 3,000 crore is for the 23 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and 31 National Institutes of Technology (NITs). These premier engineering institutions account for 37% of the total outlay for higher education in 2017–18! On the other hand, Jaitley has shown no interest in increasing funding for improving the quality of the average engineering colleges, which account for the overwhelming majority of the engineering colleges in the country. The All India Council for Technical Education, the regulator of engineering education in India, got only Rs 485 crore this year, as compared to Rs 481 crore last year (2016–17 RE), a cut in real terms.

Similarly, while the country's most elite universities, the Central Universities, got Rs 6,486 crore this year, 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 4,692 crore (an increase of Rs 200 crore over 2016–17 RE, again a cut in real terms). The UGC had been allocated Rs 9,315 crore in 2015–16

RE; in other words, the allocation for it has fallen by half in two years.

So, in case of higher education too, Modi and Jaitley have their priorities clearly set out. The aim is to gradually strangulate the country's government funded higher education system by reducing government grants to colleges and universities, so that conditions can be created for its privatisation. With education becoming a commodity and higher educational institutions becoming business firms, the quality of education is bound to suffer. But the country's corporate houses need at least some good quality engineers and managers—and so government funding is being concentrated on the country's premier higher educational institutions like the IITs, IIMs and Central Universities.

The neoliberal model looks at everything, including education, from the perspective of maximising corporate profits. There is no need to look at education from the perspective of human development, as a means of unlocking the inherent potential of human beings, so that they can enjoy an enhanced quality of life. All this is gibberish. The sole aim of education must be to prepare youth for employment in the assembly lines of multinational corporations. For this, the youth must be imparted the necessary skills, so that they can become cogs in the corporate wheel.

This philosophy also fits well with the fascist philosophy of the BJP–RSS regime, which wants to transform our youth into mindless automatons in the service of virulent Hindutva. The youth of the country can only become so, if they do not read, gain knowledge, develop critical thinking, expand their mental horizons.

And so, while on the one hand, the Modi–Jaitley regime is slowly strangulating our higher educational institutions by starving them of funds, on the other hand, the government has hugely increased funding for skill development. The BJP Government inaugurated the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship soon after coming to power in 2014. Its main program is the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, whose allocation has more than tripled in the last two years. In his budget speech, Jaitley proposed to extend the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras from the 60 districts at present to more than 600 districts across the country.

Table 3: Allocation for Skill Development (Rs crore)

	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	991	1,771	2,140	2,924

Allocation for health

India's health system is in "crisis". India 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 World Health Organisation (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 is also in the grip of an epidemic of chronic diseases, which account for more than 50% of the deaths in the country.¹⁰

It is possible to address these health challenges, but that would call for strengthening of the public health system. The WHO recommends that countries should allocate at least 5% of their GDP for public health services; India allocates barely 1%. India ranks 171 out of 175 countries in public health spending.¹¹ 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 22% in primary health centres (PHCs) and about 30% in community health centres (CHCs); and there are only on an average of 1.14 district hospitals per district. Where these health centres exist, a majority of them are deficient in infrastructure, with even doctors not available.¹² This dismal state of public healthcare 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.¹³ Because of the lack of affordable medical services and high costs of private healthcare, six crore people are pushed into poverty each year—a fact admitted by

Finance Minister Jaitley in his budget speech last year.

On December 31, 2014, the Union Government released the draft National Health Policy (NHP) 2015. The draft NHP set three major objectives for the public health sector: expanding preventive health services, assuring universal availability of free, comprehensive primary healthcare services, and significantly reducing out-of-pocket expenditure by ensuring affordable secondary and tertiary healthcare services. But the government toned down these booming objectives in the draft document itself, saying that "taking into account the financial capacity of the country", the country could only afford a public health expenditure of 2.5% of GDP to meet these targets, of which 40%, that is 1% of GDP, would be spent by the Centre. Health experts have pointed out that considering the appalling state of public healthcare services in the country, such a low level of public health expenditure is inadequate to make available decent quality affordable public healthcare services for the entire population.¹⁴

In all the three budgets presented by Jaitley since the draft NHP was made public by the government, the funds sanctioned by him for healthcare are way below the minimalist fiscal target of 1% of GDP proposed in it.

Thus, in the 2017–18 budget, there is an increase in the allocation for the Department of Health and Family Welfare by 24%, or Rs 9,010 crore. This increase appears significant only because the allocation for health in the previous years has been very low. Even after this increase, the allocation is just 0.28% of GDP, way below the target of 1% set by the Union Government in the draft NHP. Of this increase in the budget for the Department of Health and Family Welfare, the major increase is in secondary and tertiary care sectors, ignoring the orientation suggested in the draft NHP, which calls for giving first priority to providing access to free and universal primary healthcare services to all. Thus, nearly one-fourth of this increase (Rs 2,006 crore) is allocated to upgrade district hospitals into new medical colleges under National Health Mission, and another 22% of the increase (Rs 2,022 crore) is on the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana, which is for setting up new AIIMS and upgrading medical colleges. This is not to argue that new high quality public tertiary care hospitals are not needed—the point is that this should be done not at the cost of neglecting the primary sector. The present rush at the district and high-end hospitals can be much reduced if the facilities at the PHCs and CHCs are

Table 4: BJP Government Allocations for Health, 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
Dept. of Health and Family Welfare (including Department of AIDS Control) (1)	30,626	33,121	37,062	38,343	47,353
Dept. of Health Research	911	993	1,145	1,345	1,500
<i>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: Total</i>	31,537	34,114	38,207	39,688	48,853
Ministry of AYUSH	617	1,075	1,326	1,307	1,429
<i>Total Health Budget (2)</i>	32,154	35,189	39,533	40,995	50,282
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series) (3)	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455
Total Exp on Health and Family Welfare as % of GDP (1/3)	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.25	0.28
Total Exp on Health as % of GDP (2/3)	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.3

improved; if primary level health services are good, most illnesses can be taken care of at this level itself, and this will not only improve the efficiency and reduce the cost of delivery of public health services, it will also improve the overall health status of the people.

On the other hand, the budget marginalises primary healthcare. While the budget for strengthening the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) has been increased by Rs 2,870 crore, simultaneously, the budgets for reproductive and child health (including immunisation) and communicable diseases have been reduced, while the budget for maintenance of existing infrastructure has been kept at virtually the same level as last year. (And yet the finance minister has announced that the government has set a target of reducing the country's high maternal mortality rate from 167 in 2011–13 to 100 by 2018–2020, and infant mortality rate from 39 in 2014 to 28 by 2019—probably by manipulating statistics here too). Therefore, on the whole, the budget for NRHM has been increased by Rs 1,727 crore (over the revised estimates for 2016–17), which is a modest increase of 8.9%, barely enough to beat inflation.

This means that existing public health and primary care facilities, particularly the PHCs and CHCs, will continue to underperform and lag behind the rural population's health needs due to shortage of funds. In his budget speech, the finance minister has kept mum on the huge shortage of health sub-centres, PHCs and CHCs in the country and the severe shortage of infrastructural and other facilities at the existing centres—all that he has announced is that the 1.5 lakh health sub-centres

will be transformed into 'health and wellness centres', whatever that means. In other words, the huge shortfall of 35,110 sub-centres, 6,572 PHCs and 2,220 CHCs across the country is going to continue.¹⁵

The NRHM's urban counterpart, the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), is yet to take off properly. For the period 2012–13 to 2016–17, its average yearly budgetary requirement was estimated to be Rs 3,391 crore per year from central funds; this year's allocation is only Rs 752 crore. This allocation is a sharp cut from the previous year's budget allocation of Rs 950 crore.¹⁶

It is well established that providing free/affordable public healthcare services is a much better way of providing universal healthcare to the people rather than providing them health insurance coverage and reimbursing them hospitalisation costs—the latter only benefits private healthcare providers and private insurance companies. Be that as it may, last year, the government made a big bang announcement of providing people Rs 1 lakh insurance coverage for all Below Poverty Line (BPL) card holders under a National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)—this scheme was also announced by PM Modi from the ramparts of the Red Fort in his Independence Day speech of August 15, 2016. This was essentially a revamp of the earlier Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) that had been launched in 2008 and which was also a publicly funded health insurance scheme providing hospitalisation coverage to BPL patients in private or public hospitals for up to Rs 30,000. Upscaling the RSBY to NHPS is estimated to cost Rs 24,000 crore for five years or an average of

Rs 4,800 per year. However, the finance minister sanctioned only Rs 1,500 for this scheme in 2016–17, spent less than half of this during the year, and in the budget estimate for this year, has cut the allocation for it to Rs 1,000 crore. PM Modi has now stopped mentioning this in his speeches. Clearly, this is another announcement that is also going to remain on paper only.

Table 5: Budget Allocation for RSBY / NHPS (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017 18 BE
RSBY/ NHPS	551	–	1,500	724	1,000

Allocations for Dalits and Adivasis

The budget documents show an increase of over 30% in the outlay for the welfare of the scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs). In his budget speech, Jaitley announced that he had allocated Rs 52,393 crore for the SCs for the next financial year against Rs 40,920 crore in 2016–17 RE, and Rs 31,920 crores for the STs, against Rs 24,602 crore in 2016–17 RE. These appear to be significant increases, but a closer look tells a different story, the same story of massaging statistics to make them look good that has become a hallmark of Arun Jaitley.

Till last year, these budget outlays were designed to be from the Plan outlay, and hence were known as Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP). These sub Plans were launched in 1979 and 1974 respectively to ensure the flow of targeted funds from the general sectors in the Central Ministries towards the development of the Dalits and Adivasis, so as to bridge the development gap between these communities and the rest of society. The guidelines under these two programmes clearly stated that each ministry/department must allocate funds under

separate budget head/subhead for these sub Plans, and that these allocations as a proportion of the Plan expenditure 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 2011 Census, implying that the allocations for the SCSP and TSP should be at least 16.6% and 8.6% of the total Plan expenditure respectively. It is another matter that the actual allocations for these sub Plans never reached the stipulated norm. During the BJP regime, the allocations have fallen to even below the low levels of the previous UPA Government, and were 7.06% and 4.36% of the Plan expenditure respectively in the 2016–17 budget estimates (Table 6)!

Worse, of the total allocations for SCSP and TSP, only a small proportion of the funds were directed or targeted to benefit the SC/ST communities. An analysis done by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) found that in the 2016–17 budget, only 18% of the total SCSP allocations and 37% of the TSP allocations were direct/targeted allocations. A majority of the funds were allocated for schemes and programmes that were very general in nature and had no direct impact on the development of the Dalits and Adivasis. Thus, not only was the allocation of funds for these two programmes less than half of the stipulated norm, even this reduced allocation was being done in such a way that allowed the diversion of funds for schemes that did not directly contribute to the actual development of these communities. This was actually a violation of the policy guidelines to these programmes, that clearly state that “SCSP and TSP funds should be non-divertible”.¹⁷

The same trend has continued this year too. A NCDHR study found that this year too, the majority of the allocations are for general, non-targeted schemes. Worse, this year, the BJP Government has abandoned the SCSP and TSP, and replaced it with “Allocation for Welfare of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.” This innocuous

Table 6: BJP Government’s Budgetary Allocations for Dalits & Adivasis (Rs crore)

	2013–14 (A)	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 RE	2016–17 BE
Plan Budget	453,327	462,644	477,197	550,010
Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP)	34,722	30,036	34,675	38,833
SCSP as % of Plan Budget	7.66	6.49	7.27	7.06
Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)	22,039	19,921	20,963	24,005
TSP as % of Plan Budget	4.86	4.31	4.39	4.36

sounding change actually signifies a paradigm shift in policy, as now Plan and non-Plan expenditures have been merged. This has enabled the government to include administrative/non-Plan expenditures like salaries of employees who belong to SC/ST communities in various institutions, and pension of retired lecturers and professors who belong to these communities, as spending for welfare of SC/STs. This is contrary to the entire rationale for creating these special programmes; these people are not beneficiaries of special welfare schemes directed at SC/STs, they work/worked for the government like the rest of society, and are eligible for pensions like their non-SC/ST colleagues.¹⁸

Jaitley claims that he has allocated Rs 52,393 crore for the welfare of SCs for the next financial year against Rs 38,833 crore in 2016–17 BE, an increase of 34.9%; and Rs 31,920 crores for the welfare of STs in 2017–18 against Rs 24,005 crore in 2016–17 BE, a 33% jump. But Jaitley is manipulating data; these expenditures are not comparable, as the expenditures in 2016–17 were from the Plan Expenditure, and not total Budget Outlay, whereas in the allocations for this year, the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditures has been eliminated, and the two have been merged. Thus, in the allocations for welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes this year, schemes that were earlier reported under non-Plan head and were not included under SCSP and TSP have been included, such as Employees Pension Scheme, 1995 (allocation Rs 767 crore and Rs 388 crore respectively), and Interest Subsidy for Short term credit to farmers (allocation Rs 2,430 crore and Rs 1,200 crore respectively). Then, it is also not clear why, all of a sudden, certain schemes that earlier were not included under SCSP and TSP have been included this year in the statements giving allocations for welfare of SCs/STs—these include schemes such as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Till last year, the various ministries/departments had to report budget allocations under SCSP and TSP, based on which these sub Plans were drawn up. But this year, with these sub Plans being scrapped and no new framework being drawn up to replace them, how have the various ministries reported the allocations for welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes within the different schemes is also not clear.¹⁹

Finally, even if we ignore the above manipulations being indulged in by the *manuvadi* BJP Government to inflate its allocations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes,

even these inflated allocations are much less than the stipulated guidelines for SCSP and TSP. Even though an accurate comparison is not possible because of the merger of Plan and non-Plan allocations, let us make a rough estimate of the under-allocations this year. For this, let us take last year's ratio of Plan and non-Plan expenditure as the benchmark for allocations. Last year, as per the guidelines of the SCSP and TSP, the due allocation for SCs (16.6% of the Plan budget) should have been Rs 91,302 crore, and due allocations for STs (8.6% of the Plan budget) should have been Rs 47,301 crore. These amount to 4.62% and 2.39% of the total Budget expenditure for last year respectively (see Table 7 for the calculation).

Table 7: SCSP and TSP as Mandated by Policy, 2016–17 BE (Rs crore)

	2016–17 RE
Total Budget Outlay (1)	1,978,060
Plan budget	550,010
Amount mandated by policy for SCSP: 16.6% of Plan budget (2)	91,302
SCSP as % of Budget Outlay (2/1)	4.62%
Amount mandated by policy for TSP: 8.6% of Plan budget (3)	47,301
TSP as % of Budget Outlay (3/1)	2.39%

Now, taking these percentages (4.62% and 2.39%) as the benchmark for allocations, this means that in the 2017–18 Budget, the scheduled castes should have been allocated Rs 99,179 crore and scheduled tribes Rs 51,307 crore. But instead, Budget 2017–18 allocated Rs 52,393 crore for SCs and 31,920 crore for STs. This means a total of Rs 46,786 crore for SCs and Rs 19,387 crore for STs has been denied by the Central Government (Table 8).

Allocation for women

This is also known as the Gender Budget. First introduced in Union Budget 2005–06, it captures the quantum of budgetary resources earmarked for women by various departments and ministries. The Gender Budget Statement (GBS) is prepared on the basis of the information furnished by the Ministries/Departments.

In a country where a crime against women takes place every 90 seconds, an insensitive Modi Government had slashed the gender budget so sharply during the previous

Table 8: Desired Allocation for Welfare of SCs and STs, 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2017–18 BE
Total Budget Outlay	2,146,735
Desired allocation for scheduled castes welfare: 4.62% of Budget Outlay	99,179
Actual Outlay	52,393
Shortage in Outlay	46,786
Desired allocation for scheduled castes welfare: 2.39% of Budget Outlay	51,307
Actual Outlay	31,920
Shortage in Outlay	19,387

two years that even after increasing the allocations for women in 2017–18 by 25% over 2016–17 BE, the allocations are below the allocations for 2014–15 BE in real terms! This is also reflected in the gender budget allocation as a percentage of total budget outlay—this year’s allocation of 5.28% is below the allocation for 2014–15 of 5.46%.

The GBS is in two parts. Part A details schemes in which 100% provision is for women, Part B reflects

Budget constitutes 73% of the total budget under Part A (Rs 31,389 crore).

Part B includes spending for those schemes where allocation for women constitutes at least 30% of the provision. All important ministries claim that 30% of their allocations are for women, and this is routinely shown as such in Part B of the Gender Budget. Thus, in the 2017–18 budget, the Department of Health and Family Welfare has claimed an allocation of Rs 19,288 crore for the Gender Budget, the Department of School Education and Literacy Rs 13,335 crore, Department of Higher Education Rs 9,777 crore, and so on. No attempt is made to ensure that this much allocation is targeted to benefit women, neither do these ministries attempt to make an estimate of how many women have benefited from these women-oriented allocations.

Let us now take a look at some of the schemes mentioned in the GBS which are genuinely targeted at women. In his budget speech, the finance minister announced the expansion of the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, a pilot scheme introduced in 53 districts all over the country in 2010, to cover the whole country. The allocation for this scheme, now renamed as Maternity Benefit Programme, has been increased from Rs 634 crore in 2016–17 RE to Rs 2,700 crore in this year’s budget. The scheme provides financial assistance of

Table 9: BJP Government’s Allocations for Women, 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE	2015–16 BE	2016–17BE	2017–18
Gender Budget	98,030	79,258	90,770	113,327
Ministry of Women and Child Development	21,194	17,352	17,408	22,095
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,777,477	1,978,060	2,146,735
Gender Budget as % of Budget Outlay	5.46%	4.46%	4.59%	5.28%

schemes where the allocations for women constitute at least 30% of the provision. A closer look at the GBS makes it clear that a large part of the allocations shown under it have actually nothing to do with the welfare of women. Thus, in Part A of the GBS this year, which includes allocations for schemes that are supposedly exclusively for women, there is an allocation of Rs 23,000 crore for Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana. Even if women are given joint ownership of houses built under this scheme, how can this be a scheme that is meant to benefit women exclusively? The allocation for this under Part A of the Gender

Rs 6,000 to pregnant women for “hospital admission, vaccination and nutritional food”.²⁰

This upscaling was much needed, even though the quantum of assistance being provided needs to be increased—for instance, Tamil Nadu provides Rs 12,000 to all pregnant women below the poverty line from its own state resources. India’s maternal mortality rate is the highest in the world. According to the World Health Statistics (2016), nearly 5 women die every hour in India due to pregnancy and delivery related complications.²¹ Unfortunately, the finance minister has introduced

conditionalities such as institutional delivery and full vaccination for women to be eligible for this financial assistance. These conditionalities actually end up excluding 60% of the country's women, because they don't deliver in hospitals, and/or are unable to vaccinate their children. But they are the ones who need these maternity benefits the most, as they include women from the poorest sections of the population, belong to Dalit and Adivasi communities, and live in the remotest areas of the country. They are unable to deliver in hospitals or vaccinate their children, because of the terrible state of government health services in the country.²² Instead of focussing on improving facilities in government hospitals, and making hospitals more accessible for the poor (by improving ambulance facilities), the suit-boot sarkar's finance minister and prime minister are putting the blame on the victims of our dismal public health system, and excluding them from receiving maternity benefits!

In any case, despite the increased allocation this year, it is not enough to make the scheme genuinely universal. It is estimated that about 2.7 crore births take place in India each year. This means this scheme would require about Rs 16,000 crores. Assuming centre–state cost sharing to be 60:40, this would therefore require an allocation of Rs 9,700 crore in the Union Budget to cover all pregnant women in the country.²³ The finance minister has allocated just 28% of this.

Several other schemes exclusively meant for women are mentioned in Part A of the GBS under the allocation for the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The allocation for the 'Scheme for Adolescent Girls', also called SABLA, has kept at the same level as last year, Rs 460 crore—it had been allocated Rs 700 crore in 2014–15. For several other schemes, the allocation is so low that it is obvious that they are going to remain on paper only, and have been announced for propaganda purposes only. Thus, the Central Social Welfare Board, that is supposed to run several important programmes for the welfare and development of women and children, especially in rural areas, has been given a measly Rs 71 crore; while the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, that is supposed to provide micro-loans to women for livelihoods, micro-enterprises, etc. has been given a nominal Rs 1 crore. The allocation for women's helpline has been reduced to Rs 10 crore from Rs 25 crore in 2016–17. The allocation for the much tomtomed *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan* has been doubled to Rs 200 crore; but the government's seriousness about this scheme

becomes clear from the fact that of the low allocation of Rs 100 crore in the 2016–17 budget, only Rs 43 crore was spent. Ninety crores have been allocated for setting up of 'One Stop Crisis Centres' across the country to provide assistance to women victims of sexual assault; they were to have been set up in 2015, in 2016 Maneka Gandhi announced that 17 such centres had been set up, but news reports point out that many are only in name.²⁴ Even the National Commission for Women, a statutory body that investigates complaints related to deprivation of women's rights, has been allocated just Rs 25 crore.

But what reveals the government's total unconcern towards women's safety, despite the newspapers daily carrying reports of rapes, acid attacks and domestic violence, is the under-utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund. Following the brutal gang rape of a young girl in Delhi in December 2012, that shook the conscience of the nation, this fund was announced by the then Finance Minister P Chidambaram in his 2013 Union Budget to support initiatives by the government and NGOs that support the safety of women in India, with a corpus of Rs 1,000 crore. Jaitley too added Rs 1,000 crore to this fund in both the 2014 and 2015 budgets, and then reduced it to Rs 500 crore in the 2016 and 2017 budgets. But what is most astonishing is that most of this money has remained unutilised. Most of the schemes announced by the government for implementation with these funds have remained only on paper. In fact, in May 2016, even the Supreme Court issued notice to the government questioning why the Nirbhaya Fund has been left largely unused!²⁵

The most important allocation within the Ministry of Women and Child Development is for Integrated Child Development Services or ICDS. Within this, Anganwadi services have been allocated Rs 15,245 crore, which is even less than the allocation of 15,433 crore in 2015–16 (Actuals). This cut has been made, despite a damning Niti Ayog Report of 2015 showing that around 41% of the Anganwadis have inadequate space, 71% are not visited by doctors, 31% have no nutritional supplementation for malnourished children and 52% have bad hygienic conditions.²⁶ With the government reducing the allocation, the conditions are only going to get worse. It is indicative of our ruling regime's complete insensitivity towards the crores of children in the country who are malnourished (39% of children under five are stunted and 28% underweight) and the more than two crore pregnant

women and lactating mothers. It also means that the Anganwadi workers who are being paid a pittance will continue to work at their very low wages.

Additionally, in his budget, the finance minister announced a grand scheme of setting up Mahila Shakti Kendras in all the 14 lakh ICDS Anganwadi centres. He stated that they will provide one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition. Ambitious indeed! But, the total allocation for these 14 lakh Kendras—a princely sum of Rs 500 crore. That works out to just Rs 3,571 for each Kendra! Furthermore, these services are to be provided by the low-paid Anganwadi workers—as an additional duty, without any additional pay! Implying that this scheme is a mere eye wash.

Consequence: growing inequality

The acceleration of neoliberal policies in the country under the Modi regime has worsened the inequality in the country to extreme levels. A study released by Oxfam in January this year showed that the country's richest 1% people now owned more than 58% of the country's wealth. This figure was 49% in 2014, when the Modi Government assumed power.²⁷

“India's billionaires have never had it so good”, to quote a magazine that keeps track of these worthies. The number of dollar billionaires in the country has gone up by a record 50% in just two years, from 56 in 2014 to 84 in 2016, as per the latest global ranking of the uber rich by *Forbes* magazine. They collectively own a mind-boggling \$248 billion, or 8% of the country's total wealth of \$3,100 billion. As a percentage of the country's GDP, their collective wealth, at Rs 16.6 lakh crore (taking \$1=Rs 67), is equivalent to 11% of India's GDP for 2016–17! The top 57 billionaires have more wealth than the bottom 70% of the population.²⁸

No wonder the rich are elated with Modi–Jaitley; *achhe din* have truly come for them! With India now having the fourth largest number of billionaires in the world, they have declared that India is on its way to becoming an economic superpower.²⁹

On the other hand, the poor have never had it so bad! While the *Economic Survey* of 2015–16 claims that the incidence of poverty in the country has declined from 37.2% in 2004–05 to 21.9% in 2011–12, a host of other

studies show that this is a huge underestimate:

- Basing herself on official NSSO data, the noted economist Utsa Patnaik has shown that the percentage of persons in rural areas who could not consume enough food to obtain the minimum recommended calorie norm (2,200 calories/day) was 75.5% in 2009–10. In urban areas, the percentage who could not consume enough food to obtain the norm (2,100 calories/day) was 73%.
- The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative of the Oxford University devised a Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, which used weighted indicators relating to education, health and standard of living to arrive at a measure of multidimensional deprivation. It found that in 2005–06, 53.8% of the population was ‘Multidimensionally Poor’, and another 16.4% was ‘Vulnerable to Poverty’, totalling 70.2%.
- The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (2011) data relating to rural households are now available. They show that for nearly 75% of rural households, the income of the highest earning member is less than Rs 5,000/month; and for 92%, it is less than Rs 10,000 a month. For more than half of rural households, the main source of income is manual casual labour—the most insecure, deprived and sweated type of employment.³⁰

Despite this extreme inequality and terrible marginalisation of the overwhelming majority of the country's population, the government is reducing its already low welfare expenditures on the poor, and transferring the savings to the rich! In the 2017–18 budget, the total allocation for the Department of School Education, the Department of Health and Family Welfare, for all agriculture-related sectors and for the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare totals Rs 46,356 + 47,353 + 1,65,671 + 22,095 = Rs 281,475 crore. This amount is roughly half of the total tax concessions given to the rich last year! And apart from tax concessions, the rich are being given so many other breathtaking subsidies—loan write-offs, loan restructuring, allowing them to plunder mineral wealth of the nation virtually for free, grants of public funds as ‘incentives’ to investors in the infrastructural sectors, and so on.

The Modi Government is undoubtedly the most pro-rich government in the history of independent India.

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Between The Lines**Politics at studies****Kuldip Nayar**

There was politics even during the period when I was in college before partition. But it was not on communal lines as it is today. Then the enemy was the British and all were at a struggle to oust them. It was the 1940s when Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah came to the Law College at Lahore and exhorted all of us to make a joint effort to drive out the British.

Subsequently, things came to such a pass that even water was divided into Hindu pitchers and Muslim pitchers. We, the students, were not contaminated at that time. We would eat together at the same table, ordering food from the Hindu kitchen as well as from the Muslim kitchen.

Today the polarization has contaminated Hindu community, dividing it into castes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not recognise this and recently talked about *kabaristan* and *samshanbhoomi*. He unnecessarily brought in the religion saying that why there is no power at *samshanbhoomi* while it was available at *kabaristan*.

State chief minister Akhilesh Yadav corrected the Prime Minister and stated that Uttar Pradesh had electricity for 24 hours and both *kabaristan* and *samshanbhoomi* get constant power supply despite the fact that the state had been facing severe power cuts. The complaints the Muslims make is that there are fewer ATMs in their localities and

they feel handicapped in withdrawing money.

This may be true. But the Muslims do not point out at the real reason. They lost their importance after the creation of Pakistan which was founded on the basis of religion. Congress leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad fought a lonely battle against this thinking during the British period itself. He would say that if the Muslims felt unsafe or insecure in a large country like India, they would feel still more unsafe in a partitioned India because the Hindus would tell the Muslims to go to Pakistan after having taken their share.

This is precisely what happened. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who was able to stop the exodus. Along with Sardar Patel, who was not enthusiastic about Muslims staying back in India, appealed to the Hindus that Mahatma Gandhi who freed India from bondage would say that India would continue to be a country where there will be no distinction between Hindus and Muslims.

The Muslims community has lost its importance in government affairs after partition. They number about 17 crore in India but have no important portfolio in the Narendra Modi cabinet. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi was the lone Muslim face until M.J. Akar was inducted as the second minister of state. This does not, however, cover up the tilt towards Hindutva.

The scenario in UP only underlines the Modi's or, for that matter, the BJP's thinking. True, Hindus are in a preponderant majority in India but the country is ruled by the constitution which gives the voting rights to every individual without any distinction. When this clause was discussed at the Constituent Assembly, Sardar Patel was willing to give reservations to Muslims. But the community refused it on the ground that such thinking would again result into another division.

Nonetheless, the appeal to voters is still on the basis of caste and creed. Although the Election Commission has banned invoking the name of religion or community, the political leaders continue to use them so blatantly because they knew that the Muslims did have a say when it came to elections.

We could see leaders of all hues and parties trying to woo the Muslim voters during the recent election campaigns in UP, without saying anything to ameliorate their conditions which is worse than that of dalits according to the Sachchar Commission report. The offer of freebies, including electricity and writing off loans to farmers, is the routine traits adopted by all political parties. This once again goes on to prove how the Muslims are used as a vote bank.

Unfortunately, all these last until the polling dates. Soon after, different

parties go their own way and the elected government once again turns a blind eye towards the betterment of Muslims. The wishes and aspirations spelled out in the constitution becomes only a mirage. The Muslims are pushed into the background to be brought back to the forefront before another set of elections.

I witnessed a similar scenario when I left my hometown Sialkot. There was no difference during those days and we lived as citizens, not as Hindus and Muslims. I had even got the Crescent tattooed at the bidding of my Muslims friends.

However, none of them agreed to my plea that one of them should have a tattoo of OM. They said that they would be beaten up at their home if they did.

We have come a long way from that time. Today, the society is so polarized that the question of tattooing other religion's symbol does not arise. He would be a brave man who dares the community by violating its code. Muslims prefer to live in a locality where their community's people are concentrated. They do not feel safe in a mixed or secular habitation.

At the same time a Muslim does not get accommodation or think of buying a property in a decent locality. They do not even agitate for it lest they should be misunderstood. But there are instances of Muslims having bought properties in a Hindu locality after the court's intervention. Of course, there are some misguided elements among Muslims throwing their weight about.

However, despite Hindutva factor people in India are realizing that they have to live together as they have done centuries before. That is the idea of India and most people are clutching at it.

Violence in Delhi University

Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS) condemns the violence that broke out in Ramjas College of Delhi University a few days ago. SYS condemns similar bouts of violence happening in other universities. The tragic suicide of the promising research student Rohith Vemula of Hyderabad University too could be viewed as the result of this trend of violence in student politics. SYS believes that universities are a platform for the freedom of expression and the holistic development of students. The future of the nation is shaped in its universities, where students sharpen their intellectual acumen to lead a more meaningful life for the nation and society. But the pervasive violence witnessed first at JNU and now in DU has diminished the stature of the universities. This has caused insecurity for students (especially those who have come here to study from far-flung areas) and has disrupted their academic career.

Under the umbrella of the power at the Centre Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of RSS/BJP, is indulging in routine ruckus in the name of nationalism and culture. In reaction to this, the communist students' organizations lead protests for freedom of expression in the campuses. In the battle for supremacy between Sanghis and communists, the general lot of independent, liberal, non-violent, democratic, secular students, and those who advocate social justice naturally stand against ABVP's retrograde agenda. But the communist student organizations often try to use them for their own limited agenda. This weakens the struggle which benefits the ABVP. Communist student organizations do not actually lead these groups; this was proven beyond doubt with the BAPSA's impressive demonstration in JUNSU elections when it contested for the first time. SYS had fielded its panel in the DUSU

elections after a long hiatus in 2013 and 2014 and received good support from the student community. SYS believes that in the university campuses, the fight for the freedom of expression should not be transformed into a fight for hegemony.

It is a matter of great concern that in the wake of the Ramjas incident some communist comrades openly advocated violence on social media. The ill effects of violence are usually borne out by the students from the weaker sections of society. SYS believes that university campuses should be no place for violence of any kind from any quarter. Consequently, SYS unequivocally opposes the violence. The time has come when all student organizations must agree to follow the path of non-violence advocated by thinkers like Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Acharya Narendra Deva, Yusuf Meherally, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, Dr. Ambedkar, Frontier Gandhi Khan

Abdul Gaffar Khan, Dr. Lohia, JP and Kishan Patnayak.

The Ramjas incident has become an alibi for some people to speak against student politics. What is the need for politics in university premises, they ask. SYS believes that the right kind of political training can happen only in the environs of universities. In this

context, the following statements by Bhagat Singh and Dr. Lohia are pertinent:

‘They (the students) should study. They must study. Along with it, they should also acquire political knowledge, and jump into politics if and when the need arises, and dedicate their lives to its cause.’
(Bhagat Singh)

‘When students do not participate in politics they tacitly support governmental politics and in this way do politics indirectly.’
(Dr. Lohia)

Come; let us all join hands to free education and educational institutions from the clutches of neo-liberalism.

–Niraj Kumar, *President* ; Bandana Pandey, *General Secretary*

The author of two articles ‘RSS–biggest threat to democracy’ and ‘Mayawati set to return in Uttar Pradesh` published in the last issue at *Janata* is Sandeep Pandey.

–Mg. Editor

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Rabi Ray
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Between The Lines

Is judiciary in peril?

Kuldip Nayar

Delhi University teacher G. N. Saibaba has been sentenced to life imprisonment for his links with Maoists. With due respects to the court, I beg to differ with the punishment. Maoists are ultra-left and most people in India do not like their philosophy. Some who follow them can be criticized, but cannot be imprisoned for their views and that too for life.

It appears that the courts are also getting influenced by the party in power. The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) believes in Hindu Rashtra. Conceded that it is not doing anything in the form of a bill or any order to impose Hindutva, but the very fact that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi supports the cause does carry weight.

The Maoists should be fought on the ideological ground. The BJP should present its case that the Hindu philosophy would bring more prosperity than that of the leftists' which promises an egalitarian society. In fact, the left itself has to sell what it believes in and how the

people, by adhering to their thesis, would benefit.

India is not alone in facing the challenge. All over the world, especially after the election of Donald Trump in America, people feel insecure in pursuing their right to espouse views. As his rival Hillary Clinton said, they would adhere to what the constitution of America says on individual rights. The US President should know that the popular movement against the Soviet system which brooked no other voice was brought down by the people themselves. The popular sentiment was that expression of views should be free and without fear. Germany also proved this point. It had the best of constitution which guaranteed free speech in every way, but a person like Adolf Hitler used the same constitution to found the worst of rules. It took a full-fledged war to oust him and his philosophy.

Even now Germany takes different stringent steps to see that the ghost of Nazism does not surface. Nazis' swastika has been

found scribbled on the walls of Berlin. It seems that some Germans are still dreaming about ruling the entire Europe. Economically, the country does dominate but politically it has not yet learnt to take its turn.

It is surprising that Maoism has very little following although it is the same kind of philosophy which does not entertain another point of view. Nationalism in Germany is so deep that it does not allow any other thinking which may be embracing other parts of Europe. The country has allowed some immigrants who have become a great burden on Greece. Berlin is now vigilant. It is not now possible to migrate to Germany even on humanitarian grounds.

New Delhi is unnecessarily worried. The idea of India counts so much with the people that there is no room for any other thought to germinate. It is probably this Indian-ness which binds people from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The Maoists cannot penetrate.

Democracy is more than a faith with the people. It was seen how the popular leader, Indira Gandhi, was swept off her feet soon after lifting of the Emergency in 1977. She too was defeated at the polls. The voters did not like the authoritarian rule and revolted against it when they got the opportunity.

The ruling BJP, which was then Jan Sangh, also suffered and its followers were put behind bars. Even then Delhi Mayor Hansraj Gupta was not spared. Members of the Jan Sangh and the Gandhites shared the same cell. The Janata Party was born in the jail itself. The credit, however, goes to Raj Narain, a socialist, who

(Continued on Page 3)

Narendra Modi compromises his stature in UP elections

Sandeep Pandey

With indications of major voting in favour of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), led by strong dalit leader Mayawati, in the early round of polling in Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, it is quite strange that major newspapers, quite suspiciously, are predicting a Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government just before the results are to be out on 11 March, 2017. We have seen this kind of phenomenon during the last general elections in 2014 when Narendra Modi was swept to power riding on a high profile publicity campaign. However, it is quite unlikely that 2014 will be repeated when BJP bagged 71 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats from UP. The apparent wave in favour of BJP is limited to media and appears to be sponsored. It is also likely that some media houses have been armtwisted to toe the rudely authoritarian rule to which India is now getting used to.

In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's desperation was visible when he stooped to the level of talking about more electricity being given on Ramzan than on Diwali and how Hindus also deserve space in Shamshaan like the Muslims get in Kabristan. It became clear that he was speaking as the Prime Minister of Hindus and not the whole population. The now deceased President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Ashok Singhal, had claimed in 2014 after Narendra Modi's elevation to the PM's post that Hindu rule was back in India after the Mughals invaded the country. It is interesting

that Ashok Singhal did not say this when Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the PM, the tallest leader of BJP so far. Vajpayee was not seen as communal and was the only important national BJP leader absent from the site when Babri Masjid demolition was taking place in 1992 in Ayodhya.

Since before the campaign for last general elections when it was clear the Narendra Modi would be the PM candidate it was decided between Narendra Modi and his handpicked BJP chief Amit Shah that the former will only address development issues and the latter may, when felt necessary, raise communal issues like he did prior to the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013 and made reference to Kasab, the now executed Pakistani involved in 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, recently in the UP campaign. This arrangement was made to project an image of Narendra Modi, widely acceptable by all sections of population since he was to be a national leader. It must be granted that he did control his communal tendencies and went out of the way to make friends with some heads of states of Muslim nations like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Afghanistan and even made a visit to Pakistan, opposition to which is a cornerstone of BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh politics, to attend a private event in Nawaz Sharif's family. Even though he was not forthright in condemning communal incidents like the murder of Mohammad Akhlaq in 2015, he

never uttered anything explicitly communal. He was trying to project himself as a statesman in the mould of Jawaharlal Nehru, a hugely popular PM internationally as well. But the fear of losing UP elections weighed heavily on him, especially after the humiliating loss in Bihar in 2015. The self-discipline gave away. He betrayed his true colours and appealed to the baser instincts of Hindu population, which was not expected of a PM. He even claimed, out of the blue, that terrorists from a neighbouring country, quite obviously referring to Pakistan, were behind a railway accident which took place sometime back. It was patently clear that he lost his self-confidence. But he could not have quit midway and therefore continued to campaign with a bold face. The strategy to pump money into media or pull levers to project a BJP victory was adopted subsequently.

It was feared that BJP may even resort to provoking a communal riot, if needed, to polarize the votes further. That did not happen but the evening before the last day of polling, on 7 March, 2017 an encounter took place in Lucknow in which Saifullah, with alleged connections to ISIS, was eliminated. With technological advancement terrorist incidents have replaced communal riots and have the same effect in mobilizing public opinion. A number of questions have already been raised about this encounter and in all probability it was staged to give BJP some advantage in the polling the next day. Recently a number of individuals accused in terrorist incidents in Delhi and Gujarat have been acquitted on account of insufficient evidence.

It will be obvious to any outside observer that BJP is repeating its mistakes in Bihar. By not announcing

a Chief Ministerial candidate and projecting Narendra Modi and Amit Shah as the only credible leaders in the party, it has once again annoyed the state leaders, some of whom are senior to both the Gujarat leaders. It did not learn from Mohan Bhagwat's anti-reservation pronouncements in the middle of the Bihar campaign in response to which the PM had to go out of the way to claim that he will lay down his life to protect the reservations system. This time Manmohan Vaidya, another senior functionary of RSS, repeated the mistake at an international literary festival in Jaipur held in January 2017.

(Continued from Page 2)

challenged Mrs Gandhi for her poll malpractices. The Allahabad High Court debarred her from occupying from any elected post for six years. She, however, imposed the Emergency but that is a different story.

The DU teacher and four others who were sentenced for life did not commit any heinous crime to deserve the punishment for having mere links with the Maoists. Even otherwise, I believe that the Maoists should have a say and express their viewpoint as citizens of this country. It should be left to the citizens to choose or reject their philosophy but the criterion should be that they would not incite violence.

The experience has been that once you make leeway in one case the demand would be that the same attitude should be exhibited in other cases. The precedent will be quoted and the court would have to decide whether the case was similar or any different. Fortunately, the victims would most likely appeal in higher courts and it all will depend on what the verdict of the higher judiciary is going to be.

Even if the BJP manages to pull through a victory by fluke in the UP assembly elections it would have caused serious damage to the secular fabric of the state. The BJP is working on replicating the Gujarat model of segregating the Muslim population by victimizing them and then denying them their basic rights. It doesn't portend well for the future of the state and the country. This campaign has also proven that Narendra Modi does not have the mettle to be the Prime Minister of the country. At best he is a chieftain of a section of the majority community which subscribes to a sectarian view of cultural nationalism.

Ultimately, it would come to what Maoism means. In a country where the constitution guarantees free speech and expression, the views of a particular philosophy cannot be banned. But there should be no exhortation to violence. The manner in which the killings have taken place in Bastar indicates that the Maoists have no respect for life and would use any method to ensure that their idea is not opposed.

The court should not be influenced by what the Maoists preach or not because I find that verdicts are becoming dependent on the philosophy that the ruling party espouses. It is healthy to see that appointment of judges is now by the collegium of senior Supreme Court judges. Yet my experience says that the chief justices come to be influenced by those in power. This was not the case till recently. The judges were appointed by the government and they delivered some of the best of verdicts. It is no use recalling time but taking necessary steps to create the same atmosphere of independence returns to the court.

Notebook

Prime Minister should visit Palestine along with Israel

It has been officially announced, few days back, that the Indian Prime Minister will visit Israel, but not Palestine.

Shri Narendra Modi had taken great pains to befriend UAE. That will certainly pay dividend. India also has to cultivate friendly relationship with Iran which can supply oil in adequate quantity at reasonable price. These days in the world market the price of oil has started spiraling upwards. That would be very harmful to India. The balance of payments deficit has been increasing all these years even while the oil prices were in the range of 29 to 40 dollars per barrel. Now it has crossed dollars 55. If this trend continues India will have to bear very heavy burden because our exports have become stagnant while imports are not declining and their prices are rising. It is a well-known fact that Iran is at loggerheads with Israel which has acquired nuclear weapons and has been pursuing expansionist policies

in the land that is legitimately claimed by Palestine. In the Gaza strip Israel has encouraged construction of big colonies. UN Security Council has passed a resolution calling upon that country not to expand colonization program on the western bank.

Thanks to erstwhile President Barack Obama, that resolution could be passed because US did not exercise its Veto. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had given vent to his anger but it must be noted that even the newly elected US President Donald Trump has openly advised Israel to help accelerate peace talks with Palestine and agree with the proposal of two States. Netanyahu is insistent upon having only one State in that region so that the Jew sections, having substantial military strength and the backing of the money pots in USA can easily cow down the Arab population which are much larger in number but weak in material resources. History stands witness to the claims of the Arab people to all

that area including that which is occupied by Israel. It was machinations of British colonialist that sizable chunk of the Arab land was handed over to Israel, a State of the Jews that was established in 1932 and received recognition of the Allied Powers from the middle of the 20th century. Indigenous people of all countries suffering from European imperialist occupation have been aspiring for sovereign nationhood. Israel should not indulge in arrogant dealings with the Arabs. And Indian interests can best be served by cultivation friendly relations with Arabs and other Muslim countries of Western Asia. India has been accepted as leader of the NAM movement consisting of 65 countries. It is under moral obligation to take along all the underdeveloped countries of the world. In addition, that can be beneficial to India for getting assured supply of oil. And Pakistan can be contained in ways more than one. Therefore Shri Narendra Modi should make it a point to include Palestine in his planned tour.

Why mock at the Harvard academicians?

In the last week Statistical Organization of India suddenly publicized that the rate of GDP growth in the Q3 was 7% and not 6.5% as was mentioned in reports of the RBI and also in the Economic Survey published by Finance Department of GoI on the eve of the Budget. Next day the Prime Minister of India started mocking the academicians of Harvard (read Amartya Sen) and dancing boastfully on election daises claiming that Hard Work people are much wiser than those academicians. He also said that a boy hailing from a poor family could achieve impressive performance by raising

India to first place in the world as it could record 7% growth rate in GDP.

The facts are there, known to the economists, industrialists and also their organizations like ASSOCHAM, that have pointed out loss of 46 lakh man-days due to Notebandi. There was also contraction of credit by the banks to the industrialists. Sales of durable consumer goods had declined. So also prices of agricultural produce like pulses, soya bean and vegetables and fruits. Then how can the growth rate record a rising trend in that quarter? Modi should have abstained from indulging

into cheap demagogy. One of the senior officers of SOI has publicly stated that rate of growth during Q3 can be computed only after full data would be available by March end. A sane person does realize that common man of the country is really under the evil effects of unemployment on one hand and price rise of manufactured and imported goods on the other hand. The captain of the Central Government owes it to the people of the country to devise policies to overcome these two hurdles and make things easy for the man on the street.

—Pannalal Surana

Obituary

Rabi Ray

Noted Gandhian socialist leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray passed away on March 6th at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack following prolonged illness. Rabi Ray was 91 and is survived by his doctor wife, Saraswati Swain. Son of Late Ghanshyam Ray, Rabi Ray was born at Bhanragarh village of Khurda district of Odisha state on November 26, 1926. He shot into the limelight in 1946-47 when he was arrested along with others for lowering the Union Jack and unfurling the Tricolour at the Ravenshaw College (now University), Cuttack.

Rabi Ray was one of the closest associates of Rammanohar Lohia and one of the founders of the Young Socialist League or 'Naujawan Samajwadi Sangh' in 1949. Lohia's visit to Odisha in 1948 and his advice to address the unprivileged touched Ray's heart. Following socialist principles, he even refused to mention his caste in the examination form he had to fill at the Ravenshaw College, where he did B.A., (Hons.). In the year 1953, he was elected joint secretary along with Ladli Mohan Nigam and Rangnath as general secretary in the foundation conference of Samajwadi Yuwak Sabha, held at Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi. In the year 1955, Rabi Ray organized SYS conference at Puri in Orissa and it was inaugurated by Madhu Limaye. In 1956, Rabi Ray, under the leadership of Dr Rammanohar Lohia, founded the Socialist Party in Orissa. In the year 1957-58, when Godey Murahari was elected

General Secretary of Socialist Party, Rabi Ray became General Secretary of All India Samajwadi Yuwak Sabha. In the year 1960, he became the first general secretary of Socialist Party founded by Rammanohar Lohia.

In 1967, Rabi Ray was elected to fourth Lok Sabha 1967-71, from Puri Lok Sabha constituency and was the leader of Samyukta Socialist Parliamentary Party while Lohia was a member of Lok Sabha. During the socialist movement he was imprisoned many times in connection with the various Satyagrahas launched by Socialist Party during 1960-74 and was imprisoned during the Emergency, 1975-76. In 1974 he was elected to Rajya Sabha.

During 1977-79, he was General Secretary of Janata Party and from 25th January 1979 to 14th July 1979, and 28th July 1979 to 14th January, 1980 he was Union Minister, Health and Family Welfare under Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Charan Singh respectively. However, his moment of glory came between 1989 and 1991 when he became the Speaker of the 9th Lok Sabha and first one from Odisha, during one of the most tumultuous periods of Indian politics. He was elected to Lok Sabha in 1991, for the third time.

The mortal remains of Rabi Ray were consigned to flames at his native village Bhanragarh district with full state honours on 7th March 2017. According to Chittaranjan Mohanty, a close associate of Rabi Ray, his body was first taken to Ravenshaw University and M S Law

College in Cuttack, where he was the president of the students union and kept at Lohia Bhavan in Bhubaneswar for the people to pay their last respects before it was taken to his native place.

Rabi Ray's nephew lit the funeral pyre at Bhanragarh village in the presence of hundreds of people including Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, his Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar, former JD-U president Sharad Yadav, Bhubaneswar MP Prasanna Patsani, Food and Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Sanjay Das Burma and Athagarh MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik condoled, Rabi Ray's death and described him as a veteran socialist leader. "As a union minister and Lok Sabha Speaker, Ray had established a rich tradition in the conduct of the House. He worked with commitment for socialist ideas and moral values in life," Navin Patnaik said. Ray's death marked the end of an era, Nitish Kumar said and added that the former Lok Sabha speaker was like a guardian for him and for many others in the socialist movement. Odisha government declared one-day state mourning in his honour on Tuesday.

Rabi Ray was a towering personality in national politics, who believed in socialist ideology till the end and inspired many young politicians from Odisha as well as the country. During his six decades long political career, Rabi Ray did many developmental works in the district including the establishment of Krushi

Viganya Kendra and Navodaya Vidyalaya. Rabi Ray was a champion of socialist politics and made significant contribution to socio-economic development of people of the State,

When Rabi Ray was the Speaker, VP Singh was the Prime Minister and Rajiv Gandhi was Leader of the Opposition. He was liked and respected by members cutting across party lines in the Lok Sabha for the

high standards maintained by him. He had widely travelled as leader of various Parliamentary Delegations and was editor, 'Chaukhamba' (Hindi) fortnightly and 'Samata' (Oriya) monthly journals.

Syed Shahabuddin

Former Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer and parliamentarian Syed Shahabuddin, who was suffering from a prolonged illness, passed away on 4th March, 2017, at NOIDA (near Delhi). Son of Syed Nizamuddin, Syed Shahabuddin was born on 4th November, 1935, at Village Itki in Ranchi district of then Bihar, now Jharkhand State. He was educated at Haridas Seminary, Gaya, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, Science College, Patna and Law College, Patna. He stood first in Bihar State in Matriculation, first in the University in I.Sc and did M.Sc., B.L. During his student days he was General Secretary, Bazme-Sukhan, Science College Patna, 1953-54, Vice-President Science College Debating Society, Patna, 1954-55. Convener, Patna University Students Action Committee, August 1955, General Secretary, Bihar State Students Council of Action, December, 1955. Member, Patna University Students Union Steering Committee, represented Patna University in English and Urdu Debates. He was Secretary, Patna University Students Relief Committee, Literary Society, United Nations Students Association, 1955-56, Secretary, World University, Service National Committee, 1955-56.

Long time ago when he was asked in an interview about his political ideology he said, 'I was

known to be a Leftist in my views and still am a socialist by conviction'.

On being asked about his controversial selection in Indian Foreign Service despite being a left winger, Syed Shahabuddin explained how then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's intervention made him diplomat. "It is true that there was a police report against me and that is why my letter of appointment to the IFS was delayed. Actually there were ten vacant spots in the Foreign Service in 1958, nine were filled. Muchkund Dubey, who was my contemporary in the University, was a year senior to me in the Service since he became eligible for taking the exam a year before me, wrote to me, while I was teaching at Patna University, to tell me that nine probationers of 1958 batch had joined the training school and that, according to his information, one spot was being kept vacant for me. He asked me to find out what had gone wrong. The top man in Bihar police intelligence at that time was Mr S.P. Verma whom I knew because of my involvement in the Patna student Firing Disturbance in 1955. So I requested him for an urgent meeting. I asked him what he had written against me. He laughed and said he couldn't disclose that. But he assured me that the police report wouldn't finally go against me. In India, there

are many ways of finding out what a police report says and I managed to get hold of its text. What it said was that Shahabuddin had led the student agitation (in 1955), which was true but then added a blatant lie that I was a member of the Communist Party, which I was not. But then the intelligence report went on to say that for the past one year I had been teaching in the university and had not come to any adverse notice. I suppose that was the saving grace. I had seen Jawaharlal Nehru during the disturbances, so I immediately wrote to him that I was a socialist by conviction but I had never been a member of any political party. I don't know what action Nehru took or if he took any action at all but within a week or so I happened to meet General Shahnawaz Khan who was very fond of me, as he used to visit the university very often to preside over debates and distribute prizes. He advised me to go and see Mr Humayun Kabir. Humayun Kabir asked me to state my case in black and white. I said that all I wanted was an opportunity to see Mr Nehru because he would recognize me. I got a call a day later saying that the file had already reached Nehru's table and I should see Mr Chakravarty, then Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, later the Governor of Haryana. So the next day I went to see him. 'The Prime Minister has ordered your

appointment,' he said, 'but he has asked me to give you a talk on the responsibilities of the Civil Service.' He then asked me a few questions about what had happened in 1955 and what I had told the Justice Das Commission of Inquiry. I told him that in protest against police firing on the students, I had organized a procession of 20,000 students from the university area to the airport to greet Jawaharlal Nehru with black flags. It was raining. So along with a few others, we saw Pandit Nehru at the Raj Bhawan. I still recall his words, '*Goli chalana buri bat hai par jab goli chalti hai to kisi na kisi ko lag jati hai.*' He was referring to the killing of Pandey, a student. Later that evening, some banners in Gandhi Maidan, planted by a Congress leader, obstructed Nehru. He lost his temper and threatened the students with punishment if they were found to be in the wrong. A few days after, I saw Mr Chakravarty, and got my letter of appointment. I joined the IAS Training School at the Metcalf House in the Civil Lines, Delhi in May 1958, about a month later than my batchmates. So while it is true that there was a police report against me, which delayed my appointment, it's also correct that Nehru overruled it. Nehru had written in his own hand on my file "I have known Shahabuddin during the Patna disturbances. His participation in the disturbances was not politically motivated. It was an expression of his youthful exuberance." So Nehru had given me a clean chit. Subsequently, nine months later, when I was about to embark on my first posting abroad, as a probationer back in Delhi after my district training, I was deputed to serve as Liaison Officer for the UN Secretary General, Mr Dag Hammarskjöld, on his visit. I

accompanied him everywhere including the official dinner at the PM's House at Teen Murti, which is now Nehru Museum and Library. After the dinner when the guests were sipping coffee on the open terrace, I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned around to face Nehru who said affectionately, 'So you are that naughty boy from Bihar'. In my youth I had no formal connection with any political party, but I was certainly a Leftist and socialist in my views. This explains why in my 15 years in Parliament, almost never I took a line different from the Left parties on the floor of the House. The same is true of my entire public life."

Before joining Foreign Service Syed Shahabuddin was Lecturer in Physics, at Patna University, 1956-58 and while he was in Indian Foreign Service, 1958-78, he served in Indian Missions in New York, Rangoon and Jeddah, as Charge d'affaires in Caracas, Venezuela, 1969-72, and as Ambassador of India to Algeria and concurrently to Mauritania, 1973-75. He was Deputy Secretary, 1966-69 and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in-charge of S.E. Asia, 1975-78, but opted for premature voluntary retirement from the Indian Foreign Service in November, 1978.

He was Member, Aligarh Muslim University Court, 1981, Vice-Chairman, Haj Committee, Bombay, 1981-84, Vice-President/Acting President, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, 1981-90, Convener Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee, 1986 onwards. Member, Working Committee; All India Personal Law Board, 1980 onwards and invited to deliver Inaugural Address by East-

West University, Chicago in November, 1980 and invited to address University of Oxford on Power Politics, in July, 1982 and Islamic Medical Association of the USA.

Syed Shahabuddin was Member of Rajya Sabha, 25-7-1979 to 9-4-1984 and elected to eight and tenth Lok Sabha in 1985 to 1989 and 1991 to 1996 respectively from Kishanganj in Bihar. He was General Secretary, Janata Party 1980 to 1986. He contributed many articles in the national Press and was founder Editor, 'Muslim India' monthly since 1983. Syed Shahabuddin was a Teacher, Diplomat, Advocate, Political Worker and Journalist. He married on 30th January, 1958 to Shaher Bano and had one son and five daughters.

—Qurban Ali

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The legitimacy and morality of Prof. Saibaba's conviction

Prabhakar Sinha

I would not express any opinion on the legality of Prof. Saibaba's conviction and the award of a term for life in prison because I have not read the judgment, have not gone through the evidence before the court and most importantly am not a legal expert. But I would like to examine its legitimacy and morality because the judgment's legality is not the only question that concerns the people. If the legality of a law and judgment were all that should be of concern to the people, then the racial segregation in South Africa was sound, Hitler's anti-Jew laws causing death of millions of Jews were sound, slavery was sound, anti-Hindu and anti-Christian laws in Pakistan are sound. By the same token, the Rowlatt Act enacted by the colonial government to suppress the 'revolutionary movement' was also sound; but the people of India did not think so, rose in protest against it, which led to the massacre of more than a thousand peaceful men, women and children, who had gathered at Jallianwala bag to protest against the black law. And the Rowlatt Act was a very liberal and just law compared to the draconian laws enacted by democratic India. It is not enough that a law should be legally sound but it must also be morally sound and legitimate, must ensure justice. A law and its operation, which do not deliver justice is immoral and illegitimate and not a proper law.

Prof. Saibaba of Delhi University is 90 per cent physically challenged and is bound to his wheelchair. He is incapable of a violent act unless one

is blind enough to say that he can fire from a gun sitting in his wheelchair. He cannot kill, maim or break bones. Prof. Saibaba at best or worst can only be a non-violent revolutionary due to his physical handicap. He has not been found guilty of any violent act, but has been convicted of unlawful activity. Even the judgment says that the accused had conspired 'to create violence, cause public disorder and spread disaffection towards the central government and the state government.' The court does not find him guilty of inciting any particular violent incident, but inciting violence because of his ideas, which support the use of violence by the Maoists. I do not know if the finding of the court is true, but would accept it for the time being to make my point.

Mahatma Gandhi was prosecuted and charged with sedition (Raj Droh, 1922) for creating hatred and disaffection against the government of India. He confessed to the court that he was the biggest rebel against the British Raj. He also confessed that he was in a way responsible for the violence at Chaura Chauri and in Bombay despite his commitment to non-violence. He was prosecuted for his seditious articles published in the *Young India*. The punishment for sedition was imprisonment for life, but Gandhiji was sentenced to just six years. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was also charged with sedition (1909) for a number of articles published in the *Kesari* he edited. He had expressed the view that violence by the young revolutionaries was a reaction

against the repressive government. Tilak was also awarded six years of transportation (imprisonment in Andaman Nicobar).

Compared to the award of six years of imprisonment to Tilak and Gandhi for sedition by an imperial court, the life sentence awarded to Prof. Saibaba by a court of democratic India appears as nothing short of judicial lynching. Our judges in such cases appear so devoid of human feelings, sense of proportion and sense of morality. The case of Tilak and Gandhi should be the measure for judging the justness and legitimacy of a sentence in cases in which no violence is planned or committed by an accused and is held only guilty of inciting hatred or disaffection against the government.

Our criminal justice system is a criminal injustice system. Several thousand innocent Sikhs were openly butchered in Delhi following Indira Gandhi's assassination, but the then Prime Minister, Rajeev Gandhi, and his men continued to rule the roost despite the public knowledge that his hands were blood-stained. Hundreds of Muslims were butchered in Gujarat riots of 2002, but Modi remains innocent in the eyes of law because no court has found him guilty of the shedding of innocent blood of the Muslims. But the people know the difference between truth and judicial truth. The best example is the case of Md. Shahabuddin, three or four time Member of Parliament from Siwan, and probably the most cruel and savage criminal known. But he, too, was an innocent and

respectable leader like Rajeev and Modi till the arrival of Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister, whose government got him convicted of the crimes he had been committing with impunity

The State follows a double standard in the application of law. With the coming to power of Modi, the terrorists associated with the Parivar, who were charged with the bomb blast at Malegaon, Samjhauta Express and Ajmer, are being bailed out or acquitted with the open support of the government. The NIA persuades the Public Prosecutor to help the terrorists involved in the bomb blast at Malegaon and Samjhauta Express secure acquittal. The NIA did not oppose the bail application of Pragya Thakur, an accused in Malegaon terror attack. The public prosecutor, who had been conducting the case, resigned because she was being persuaded to collude with the accused. The culprits of 2002 Gujarat riots are receiving full protection of the State, and the state agencies are changing their stand to help the accused.

There is discrimination in dealing with the people accused of the same or similar crimes. The policy being followed is to kill and rape those who are suspected to be Maoists or their supporters and to protect those who do the killing, maiming or raping and also to instigate the police to kill, rape and maim with impunity in Bastar, Chhattisgarh as has been discovered by the National Human Rights Commission. Prosecute Zakir Naik for 'spreading communal hatred' and give a free hand to the RSS, BJP and the other members of the Pariwar to not only spread communal hatred but to engineer communal riots.

(Continued on Page 11)

Shall the world economy remain US Dllar slave forever?

Jitendra Kumar Sharma

Has the American Dollar enslaved the financial world? The US contribution to world GDP is only 18% but the US Dollar's throttlehold on the international money system is total! China's pie in the world GDP is now 16%; other emergent economies add up about 60% to global output. A new financial pattern is clearly visible but is not reflected in the prevailing reserve currency arrangements where US dollar dominates the financial world. Carmen Reinhart, Ethan Ilzetzki, Kenneth Rogoff study shows "the US dollar has retained its dominant position as the world's reserve currency – and by a significant margin. Over 60% of all countries (accounting for more than 70% of world GDP) use the US dollar as their anchor currency". The euro, another western reserve currency, has failed to match the US Dollar. Euro has receded from its African zone; so also Euro's global importance has declined. The hiatus between the world production trends and finance should be a cause for concern, especially for China and India for future strength and expansion of their economies. Oddly, "a relatively smaller US economy supplies reserve assets in step with rising global demand for them (primarily from emerging markets)", points out CARMEN REINHART. Between 1950s and 1970s, global trade expanded and demand for reserves increased. The gold-backed US paper dollar then colossally walked over the gold-starved world and prevailed. In the 1960s, the Belgian economist Robert Triffin espied the risk in the strident US paper dollar as the ratio of "paper dollar" reserves

to gold reserves began to rise. The gold-parity US dollar could not rein in unbridled US paper dollar. US dollar's national goal and its international role "as sole provider of the reserve currency" were at cross-purpose. In March 1973, however, the US dollar was compelled to float along with other major currencies and the US dollar depreciated. The USA remained foolhardy and printed its dollar even more recklessly and the world grabbed and gobbled it even more greedily like the proverbial Gargantua. The US of America had to resort to current-account and fiscal deficits. Now the USA cannot get out of these deficits as long as it remains the sole supplier of reserve currency. Thus, enslavement to US dollar will continue as long as no other currency is willing to step forward to become an alternate provider of reserves. Does the USA dare reduce its deficits? Will China venture to be international supplier of reserves? If the US does reduce its deficits, China will suffer capital loss on its US Treasuries. With rising distrust of both USA and China, the world may be looking for a third option. Maybe, the emergent markets lose their appetite for US reserve which China's capital flight is already initiating. Undoubtedly, the world economy is becoming restless about the endless serfdom of world currencies to USA's paper dollar. Will the enlarging emergent market throw off the yoke of single currency imperialism? Answer to this question holds the key to the economic liberation of our increasingly democratizing world.

Children of lesser god

Devinder Sharma

Farmers are being treated unfairly as their small loan defaults are being handled with an iron fist while big corporate debtors are being petted with velvet gloves.

It is not the first time that default on loans has piled up to Rs6.8 lakh crore. Every two or three years, defaults grow so large that a significant proportion of it is written off and the balance is restructured.

State Bank of India (SBI) recently announced the auction of the tractors owned by farmers from Bundelkhand in UP for defaulting on loan repayment. At the same time, reports indicate that debts of crores of rupees held by top companies are likely to be written off.

Why does the law that applies to the farmer not apply to big industrialists? All these years, rich borrowers have been treated as Maharajas and farmers and petty traders as lowly people who have to abide by the law. Loan default becomes a crime if you are a farmer, but a right when it comes to rich defaulters.

Credit rating agency India Ratings, in a recent estimate, showed that of the Rs7.4 lakh cr debt owed by companies between 2011 & 2016, at least Rs4 lakh cr will be written off. At the same time, 19 farmers whose tractors are being auctioned March 21, collectively owe Rs63 lakh to banks.

This is gross discrimination. Even the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament, K

V Thomas, has stated that naming and shaming of such corporate houses may help financial institutions get back their money. In a report published in *The Indian Express* (March 06), Thomas said that out of the Rs6.8 lakh cr of non-performing assets (NPAs), which actually is a misnomer for bank default, 70% are those of big corporate houses, hardly one per cent of it belongs to farmers.

He goes on to say: "In case of farmers or small traders, banks act strongly and they go to their houses to recover money. They even get their names and photographs published in newspapers. But when it comes to corporate houses, they don't reveal names." The PAC has now decided to give names of such big defaulters who owe money to banks, in its reports to be presented to Lok Sabha before the end of budget session.

This is certainly welcome. But we must watch whether the PAC does submit the names of big defaulters and, if it does, what action the government initiates. Big businesses have taken academic efforts to provide a neat cover-up for the massive swindle of public money they have perpetrated.

In an article in *The Times of India* (March 04, 2017), researchers Prasanna Tantri and Sankar De have argued that a blanket waiver of farm loans, which is being proposed by all political parties campaigning for UP elections, is likely to harm farmers more than benefiting them. "Sooner or later, voters will see through this and punish the political class for such

opportunistic behavior," the article says.

The work is biased. It is a blatant effort to present a flawed hypothesis that debt waivers will leave farmers either in exactly the same or a worse situation.

If loan waivers are bad for farmers, why are loans of corporates being written off year after year? Won't debt waivers hurt big businesses in the long run? If debt waiver is a bad idea for farmers, how come it is always welcome for corporate?

It is not the first time that default on loans has piled up to Rs6.8 lakh crore. Every two or three years, defaults grow so large that a significant proportion of it is written off and the balance is restructured.

Perusal of data reveals that at least Rs10 lakh cr has either been waived in full or restructured, which in financial language means banks have to underwrite much of the outstanding loan. This has happened in the past few years. And again, the banks have piled up bad loans of Rs6.8 lakh cr as the PAC has shown. Isn't that a bad idea? And why does it coming back repeatedly?

It is because mainline academic research and public discourses are tailored to believe that defaults by big companies are inevitable as these enterprises depend on extraneous circumstances over which they have no control. And of course, the sale of assets of these big companies will also result in layoffs, which means

unemployment. These are well-crafted arguments that we tend to accept without question and protect the big defaulters.

Default on loans by farmers, too, is an outcome of extraneous factors. When potato growers are forced to

sell their produce of 2000 kilos for Re1 a kilo or when hundreds of tomato farmers dump tomatoes on the streets as they fetch poor prices, these people are not doing it for fun. They throw their produce, which is the fruit of hard labour, as a mark of protest. They don't get the price they deserve

and fall into debt. And yet, if their tractors have to be put on public auction for default on loans, does it not smack of utter discrimination? Aren't farmers being penalized just because they are poor? Farmers are indeed being treated as the children of a lesser god.

–OrissaPost

(Continued from Page 9)

Communalism has become the 'Raj Dharm' and its adherents are above the law while the minorities and the Maoists are the enemies of the Raj, not entitled to the protection of the law and to be witch-hunted.

The discriminatory criminal justice system has robbed the judiciary of its majesty and credibility and made its judgment devoid of legitimacy and morality. It is not in command of the criminal justice system and cannot be blamed for its ills, but it must find some way to prevent its *Cheer Haran* (Disrobing) because Shree Krishna would not come to its rescue.

And finally, why is the judgment in Prof. Saibaba's case devoid of legitimacy and morality? Because while Tilak and Gandhi, the towering and formidable enemies of the British empire, were awarded only six years of imprisonment by the judges of an imperial government, Prof. Saibaba, a 90 per cent disabled person and the co-accused in the case were sentenced to life by the court in democratic India. The judiciary must change its mindset and do justice uninfluenced by the ideology of the power that be if it does not want to become a handmaiden of the government. The judiciary must act as a protector not only of legal rights but of justice by cutting through the

maze of technicalities created by the Executive, which has made justice captive to serve its interest .

** I am not a supporter of the Maoists, do not support violence as a means of solving political problems, but believe in adherence to the rule of law to ensure justice to all without discrimination. I believe that adherence to the rule of law is the way to prevent violence as emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the following words: Whereas it is essential if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.*

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

by

Rohini Gawankar

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The vision of Swami Vivekananda

B. Vivekanandan,

During the last many years, I have been studying the global visions of outstanding European Socialist statesmen like Olof Palme, Bruno Kreisky and Willy Brandt, who longed for building up a new world of peace and harmony, based on equality and distributive justice. That book has now been published in London and New York, by Palgrave Macmillan. Through the present analysis, I am adding a spiritual dimension to it, how Swami Vivekananda, a globally acclaimed spiritual beacon, and a self-proclaimed socialist, had envisioned the construction of a new world of peace and harmony, with the support of *Advaita* philosophy, India's great gift to world thought, for overcoming divisiveness in the world.

The first shot Swami Vivekananda fired, to unfold his vision of peace and harmony, was through his celebrated speech at Chicago, in the Parliament of Religions, on 11 September 1893. He triggered it, by calling the 7000 strong American audience present there, "Sisters and Brothers of America", which instantly set off a two minutes long standing ovation from the entire audience. In the next five minutes, he presented to them his tapestry of peace and harmony in the world, by underlining the Oneness of the humanity, marching ahead towards attaining the same goal. He compared God with an Ocean, and religions of the world as rivers flowing towards that Ocean. When they reach the

Ocean they merge with it and, consequently, dissolve their separate identities and become One. That was music to the ears of that audience, which greeted Swami Vivekananda's speech, with a deafening applause. His speech conveyed that though religions, in different names, follow different paths, their goals are one and the same – the attainment of Truth or God. Unity in diversity was the quintessence of that speech. It also conveyed that people can attain God through their own religions, and, for that there is no need of anyone changing one's religion. Further, it imparted the message of human solidarity across the religious divides. A significant feature of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at Chicago was that while other delegates tried to prove the superiority of their respective religions, Swami Vivekananda spoke about the resemblance of all religions, and conveyed the message of universal tolerance and acceptance of all religions. His appeal was to rise above narrow sectarianism and bigotry. Without uttering a word of condemnation about any religion, he spoke about their common destination – attainment of God. He affirmed that all religions are equally effective in leading their followers to the same destination – God. This all-embracing approach to religions, and his emphasis on universal brotherhood and religious harmony, made Swami Vivekananda the darling of the Chicago Conference.

Overnight, he became famous, and respected, in the United States and the world.

The lodestar

It may be seen that the lodestar of Swami Vivekananda's thought and actions was the *Advaita* philosophy, embedded in Indian *Upanishads*, but had remained dormant, until it was churned out by Adi Sankara in the early 9th century. When I was awarded the Honorary Doctorate, the highest honour of the Helsinki University, in 2011, the first Indian chosen for that honour in the 350 years history of that university, the subject I chose to speak during the award ceremony, in Helsinki, was India's *Advaita* philosophy. On that occasion I told the European audience that, "All problems of the world emanate from the divisiveness in our society. I come from India, the country which has provided a remedy to it, through the *Advaita* philosophy". I told them, first in Malayalam, as per the established custom, and then in English, that by following the *Advaita* philosophy to end the divisiveness in society, and among people, countries, and continents, can institutionalise peace and harmony in the world.

What is the core element of *Advaita* or non-dualism? *Advaita*, which was churned out by Sri Sankaracharya, from *Upanishads*, 12 centuries ago, and presented to people as a great gift, affirms that God dwells in all human beings in the

form of the life giving human soul, which is a part of God or the Supreme Soul. While the body and the mind are mortal, the soul is immortal and independent, and no weapon or fire can destroy it. While the mind controls the body and generates all kinds of desires – the fountain of sorrow – it has no control over the soul. The soul gives life to the body so long as it stays with the latter. When it leaves the body, death occurs, and the body begins to rot. As per *Advaita*, nobody dies. The perceived death is a process of the soul's departure from the body and its return to the Supreme Soul; and then the soul shoots out again in another direction, to migrate in another body to give it life. So, in every human being, there is an immortal part of the Supreme Soul or God. So, *Advaita* asserts that God is present in every human being *Thathwamassi* is the right description of the relationship between humans and God.

Based on his studies of *Vedas*, Swami Vivekananda once talked about the form of God, and the relationship between human soul and the Supreme Soul. citing *Jnana Yoga*, he said that God is like a formless pool, having countless to-and-fro active centres, where human souls incessantly keep coming in and going out. It is the sum total of all souls in the world. Invariably, a soul migrates to a human body to give it life, and remains in it, for varying periods, to enable the body to carry out various activities. When it leaves the body, it goes back to the pool, and merges with the Supreme Soul. Then it shoots out again to give life to another body. This is an endless ongoing process.

A notable feature of this process is that when a soul shoots out from

the Supreme Soul to migrate in a human body, it does not discriminate the new body on the bases of caste, creed, colour, gender or geographical location of the body, to which it shoots out to migrate. Viewed from the angle of global harmony, what *Advaita* proclaims eloquently is the fundamental equality and oneness of all human beings, and their universal brotherhood. It affirms that there is oneness behind all creations in the world. Therefore, *Advaita* affirms that there is oneness between man and God.

Religious harmony

Swami Vivekananda was a promoter of religious harmony. He had equal respect for all religions. He said that the best way for strengthening religious harmony is to treat each other with mutual respect. He held that the ethical and moral contents of all religions are more or less the same – be selfless, help others, love others, etc. They all hold certain elements of truth. They all encourage their followers to lead a righteous life. Swami Vivekananda urged the humanity to look at all religions from the angle of *Advaita*, with love, and with a conviction of the oneness of the humanity. *Advaita* vouches for divinity in every man and woman, as each human soul in them – a part of the Supreme Soul – is divine. We must accept, he said, that all religions are true, and teach people to be pure and unselfish. Such an enlightened approach towards religions would help people to assimilate the spirit of other religions too, and promote harmony in the world. He said that sectarian fights in the name of faith are a futile exercise, since all are one with the Supreme Soul – God. Instead of stressing on discordance, the stress should be on commonalities of

religions. The concept of unity in diversity, the core element of Indian secularism, has sprung from these exhortations of Swami Vivekananda. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda, indeed, was the progenitor of Indian secularism, which exemplifies equal respect for all religions. The core objective was to ensure that people lived in peace and harmony.

As per *Advaita* all human souls have a duty to respect and help each other in a framework of solidarity, irrespective of their bodies' religious or caste affiliations, or gender differences. He said that God is the all embracing *Brahmam*, and all religions, are striving to reach that *Brahmam* through different paths. When they do so, they all follow the *Advaita* philosophy, whether they recognise it or not. Indeed, they all seek the same Truth, God or Supreme Soul – through different paths. Therefore, he said that all religions should have a friendly and mutually respectful relationship between one another. Indeed, Swami Vivekananda gave a valid layout for Indian secularism, long before it became a buzz word in India's political circles.

In the closing years of his life, Swami Vivekananda felt the need to lead the humanity in a new direction, by integrating the essence of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, *The Quran* and *The Bible*, for the simple reason that, consciously or unconsciously, they all follow the *Advaita* philosophy. A deeper study would convince them of that truth, he said. It may be recalled that during his journeys through the West, he had drawn a plan to build a universal temple, – a common prayer centre under one roof – where people from all religions would freely assemble and pray to

God. If constructed, it would have been a place of worship, epitomising religious harmony. But, he could not fulfil that wish, as he did not live for long to implement that plan.

Swami Vivekananda had a universalist political mind, wedded to equality and justice. His compassionate mind always bled for the wellbeing of the poor and the oppressed. During his three-year long journey through India as a wandering monk, he saw the appalling level of poverty and exploitation all over the country. As a result, problems of the poor and the oppressed, and their remedies, remained his constant concern. Indeed, on these matters he was unequivocally on the side of the poor and the oppressed. How to elevate them to higher levels was a main concern.

I am a socialist

Establishment of a world of equality, justice and mutual respect is the best way to promote global harmony. Being an adherent to equality and equal justice, Swami Vivekananda was attracted by the principles of democratic socialism, which was gaining ground in Europe at that time. It may be noted that Swami Vivekananda visited France, England and Germany, the cradle of the European socialist movement, in 1890s. At that time, he got opportunities to learn more about socialism, and developed respect and affinity for that ideology.

For an *Advaiti* and *Vedanti*, like Swami Vivekananda, with his deep attachment to the principle of equality, and a commitment to end exploitation, and elevate the poor and the oppressed, it was natural to get attracted to socialist ideas and

vision. That made him to declare, in 1896, publicly that “I am a Socialist”, at a time when the socialist ideology was little known in India. His basic temperament, and natural affinity for the poor, made it a natural choice for him. While making the statement that he was a socialist, he said:

I am a socialist, not because socialism is a flawless system, but, it is better that everybody is ensured of half-a-loaf of bread, than nothing. Its principles of equality, distributive justice and provision of good quality universal education are all for the welfare of the people. When millions of people live under poverty and ignorance, it is criminal that those who got education at their expense pursue selfish goals without thinking about the poor or working for them.

Moreover, the proximity between *Vedanta* and the objectives of Socialism has also made him to publicly declare that “I am a socialist”, underlining the imperative need of making the study of *Advaita* a part of the study of socialism. As per *Advaita* all human beings of the world are equals, and are, therefore, entitled to an equal share of the world resources. That squares well with the socialist objectives of building up an egalitarian and exploitation-free society in the world. For building up such a society of equals, it is imperative that people imbibe the spirit and content of *Advaita* philosophy. If a socialist society gets established with a clear understanding of the *Advaita* philosophy that would provide stability to the new egalitarian socialist society.

At one point, while reiterating his adherence to distributive justice,

Swami Vivekananda said that he would not believe in any God or religion if it did not provide food for the hungry, protection for the weak, or wipe out the tears of the widows. If interpreted politically, what Swami Vivekananda envisioned was a cradle-to-the-grave welfare state system, which socialists of Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland have established during the last 80 years. However, Swami Vivekananda has succeeded in making *Advaita* an effective instrument to fight for equality and equal justice in modern society. For the socialist principles of freedom, equality and justice Swami Vivekananda gave a spiritual basis and interpretation. He presaged that socialism would be the system of the world in future, and called for a socialist transformation of the society. He held that this socialist transformation of the society should be combined with religion and ethics. He had a conviction that the masses would transform the society that way. That is the political dimension of Swami Vivekananda’s vision for building a world of peace and harmony.

Social Disharmony

Swami Vivekananda had a clear insight of how the in-built oppressive and exploitative features of the caste system, have been systematically undercutting harmonious social relationship in India. He had acquired first hand knowledge of it, during his 3-year long extensive travel all over India, between 1890 and 1893, as a wandering monk, in his drive to discover the Soul of India. During these sojourns though a deeply divided, caste-ridden country, he had innumerable opportunities to see its manifestations in forms of untouchability, denial of rights to

education, to reading of scriptures, to wear upper garments for women, *Sambandham*, and so on. During his journey through Kerala in 1893, before he reached Kanyakumari, he had a taste of it personally, which included a 3-day starvation under a Banyon tree. outside the famous Kodungalloor Devi Temple, following the failure of the privileged local elite to ascertain the caste of this wandering young monk. He was then bearing a non-descript name 'Swami Bibidisananda', which also gave no indication of the caste of the monk. After a futile exercise of asking some searching questions to Swami Bibidisananda for ascertaining his caste, the privileged local elite left him, under the Banyon tree, to starve for three days. He was not allowed to enter the Kodungalloor Devi Temple either. Untouchability was also rampant in Kerala at that time. It was after making an insightful study of how oppressively the caste system had worked at that time in Kerala, that he made his sharp observation that "Kerala is a lunatic asylum", and launched his public opposition of the caste system in India. Holding firmly on the *Advaita*, Swami Vivekananda underlined the fundamental equality of all humans, the oneness of the humanity, and the oneness of the humanity and God. He emphasized that as god dwells in all human beings, in the form of the divine human soul, equality of all human beings is fundamental, and that the caste system is inimical to it. Indeed, by advancing *Advaita*, he had destroyed the base of the caste system, and gave a powerful incentive to the modern world to remove the barriers created by caste, creed and colour, and to weld people together into one humanity, to establish harmony in Indian society.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Swami Vivekananda was a great unifier of the world who had striven, all through his life, to establish global harmony. He embodied the wisdom of the East and the West, and for that he has been respected everywhere. Armed with the *Advaita* philosophy, and the spiritual prowess of India's intellectual tradition, he ventured to harness peace, unity and harmony in the world. For him *Advaita*, the oneness of all beings, is the eternal Truth. As he found selfishness standing in the way of spiritual progress, he said that it was imperative to discard selfishness and practice renunciation. He wanted the restoration of *Advaita* to its pristine glory and make it the fulcrum of all activities in the world. He prophesied that, in future, all religions would receive a new orientation from *Advaita* and build goodwill among them. He said that the great truth which he had learnt from his rumination (*tapasya*) was that, God is present in all beings who are, indeed, the manifested forms of one living deity. He promoted universal brotherhood based on *Advaita*.

Swami Vivekananda personified the combination of a *Jnana Yogi* and a *Karma Yogi* who sought the realisation of God through knowledge and through actions, bereft of attachment. He had a global vision of building a one world of peace and harmony, encompassing the whole humanity. He was a secularist saint who respected all religions, and stated plainly that all believers can attain Truth through their own religions, and that there is no need for anyone to change his/her religion for the attainment of Truth. He called for a balance between material prosperity and spiritual advancement.

Swami Vivekananda's love for India was beyond description. He was passionate about it. For him, India is a holy land and asked all his followers to love India. He had a vision of a new India, free from socio-economic inequalities, a country which moves up towards a classless and casteless society, through an evolutionary process. He said that widespread education would remove inequality in society. He believed that India's greatness lay in her spiritual assets, which would give her in future the leadership position in the world.

He wanted the elevation of the poor and the downtrodden, to a level comparable to those who lead comfortable life in society. He said that serving the poor tantamounted to worshipping of God, and urged people to work for the welfare of others.

He supported gender equality of men and women. He said that high education would liberate women from their bondage. He urged people to view women from the angle of looking at mothers, and treat them with respect, with a realisation that, in them too, there dwells a divine human Soul, which is part of the Supreme Soul. He said that while body has gender difference, the Soul does not recognise that difference.

His public statement that "I am a Socialist" is a political statement of an *Advaiti/Vedanti*, yearning to establish a peaceful society based on equality in all respects, a core element of *Advaita*. And, undoubtedly, all his thoughts and actions were centered on strengthening peace and harmony in the world.

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of caste**
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Between The Lines

Discrimination laces democracy

Kuldip Nayar

However democratic we may be, discrimination on the basis of caste system has not diminished. Every day, in some part or the other of the country, there are instances of dalits being burnt alive. Only the other Dadri, near Delhi, was the scene of a dalit family being consigned to fire.

In the national capital itself, a JNU student hung himself because he could not stand the jibe of discrimination. The 28-year-old M.Phil student had dreamt of studying in JNU and was fortunate to get through on his fourth attempt. Hailing from the South, Muthukrishnan was reportedly a sober personality and generally kept to himself.

Surprisingly, there is very little impact on the society or, for that matter, in India. It was just an incident and forgotten. Instead, the country on the whole should have been shaken. Had this been the case of an upper caste student, there would have been many statements calling for attention notice in parliament. But there was not even a whisper in the

present case.

The media was equally guilty because it reported the incident only as a periphery to some other bigger stories. This only underlined that the media persons, generally belonging to the upper caste, have the same old mindset. The youth is supposed to be radical, but this was not the case.

Obviously, the deceased student's father and even some students believe that there was some foul play. The police was led to record FIR under relevant provisions because the police thought that it was a case of suicide. The parents have demanded a CBI inquiry. I don't know how it would make the difference because the CBI would itself depend on the Delhi Police which is in the dog.

A similar issue had cropped up when Rohith Verma, a dalit research scholar from Hyderabad University, committed suicide last year. However, unlike in the JNU student's death case, there was a big hue and cry and students took to streets and the agitation even led to

the change of guard at the university's department.

Incidentally, Muthkrishnan had recalled Rohith's death and condemned Hyderabad University's alleged role in the dalit scholar's suicide. The JNU student had a Facebook post in which he had criticized JNU's new admission policy, obviously recounting several instances where he had to face discrimination.

What do these incidents in varsities indicate? We need to apply our minds to address the problems that dalit students face in institutions of higher education. Not long ago, the Hyderabad University had to revoke the suspension of students after Rohith's death. Indeed, his suicide had caused great shock and resulted in outrage, but similar sentiments were expressed when Senthil Kumar from Salem, another student from the University of Hyderabad, killed himself in 2008. Muthukrishnan, too, is from Salem in Tamil Nadu.

There have been over dozen cases of suicide by students, mostly dalits, in various institutions in Hyderabad between 2007 and 2013. In the north, besides two cases of suicide by dalit students at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi, 14 other cases of suicide by dalit students were reported between January 2007 and April 2011.

It is almost as if we have become immune to these frequent instances of suicide mainly by dalit students. The student population on campuses of higher education has become increasingly diverse. According to 2008 data, of the total number of students in higher education in the country, four percent of them are

Scheduled Tribes, 13.5 per cent Scheduled Castes and 35 per cent Other Backward Classes. Hindus alone accounted for about 85 per cent of students, followed by Muslims (8 per cent) and Christians (3 per cent). And yet, 23 out of 25 suicides were of dalits.

There are several researches which indicate that experiences of discrimination, exclusion and humiliation are the predominant reasons. After analyzing some cases of suicide, the conclusion seems to be that there seems to be more than enough evidence to believe that caste discrimination played a significant role in driving these extraordinary individuals into committing suicide, and that elite professional institutions are the places where caste prejudice is so firmly entrenched that it has become normal.

A study in 2010 by Professor Mary Thornton and others of five higher educational institutions in India and the United Kingdom observed that "separation of groups on the higher education campus is pervasive and ubiquitous. While some such separation may be for supportive reasons, at other times it is due to overt discrimination on the grounds of race, region, nationality, caste, class, religion, or gender".

In 2013, Samson Ovichegan, in a study on the experience of Dalits in an elite university in India, observed that "this university is yet another arena in which the practice of caste division continues to exist. The university environment reinforces and maintains a divide between dalit and non-dalit. Dalit students do, indeed, experience overt and covert discrimination based on caste at this premier university".

As much as we admit to the persistence of caste discrimination and stigmatization as a problem plaguing higher education campuses, there is also a constant denial or attributing the suicides to incident-specific situations with total disregard for links with the larger social milieu of exclusion. True, there are incident-specific reasons, but it cannot be a coincidence that out of 25 cases of suicide, 23 were of dalits. Thus, the first thing for policymakers is to come out of denial mode.

No doubt, the situation may have improved. But the shame of caste system continues in one form or the other. Relations between the dalit students or, for that matter, with other students and teachers and administrators, have always been questioned. In my view, we need to take steps to address the problems of dalit or other marginalized students. The only solution I can think of are the legal safeguards against discrimination, civic education, academic assistance to students who need support, and participation of dalits in all decision-making bodies of universities and colleges.

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BJP government in UP doesn't bode well for poor and democracy

Sandeep Pandey

The shocking victory of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh with over three fourths of the seats in the assembly elections appears too one sided to be true. Leader of the BJP Narendra Modi has given a slogan 'With everybody's support, Development for all.' However, in the last general elections for the Parliament and in the recently concluded state elections BJP did not put up a single Muslim candidate and neither does it expect the Muslims to vote for it. Muslims constitute 19.3% of UP population. BJP and its ideological parent Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) have sent out a clear message that they don't care for Muslims and can win elections without their support.

BJP doesn't represent one fifth of the state population and worse does not want to take any responsibility on their behalf. During India's partition between India and Pakistan communal violence engulfed the sub-continent and people were thoroughly communalized. The second phase of communalization started in 1992 from the Ram temple movement and has created mental gulf between the Hindu and Muslim communities. In India Muslims were insecure then and are insecure now. This doesn't portend well for the country. The demolition of Babri Mosque in 1992 has invited the problem of terrorism to India, the first series of bomb blasts taking place immediately after the demolition in early 1993 in Mumbai as a reaction to the incident.

This is precisely the Gujarat model. Segregate the Hindus and Muslims and then deny the Muslims of their basic rights. In today's Gujarat Hindus and Muslims can't live together. Sachar Committee report reveals that the social, economic and educational status of Muslims is only slightly better than dalits. If the national level of poverty is 22.7% then 31% Muslims and 35% SC-ST are poor. 40.7% Muslims fall in the Other Backward Classes category and constitute 15.7% of the OBC population. The condition of Arzals in Muslims is as bad as the Most Backwards Classes.

A politics which boycotts a section of population is inconsistent with spirit of democracy. Narendra Modi is the first Prime Minister of the country who is establishing himself as a leader of the Hindus. The kind of statements he made during the UP election campaign – of more electricity being given on Ramzan than on Diwali, money given for constructing boundary wall of Kabristan but not that of Shamshaan and blaming elements from across the border, implying Pakistan, being responsible for a train accident near Kanpur which had taken place a while back – have not been made by any PM in the past. When Modi became the PM, the now deceased President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad Ashok Singhal claimed that Hindu rule was back in India first time after the Mughal rule. Interestingly he didn't make this claim when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the PM because Vajpayee didn't have a communal image. Narendra Modi is living up to

the pompous claim of Ashok Singhal. The idea of PM identifying himself with only one community is also incompatible with democracy.

Consolidation of Hindu votes by creating a false impression that other political parties have pampered Muslims is a cruel joke with Muslims. The reality is that Muslims are a deprived community in India, most of them self-employed but poor. Now it is becoming clear that youth from this community are made accused in many bomb-blast or terrorist incidents and then acquitted because of lack of evidence, after having spent a number of years in jail, completely devastating their lives. Such ploy strengthens the notion among majority community that Muslims are behind all such incidents as the news about their arrests are highlighted but not of their acquittal.

From Sharmila securing merely 90 votes in Manipur is as shocking as BJP's victory in UP. People in UP have voted Amanmani Tripathi, accused of his wife's murder and whose both parents are in jail on the murder charge of Madhumita Shukla, and dons Mukhtar Ansari and Raja Bhaiya with criminal backgrounds are MLAs.

Hence it is clear that people don't vote in a rational manner. To win an election it requires money – legal and illegal, organisation and even adopting unethical methods of exploiting the caste and religious sentiments of people even if it may mean creating more friction in society. People may

(Continued on Page 5)

The verdict in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand

Apoorvanand

Indian parliamentary politics has moved away from the concerns of its minorities. This is the essence of the statement of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh intellectual Rakesh Sinha who, celebrating the massive mandate given to the Bharatiya Janata Party by the people in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, said: “A Muslim veto institutionalised as an extra-secular mechanism has been demolished. The Sangh’s meta-narrative on nationalism and Hindutva has emerged as a hegemonic ideology.”

BJP leaders use the phrase “end of caste politics” to explain the unprecedented vote percentage that the saffron party has gained in the state elections this time. Other observers see a new voter emerging in these elections, one who is weary of instability, is tired of coalition politics and wants to see decisive governance. This view looks at the mandate to the BJP as a continuation of the trend, over the last decade, in Uttar Pradesh that had put Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav in power with an unambiguous majority in the past.

What is evident from the recent poll results is that the BJP has established its pan-Indian dominance decisively. Many see the BJP’s determination to capture India with admiration. Some others see it with fear. Four years ago, when the BJP announced that its focus was on the North East and East, including Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha, it was not taken very seriously. But the consistent work by the RSS, its

mother organisation, was to serve as the springboard for the BJP.

The time was ripe. The power it got at the Centre gave it the leverage it needed in these areas. Its expansion in Odisha, as is evident in the results of the panchayat elections in February, is just an example of how the party can rebound in a place from where it was effectively pushed out only a few years ago.

The emergence of the BJP in Odisha, where the Biju Janata Dal had unceremoniously showed it the door a few years ago, needs to be understood in the light of what has happened in Uttar Pradesh. The saffron party has been out of power in Uttar Pradesh for the last 14 years.

There were theoretical explanations for this. It was believed that the politics of social justice had made it impossible for the political language of Hindutva to define politics. However, the politics of social justice was reduced to, or remained limited to, giving representation to some sections of the erstwhile marginalised social groups. This meant that all one had to do was to give these marginalised social groups a sense of participation in the affairs of politics. If one could bring them around by only doing this much, what prevented the BJP from attempting this formula too?

Thus, the last 10 years have shown the BJP turning the politics of social justice on its head. While political scientists kept calling it the party of upper caste Hindu males, it

slowly co-opted the Other Backward Classes and Dalits into its Hindu fold.

This is also a moment for ideologues to ponder over the rhetoric of Ambedkarism, which failed to anticipate that it was not at all difficult for Dalits to accept a party that is run along Manuwadi (casteist) ideological lines. Is it difficult to see how the suicide of Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad or the lynching of Dalits by the protectors of cows in Gujarat could not stir the Dalits of Uttar Pradesh to spurn the saffron party? What prevented democratic parties from talking about these issues and making them central in their campaign? The fear that they would be seen as practising a partisan political language?

There have been many reports of how the BJP worked on the non-Yadav castes to carry them along. It was done in many ways, by pulling caste groups like the Kurmis, Rajbhars, Nishads and Mauryas and non-Jatav Dalits into its fold. Cultural modes were used effectively. The BJP’s symbolic campaign in the name of Suheldev, a little-known 11th-century Pasi king, to dislodge the warrior saint Ghazi Miyan from the popular imagination as the hero of both Hindus and Muslims in eastern Uttar Pradesh, is only one example.

While the leaders of the social justice plank got complacent with the assurance of continued support from their sub-caste group, they failed to anticipate the aspirations that this

would generate in other sub-caste groups within the wider category of Dalits or Backwards.

That this would ultimately generate resentment among these groups against the dominant ruling caste group, which in the case of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were Yadavs among the Backwards and Jatavs among Dalits. To think that with these dominant caste groups as the nuclei, other sub-caste groups would keep hovering around them was lazy politics. Also, as we can now see, the journey of the politics of social justice was devoid of democratic content. A politics that was only the language of negotiation with power could only lead to where it stands now. Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati has been reduced to the status of a leader of Jatavs, and Akhilesh Yadav does not have appeal beyond Yadavs. Their failure to fashion a universal language that could compete with the Hindutva universal is stark.

No human being likes to remain confined within the identity assigned to them. We are programmed to be transcendental beings. What was the promise of the slogan of social justice in this regard? It asked Yadavs to remain Yadavs and Jatavs to remain Jatavs forever. Contrary to this brand of politics, the RSS at least promised them an opening in the wider Hindu fold, and more recently, pride in being part of a more universal national project. Thus, an ambitionless, narrow identity politics was defeated by a reverse identity politics, which just reprogrammed these groups, and assured them of being part of a larger Hindu nationalist solidarity project.

It is also interesting that the only party that spoke in a cultural language during the election campaign was the BJP. Neither the Congress-Samajwadi Party alliance nor the Bahujan Samaj Party moved an inch away from their economic rhetoric. Their attempt to appeal to the economic insecurities of people did not cut ice as people knew that both camps barely differ with regard to their economic policies. So, the only thing to make a difference was culture. However, the hesitation of the so-called secular parties in talking about their cultural platform meant that they had utter disdain for the people's striving to find their definition of what a good life would be. A good life is one that goes beyond economic compulsions. To not talk about it is having a dim view of people.

Analysts have started talking about the 2017 election results the way they did with the 2014 results of the general election. They call it inclusive and a mandate beyond caste. They seem embarrassed by the BJP's campaign, which was brazenly anti-Muslim, casteist and divisive.

The references to the Ram Mandir, anti-Romeo squads, displacement of Hindus, appeasement of Muslims at the cost of Dalits and backward castes were raised at the beginning of the campaign and remained till the end. There was hardly a BJP leader who did not use this language. It was most certainly not inclusive.

The verdict in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand is definitely a decisive victory of the ideology of the BJP. The party's opponents must first accept this fact if they are to think about ways to deal with it.

(Continued from Page 3)

not vote for a candidate like Irom Sharmila who symbolizes simplicity, commitment to high ideals like truth and non-violence and sacrifice but may prefer to vote for the criminals who symbolize everything wrong in society.

Some people harbour the illusion that a BJP government will offer clean governance or will usher in an era of merit.¹³⁷ candidates of the BJP in UP elections had criminal background. Every one in four BJP candidate was accused of serious criminal charges. Every three in four BJP candidates were crorepatris. Can anybody claim that the BJP candidates spent within the prescribed limit set by the Election Commission on election campaigning? Where did the amount spent over and above the prescribed limit, obviously in form of black money, come from, especially in new currency notes? Are these candidates representatives of common citizen, who is neither criminal nor rich nor corrupt? It is a party of the rich and capitalists and will work for them. Like other parties BJP too manipulated the caste arithmetic by focussing on non-Yadav OBC and non-Chamar-Jatav dalit votes. Alliances with Apna Dal and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party were caste based alliances. Keshav Prasad Maurya is BJP President in UP because of his caste. To dispel any doubts that caste and not merit will continue to guide Indian politics we need to go back to Bihar elections. Narendra Modi had to claim in a most melodramatic manner that he will lay down his life but not dismantle the caste based quota system after the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat made an adverse comment against the system of reservations.

Should Muslims keep away from electoral politics?

Ajaz Ashraf

Four months before the Uttar Pradesh election results sent Muslims in India reeling in shock, former Rajya Sabha MP Mohammed Adeb delivered a speech in Lucknow, which, in hindsight, might be called prescient.

“If Muslims don’t wish to have the status of slaves, if they don’t want India to become a Hindu rashtra, they will have to keep away from electoral politics for a while and, instead, concentrate on education,” Adeb told an audience comprising mostly members of the Aligarh Muslim University’s Old Boys Association.

It isn’t that Adeb wanted Muslims to keep away from voting. His aim was to have Muslim intellectuals rethink the idea of contesting elections, of disabusing them of the notion that it is they who decide which party comes to power in Uttar Pradesh.

Adeb’s suggestion, that is contrary to popular wisdom, had his audience gasping. This prompted him to explain his suggestion in greater detail.

“We Muslims chose in 1947 not to live in the Muslim rashtra of Pakistan,” he said. “It is now the turn of Hindus to decide whether they want India to become a Hindu rashtra or remain secular. Muslims should understand that their very presence in the electoral fray leads to a communal polarisation. Why?”

Not one to mince words, Adeb answered his question himself.

“A segment of Hindus hates the very sight of Muslims,” he said. “Their icon is Narendra Modi. But 75% of Hindus are secular. Let them fight out over the kind of India they want. Muslim candidates have become a red rag to even secular Hindus who rally behind the Bharatiya Janata Party, turning every election into a Hindu-Muslim one.”

Later in the day, Adeb met Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was in Lucknow. To Adeb, Azad asked, “Why did you deliver such a speech?”

It was now Azad’s turn to get a mouthful from Adeb. He recalled asking Azad: “What kind of secularism is that which relies on 20% of Muslim votes? The Bahujan Samaj Party gets a percentage of it, as do the Samajwadi Party and the Congress.”

At this, Azad invited Adeb, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh, to join the Congress. Adeb rebuffed the offer saying, “First get the secular Hindus together before asking me to join.”

Spectre of a Hindu rashtra

A day after the Uttar Pradesh election results sent a shockwave through the Muslim community, Adeb was brimming with anger. He said, “Syed Ahmed Bukhari [the so-called Shahi Imam of Delhi’s Jama Masjid] came to me with a question: ‘Why aren’t political parties courting me for Muslim votes?’ I advised him to

remain quiet, to not interfere in politics.” Nevertheless, Bukhari went on to announce that Muslims should vote the Bahujan Samaj Party.

“Look at the results,” Adeb said angrily. “But for Jatavs, Yadavs, and a segment of Jats, most Hindus voted [for] the Bharatiya Janata Party.” His anger soon segued into grief and he began to sob, “I am an old man. I don’t want to die in a Hindu rashtra.”

Though Adeb has been nudging Muslims to rethink their political role through articles in Urdu newspapers, the churn among them has only just begun. It is undeniably in response to the anxiety and fear gripping them at the BJP’s thumping victory in this politically crucial state.

After all, Uttar Pradesh is the site where the Hindutva pet projects of cow-vigilantism, love jihad, and ghar wapsi have been executed with utmost ferocity. All these come in the backdrop of the grisly 2013 riots of Muzaffarnagar, which further widened the Hindu-Muslim divide inherited from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement of the 1990s and even earlier, from Partition. Between these two cataclysmic events, separated by 45 years, Uttar Pradesh witnessed manifold riots, each shackling the future to the blood-soaked past.

I spoke to around 15 Muslims, not all quoted here, each of whom introspected deeply. So forbidding does the future appear to them that

none even alluded to the steep decline in the number of Muslim MLAs, down from the high of 69 elected in 2012 to just 24 in the new Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

They, in their own ways, echoed Adeb, saying that the decline in representation of Muslims was preferable to having the Sangh Parivar rule over them with the spectre of Hindutva looming.

“Muslims need to become like the Parsis or, better still, behave the way the Chinese Indians do in Kolkata,” said poet Munawwar Rana. “They focus on dentistry or [their] shoe business, go out to vote on polling day and return to work.”

He continued: “And Muslims?” They hold meetings at night, cook deghs (huge vessels) of biryani, and work themselves into a frenzy. “They think the burden of secularism rests on their shoulders,” said Rana. “Educate your people and make them self-reliant.”

Readers would think Adeb, Rana and others are poor losers, not generous enough to credit the BJP’s overwhelming victory in Uttar Pradesh to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s development programme. In that case readers should listen to Sudhir Panwar, the Samajwadi Party candidate from Thana Bhawan in West Uttar Pradesh, who wrote for *Scroll.in* last week on the communal polarisation he experienced during his campaign.

In Thana Bhawan, there were four principal candidates – Suresh Rana, accused in the Muzaffarnagar riots, stood on the BJP ticket; Javed Rao on the Rashtriya Lok Dal’s; Abdul Rao Waris on the Bahujan

Samaj Party’s, and Panwar on the Samajwadi Party’s. It was thought that the anger of Jats against the BJP would prevent voting on religious lines in an area where the Muslim-Hindu divide runs deep.

This perhaps prompted Rana to play the Hindu card, and the Muslims who were more inclined to the Rashtriya Lok Dal switched their votes to the Bahujan Samaj Party, believing that its Dalit votes would enhance the party’s heft to snatch Thana Bhawan.

Communal polarisation

Sample how different villages voted along communal lines.

In the Rajput-dominated Hiranwada, the Bahujan Samaj Party bagged 14 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal not a single vote, the Samajwadi Party seven, and the Bharatiya Janata Party a whopping 790.

In Bhandoda, a village where the Brahmins are landowners and also dominate its demography, followed by Dalits, the Bahujan Samaj Party secured 156 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal zero, the Samajwadi Party nine, and the Bharatiya Janata Party 570.

In the Muslim-dominated Jalalabad, the Bahujan Samaj Party received 453 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal 15, the Samajwadi Party 6 and the Bharatiya Janata Party 23.

In Pindora, where Jats are 35% and Muslims around 30% of the population, the Bahujan Samaj Party polled 33 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal 482, the Samajwadi Party 33, and the Bharatiya Janata Party 278,

most of which is said to have come from the lower economically backward castes.

In Devipura, where the Kashyaps are numerous, the Bahujan Samaj Party got 86 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal 42, the Samajwadi Party 1 and the Bharatiya Janata Party 433.

In Oudri village, where the Jatavs are in the majority, the Bahujan Samaj Party bagged 343 votes, the Rashtriya Lok Dal 15, the Samajwadi Party 12, and the Bharatiya Janata Party 22.

This voting pattern was replicated in village after village. Broadly, the Jat votes split between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal, the Muslim votes consolidated behind the Bahujan Samaj Party, with the Samajwadi Party getting a slim share in it, the Jatavs stood solidly behind the Bahujan Samaj Party, and all others simply crossed over to the Bharatiya Janata Party. The BJP’s Suresh Rana won the election from Thana Bhawan.

Can you call this election?” asked Panwar rhetorically. “It is Hindu-Muslim war through the EVM [Electronic Voting Machine].” Panwar went on to echo Adeb: “I feel extremely sad when I say that Muslims will have to keep away from contesting elections. This seems to be the only way of ensuring that elections don’t turn into a Hindu-Muslim one.”

The Bahujan Samaj Party’s Waris differed. “Is it even practical?” he asked. “But yes, Muslims should keep a low profile.”

A forgotten gender injustice

Rajindar Sachar

Sushma Swaraj, usually a calm politician, was so upset that she spontaneously blurted out “I will shave my head if a foreigner Sonia Gandhi becomes Prime Minister of India”. Luckily, Sonia Gandhi saved this embarrassment to Swaraj by intelligently and strategically thrusting Manmohan Singh (though a loyalist to the core of the Gandhi family, but on merit of his own), as Prime Minister in 2004, notwithstanding the protest from scores of Gandhi family loyalists.

Switch to March 2010 and you see a happy embrace by Sonia Gandhi and Sushma Swaraj in the precincts of Parliament. What happened in the interim for such close bonhomie?

Though introduced by Deve Gowda for the first time on 12 September 1996 in the Lok Sabha, no concrete action was taken by various governments to effectuate the legislation on Women’s Reservation Bill in Parliament and the state legislatures. Everyone expected the legislation to be passed immediately. In fact, Prime Minister I.K. Gujral promised his earliest priority in passing this Bill but nothing concrete happened.

When the UPA government came to power in 2004, it announced that the Act would be its first priority. But instead one had total silence on the Bill in the President’s speech on the opening day of the Parliamentary session. This was an open and clear notice to the women activists that the Bill, which had been so proudly projected as a commitment to gender equality, has been quietly buried, and

is not likely to be revived in conceivable future.

But then circumstances of steep price rise, political compulsions of polls in Karnataka and other impending polls made the then government to be a little wise and decide to refer the Bill to the Parliamentary Standing Committee. Though the innocent amongst the women groups were hoping that the Bill would become an Act of Legislature, nothing happened until 2010.

The Women’s Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a lapsed Bill in Parliament of India, which proposed to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lower House of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state Legislative Assemblies for women.

The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. It was this event that made Sushma Swaraj and Sonia Gandhi embrace so emotionally. However, the Lok Sabha never voted on the Bill. The Bill lapsed after the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014.

Every time from 1998 to 2014, whenever Parliament met, women representatives were assured in all solemnity by each major political party that it hoped to pass the Bill in that very session. In reality, this was a tongue-in-cheek operation.

That is why one feels that women should support the alternative of double-member constituencies which

will meet both the requirement of ensuring one-third quota for women and, at the same time, will not disturb the present male seats.

Thus, Lok Sabha membership can be easily increased to 750, with a provision that one woman candidate will mandatorily be elected from those double-member constituencies, and, depending upon the votes received, it may be that even both elected candidate could be women. This law was laid down by the Supreme Court decades ago in former President V.V. Giri’s case. The same principle will apply in the case of elections to the state legislatures.

Space in Parliament is not a problem. Shivraj Patil, once Union Home Minister, is on record admitting that space is not a problem if Parliament decides to increase the number of seats.

The alternative of double member constituencies can be done by amending Article 81(2) of the Constitution by increasing the present strength, which can be easily done if political parties are genuine in their commitment to the Bill.

I know the Delimitation Commission has already marked the constituencies on the basis of single member seats. But I do not think it is necessary to redraw the constituencies to make it double.

By a rule of thumb the top one third of the constituencies having the maximum voters in each state could

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Lohia's immanent critique of caste

Arun Kumar Patnaik

It may be argued that Lohia's immanent criticism is outlined by his principle of immediacy. Recent commentators misunderstand Lohia's principle of immediacy. Yogendra Yadav's lengthy essay on Lohia's intellectual journey underestimates Lohia's method. Where he should notice Lohia's methodological protocols in his principle of immediacy, he argues that Lohia's principle is morally relevant against 'vulgar presentism' (excessively concerned with the present and indifferent to the future) but does not have any analytical significance. Commenting on Lohia's principle of immediacy, Yadav (*Economic and Political Weekly*, October 2, 2010) argues, "Lohia did not formulate the analytical part of this insight (the principle of immediacy – *my addition*) as clearly as the normative principle". Anand Kumar (*Ibid*) tries to argue for an intersectional understanding of caste but does not notice that Lohia offers an internal critique of caste and implies that Lohia transcends caste in order to offer his criticism of caste. Let us discuss this issue at length. While responding to Yadav's position, Sasheej Hegde (*Economic and Political Weekly*, September 3, 2011) however suggests that it is possible to argue that in Lohia's principle of immediacy, 'some aspects of this analytical part' may be 'inflecting at once Lohia's ethics and politics'. What are these analytical aspects present in Lohia's principle of immediacy? Though Hedge does not explore methodological protocols present in

Lohia's principle, he hints their presence in his elaborate response to Yadav's thesis. Hegde suggests that Lohia's principle of immediacy is about "the world imagined (and lived) from the perspective of will (as separate from reason).....One of the profound weaknesses of this politics on immediacy is that it has no account of the cognitive status of its own history, even though its basic superiority consists in its unique compatibility with prevailing and current historical conditions." (2011: 71). Hegde views Lohia's principle as expression of a perspective of will (non-reason) rather than a perspective of reason. In my view, he thus reduces analytical import of an immanent criticism of history which is informed of a perspective of reason combined with a perspective of will (non-reason). Do we find a union of reason and will (non-reason) in Lohia's principle of immediacy? Is Lohia's principle of immediacy posited in the unitary sense (a claim made by Hedge, 2011: 70) and is thus devoid of multiplicity of meanings? Let us now answer these questions.

What is Lohia's principle of immediacy? What is it opposed to or different from? How Lohia does discuss it? Lohia is critical of our obsession with 'vulgar presentism' (obsession with the present) on the one hand and 'vulgar futurism' (an excessive concern with a remote future) on the other and posits the principle of immediacy. In the modernist circles there are two forms of reaction against vulgar

presentism. Lohia distinguishes two forms of test followed by modern intellectuals to promote their ideals of progress: the remote test (what may be called 'transcendental' principle) and the principle of immediacy (what may be called 'immanent principle').

Remote test

Thinkers following a remote test or transcendental principle argue that the modern civilisation is about constant 'progress' in production, democracy and even class struggle. A golden age is expected to come. The right wing intellectuals may focus on technological progress whereas the left wing intellectuals may offer a remote justification of class struggle. Both may portray a golden age in future. Both have an over-riding faith in remote tests. Thus, Lohia (2011, Vol. 2: 183) argues that the modern world has given rise to dichotomies "between spirit and matter, individual and social, bread and culture and the like". As the future appears by suppressing the present, a dichotomy between the present and the future is posited in this remote method. The right wing intellectuals represent one side of the dichotomy (spirit/individual/culture/technology) and the left-wing intellectuals represent the exact opposite of it (matter/social/bread/humanity). Lohia argues that this is an unreal opposition. Lohia (*ibid*: 184) suggests, "These dichotomies have arisen, because immediacy is flouted, because history denies fable and fable denies history". True, Lohia here criticises a rationalist

account of history popular in the Left and the Right that suppresses fables/fictions/myths. He seems to be giving up reason. But Lohia does not celebrate fables/myths. He subjects myths to a rational scrutiny and suggests that fables too have moral doctrines that impact history in a linear form or a cyclic form. By suppressing fables, a rationalist history presents partial truth. A typical rationalist account of history is binary and is full of dichotomies. He is not giving up history for fables. He is interested in exploring a fruitful dialogue between history and fables, without sliding for one-sided analytical protocols popular with the philosophers of history (with moment of flux in history) or moralists (with the moment of eternity in fables). If the moment of flux can be analysed by a perspective of non-reason or will, the moment of eternity can be analysed by a perspective of reason. Though reason and will are necessary to analyse both the moments of eternity (fables) and flux (history). That is how Lohia breaks free from binary of reason and will by combining a critical perspective of history and fables. He is critical of their dichotomy, critical of their gaze over humanity and proposes a new synthesis. For fables are stories that never take place but moralists assume they are internally real. Historians denounce fables and rightly look for moments of flux/change and thus ignore what is “externally real” in fables. (Lohia, 2011, Vol.2: 185) Lohia concludes, “If man must learn to live in history, he has equal need to live outside it”. (ibid)

The immediacy test

Lohia proposes, “We may in fact be heading for a golden age if we try to achieve that golden age in the

immediate”. (Lohia, Vol 2: 186) The principle of immediacy connects the moment of flux (history) with the moment of eternity (fables), the moment of material force with moment of subjective will, the moment of social with the moment of individual. The principle of immediacy claims that for each single act, we need not look for transcendental criteria to justify its course of doing. It can be justified with immanent criteria or by a ‘here and now’ approach to production, governance, culture and class struggle. Lohia argues, “Compassion and revolution have to interweave and any preferential loyalty to one or the other would heap disaster on the spiritual as well as the material”. (Lohia, Vol 2: 186) Lohia clearly is unprepared to give up reason for will or vice versa. He discards the golden age of distant future and argues that such an ideal is harmful for left wing movements. For they may do many ignoble acts to fulfil high ideals and think that their acts can be justified by the outcome of a remote future. If I may rephrase him, he implicitly suggests that a perspective of will focuses on compassion or spiritual realm whereas a perspective of reason concentrates on material changes in human life. A socialist ideal of progress must concentrate on a combined perspective of will and reason.

Lohia’s principle acquires an added analytical significance in socialist movement to establish classless and casteless society by a here-and-now approach rather than a remote approach. The orthodox notion of progress in socialist circles upholds a rosy future and forgets that subalterns want to gain ‘autonomy’ here and now rather than in distant future. Unless socialists identify with

the subaltern search for autonomy/solidarity here and now and would want to identify their struggle with subaltern search for autonomy, they will lose relevance here and now. Unless socialists identify with the principle of immediacy in production (the will to control production/profits in factory or agriculture), in class struggle (democratic participation in pedagogy/action rather than dependence on leadership), in culture (intellectual formation among subalterns, approximation to other cultures of subalterns and so on), socialist movement cannot create the golden age it promises to the subaltern strata.

Lohia’s thesis is anticipated by Gramsci’s immanent criticism of socialist orthodoxies in Europe. Culturally, his thesis approximates that of Gramsci’s immanent critique. As in Gramsci, Lohia’s analytical protocols broaden the field of socialist politics. It is not merely concerned with the material transformation through the state power, it is equally concerned with spiritual change or intellectual transformation so that subaltern caste/classes cease to remain subalterns. It is not merely focused on capturing the state power but also transformation of social power in caste/gender/class/ethnicity/language. Thus, analytically speaking, it is indeed a historic task of socialist movement to explore forms of immediacy in factory/land, class/caste struggle, governance and culture. It is possible for a new socialist movement to begin by identifying with these multiple forms of immediacy. Thus Lohia’s new analytical protocols are laid bare in his principle of immediacy required to renew a new socialist movement. His analysis is simultaneously political. His new methodology is at

once a new political project. Far from positing a unitary notion of immediacy as claimed by Hegde, Lohia observes a plural notion of immediacy so that socialism could be constructed with multiple trajectories.

Does Lohia apply his own method to understand caste relation? Lohia does it very acutely. He offers a plural notion of immediacy to examine caste system and identifies caste in relation to gender, language, class and region. He locates its internal strength in providing forms of solidarity and security to members of a particular caste, though in a framework of segregation and argues that socialism must articulate similar forms of security and solidarity in non-discriminatory mode. Socialism must adopt and universalise solidarity currents practised by caste society, instead of pointing towards a distant future of progress. His application of the immanent principle to examine caste system is very clear. While this could be seen as part of his analysis of 'history', it may be useful to hint at this stage how he analyses fables of Ram-Vashistha-Sambhuka story on the one hand and Vashistha-Vamliki traditions on the other hand. He also pays attention to legends of fishermen or dalit communities that reinforce their subordination and points to their inner contradictions in these beliefs. In a sense, he offers a subtle criticism of caste-based legends believed by lower castes and points towards a new socialist narrative of fables, myths, and popular legends prevalent among the caste communities. He deftly uses these stories to expose caste contradictions and points out a

way-out. Let us examine these issues below.

Caste as domination or legitimation?

Since caste is a power structure, it needs to be related to a theory of power. A theory of power is usually caught with a tension between two notions of power: power as a hierarchy of domination on the one hand and power as a system of legitimation on the other hand. The former focuses on a hierarchy of elites and subalterns, structural inequalities arising between them and strategies to dominate subaltern strata and so on. The latter focuses on why subalterns give consent to the domination of elites and its moral and legal paraphernalia.

These notions of power represent two different sides of power, sometimes pushing theorists to take sectarian positions. That is to say, theorists of power may merely echo the one or the other side of power, failing to notice that there are actually two sides of power in live tension or contradiction between each other. A comprehensive theory of power will have to engage with these two different tendencies of power structure. Thus, a broad view of caste power may have to take into account the hierarchy of domination and structures of legitimation. It must break with a binary view that treats caste as domination or as legitimation process.

This paper primarily focuses on Lohia's accounts which deal with the moral order of caste. He focuses on the legitimizing process of caste system and enquires into why caste has survived as a social system. He throws some light on the resilient strength of caste system, while

pleading for the destruction of caste's exclusionary practices. But it would be a terrible mistake to examine Lohia's account of caste in isolation from that of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Moreover, in terms of genealogy, he should be evaluated as a succeeding thinker. If Lohia needs to be examined in relation to his immediate intellectual context, the antecedent tradition of criticism of caste must be placed beforehand so that we can assess his own contributions fruitfully. It may not be inaccurate to claim that the earlier thinkers such as Gandhi and Ambedkar describe caste as a hierarchy of domination (untouchability for Gandhi and graded inequalities for Ambedkar). Lohia on the other hand focuses on caste as a legitimising system: how does it draw support of people and gain acceptability as a system? A non sectarian view of caste may thus have to combine these two important views of caste system as these views represent two different sides of caste system.

Ambedkar and Lohia on Gandhi's view of Caste

There is one thing common to both Ambedkar and Lohia. Both are dissatisfied with Gandhi's doctrine of least resistance to caste order. Both argue for the rediscovery of Satyagrah against caste system. If you recall, Gandhi was wary of Satyagrah against caste inequalities, notwithstanding his opposition to the British Raj on the grounds of Satyagrah. Gandhi does not think it would be prudent to place Satyagrah against caste order during the British Raj or even after India's Independence. Rather, on the caste issues, he proposes the doctrine of least resistance as a matter of principle rather than a time dependent strategy. Gandhi thinks that caste is

an unequal structure between the touchable castes and the untouchable castes.

He argues for changing the upper caste mentalities by an appeal to their change of hearts. He argues that if the upper castes could be convinced with an appeal to the principle of ancestral calling, it would be possible for them to believe in the redundancy of untouchability. According to this principle, we are doing different functions as our duties to a village community as ordained by our ancestors. Through an alternative education of upper castes, it would be possible to convince them that different castes do mere duties to their ancestors. So, there is no low or polluted duty and high or pure duty. All caste functions are duties as per the ancestral calling. Once upper castes are convinced with a notion of duty in every manual labour, it would be possible for them to remove from their minds that some groups do menial labour or polluted functions. All functions would be seen as necessary duties to ancestors. Once upper castes are convinced with this doctrine, they would also undertake street sweeping and so on as Gandhi himself did. That would bring an end to untouchability. So, Satyagraha against untouchability is not necessary. Ambedkar calls Gandhi's doctrine as the one of least resistance.¹

Both Ambedkar and Lohia remain dissatisfied with Gandhi's doctrine of least resistance. Both argue that Gandhi, as a matter of principle, denies the relevance of Satyagrah against caste inequalities. If you look around India's history, it is full of such Satyagraha resistance movements against caste system, so argues Ambedkar. By denying Satyagraha

against caste, Gandhi denies the relevance of this history to contemporary egalitarians. Ambedkar argues that Gandhi's call for abolition of untouchability amounts to a case of limited egalitarianism. Lohia too argues that Gandhi's Satyagraha may be extended against caste system and socialism, unlike Gandhism, may explore the possibility of policy action against caste inequalities, a theme in which Ambedkar is equally concerned. Thus, we find some common threads in their assessment of Gandhism vis à vis caste order. Both agree the Gandhism reduces caste into existence of untouchables and nullifies any concerted policy or political action against caste system. Both agree that it would be necessary to view caste order as power structure and offer an all rounded critique of caste so that it would be entirely abolished.

For both of them, the abolition of caste order is more important than the abolition of untouchability of the Dalits as Gandhism envisages. Both agree that Gandhism is an egalitarian ideology on the caste question but it has limited utilities in a democratic nation determined to abolish caste inequalities. In fact, Ambedkar, unlike his followers, clearly demarcates three egalitarian ideologies against caste: Gandhism, Marxism and Buddhism. For him as also for Lohia, it would be possible to learn from Gandhism and Marxism while trying to establish an egalitarian ideology, even though lessons from them may have limited applicability in relation to caste order in India. So, I submit, Ambedkar was not anti Gandhi as made out by his followers today. In a dialectical thinking, there are no pro or anti Gandhi positions.²

Both give credit to Gandhi for

discovering Satyagraha as a means of people's struggle against injustice and for popularizing Satyagraha at a pan Indian level. Lohia assumes that due to Gandhi, it would be now possible to place Satyagraha against caste system, even though Gandhi might have placed "the change of heart" doctrine in relation to caste or property disputes.³ For, due to Gandhism, Satyagraha is now etched on to people's memory at a national level. People would never forget its relevance in their own social and political struggles. There is no blind anti Gandhism in Ambedkar as made out by his followers today, even though he is sharply critical of Gandhism.

A system of graded inequalities

Let us focus on Ambedkar's programme of annihilation of caste as a prelude to our discussion of Lohia's plea for the destruction of caste order. Ambedkar argues clearly: Gandhism has a weak understanding of caste inequalities and moreover has a weaker understanding of solutions to caste order. We have seen the latter aspect and now shall examine the former aspect. Gandhi identifies untouchability of the Dalits as a major problem in the caste order. He is for the abolition of untouchability, even though he prescribes no political action. But, he forgets that untouchability is not simply limited to the Dalit's social experience. Untouchability is also experience of the so called touchable castes and all women across caste order. By simply ignoring this simple point, Gandhi misses the essence of caste system which consists of grades of untouchability against several human beings, not simply Dalits. Caste is defined by untouchability practiced within "touchable" castes

and against untouchable castes rather than by the position of untouchables as Gandhi imagines. One of the broadest definitions of caste system as a system of graded inequalities is thus found in Ambedkar. In comparison, the Gandhian conception of caste pales into romantic narrow mindedness. Let us elaborate this feature of caste as captured by Ambedkar briefly.⁴

Caste is simply not a system of inequalities between castes of purity and castes of pollution. Such a neat division of labour is not there in the caste system. There are grades of pollution, followed by rules of precedence in matters of education, religion, commensality, marriage, economy and so on. Such rules of precedence exclude not merely Dalits from various sectors of human life. They also exclude Sudras, Vaisyas, non Vedic Brahmins as well as all women across caste divisions. Caste is thus a hierarchy of grades/ranks of people subdivided by the different rules of precedence in matters governing human life, where the Vedic Brahmin male occupies the top of hierarchy with Dalits occupying its bottom. Let us see how rules of precedence occur in education under the caste order. Vedas and Puranas were seen as two different sources of knowledge. Vedic Brahmins occupied superior status over Puranic Brahmins as the Vedic knowledge preceded Puranic knowledge. Brahmin male occupied superior status over Brahmin women in matters of knowledge. Women of any caste and all non Brahmin males were excluded from education system by caste practices.

Violation of such rules by any

group invited proportionate physical punishment. Such punishment rules varied from region to region. If you recall, Ambedkar's submission against Gandhi is that the latter ignores the prevalence of untouchability among "touchable" castes. Even non Vedic Brahmins and all Brahmin women are not supposed to know the Vedas. The Vedas must be kept away from all these groups. Forms of untouchability are practiced across all "touchable" castes. Even, untouchables are divided by rules of precedence. Malas think that they are superior to Madigas in Andhra Pradesh and assume that the latter are untouchables. Not merely in education but also in all other spheres of life, such rules of precedence prevail, thus creating a variety of untouchability strata across caste order. That is why Gandhi's call for abolition of untouchability of untouchable castes or Dalits is a weak solution, further weakened by his plea for change of hearts of the upper castes. Thus, Ambedkar pleads that all round Satyagraha must be conducted to destroy the essence of caste which lies in varieties of untouchability created by the social system. We shall leave Ambedkar here. It should be enough to indicate how Ambedkar examines caste as a hierarchy of power.

Caste and its moral order

As I said before, Lohia does not explore how caste is organized as a graded hierarchy. I am not aware if Lohia knew Ambedkar's richer analysis. Most probably, unwittingly, he examines what is left out by Ambedkar. Why the caste order manages to survive in the midst of resistance against caste and foreign conquests? This is most important

question for Lohia, "Castes have endured over thousands of years".⁵R M Lohia,

He goes on to explore how caste creates legitimization processes so that lower castes feel that they are indeed lower, and so on. He goes on to explore how caste creates insurance or social security for which people do not have to pay a premium. How castes produce a split personality in average Hindus without a stable and sincere voice on anything? How castes disunite and divide masses who witnessed several foreign conquests by tiny armies whereas vast masses remained passive? No foreign conquests propelled them for mass action due to caste divisions. For, he continuously looks for mobilization of people for socialist action in the midst of passivity of masses imposed by caste or in the midst of social security given by caste? Can socialists learn from some positive features by destroying the negative features of caste system? What strategy they ought to have to do so? What policy actions are possible under socialism?

Provision for social security

To cite Lohia: "Caste is presumably the world's largest insurance for which one does not pay a formal or regular premium. Solidarity is always there, when everything else fails".⁶ Caste provides for social solidarity in matters of child bearing, marriage, funeral obsequies, feasts and other rituals. Men belonging to the same caste assist each other at these decisive hours of needs. But Lohia does not fail to notice that caste based security for which we may not have to pay any premium for insurance protection does also practice "excluding men of other castes" who are reduced to be

peripheral of such social security system. This system of insurance without any cost or premium makes the system more resilient and durable in the eyes of its members only. But it practices segregation in providing social security to needy people from other castes.

I remember one incident from Aska, a small town in Orissa. One Komati (trader) family was not able to arrange their daughter's wedding due to financial difficulties. The Komati Pentha arranged money for her marriage and finally arranged a boy for her too. She was "happily" married off after sometime. Such solidarity is found in the caste associations throughout India. Brahmin Associations give fellowship to the poor Brahmin students in the schools. Kamma Sangams do similar things. Do we ever come across beggars among Komatis or Jat Sikhs? The Langar houses or Penthas take care of such people. Such activities provide legitimacy and strength to caste order. Caste continues to survive despite many crisis points posed by modernization. This partly explains why caste has survived even the foreign conquests led by Muslims and Christians who came to India with egalitarian ideologies but got adjusted with caste order. And in fact, due to a modernization drive, caste has managed to survive in urban areas by getting organized as associations offering many kinds of assistance at times of financial crisis. The more a caste group has money, the more it is organized with association offices and schemes of assistance for needy members of its own. To use a more fashionable term, I would say that caste provides for social capital networks. But such social capital networks are restricted within a particular caste stratum.⁷

Can socialism learn from this community network to weaken caste order instead of relying on the state power to do so as at present? I assume Lohia is interested in inferring such a question from his investigation into caste system, though I must confess I have not been able to see such an explicit query asked by him. Otherwise, why should be a socialist leader interested in telling us about this networking aspect of caste? Lohia does not ask such a sharp question, as I am afraid, he purely relies on the state/party model of socialism to overcome barriers of caste system while offering social security. His model of solution converges with that of Nehruvian liberals and communist parties, even though the way he examines caste system frontally, his analysis differs from them. Lohia does not share what he calls their "wordy opposition" to caste.

System of moral subordination

Another aspect of caste system is the way it survives with the support from lower castes. The upper castes do not have to dominate them with the rule of gun. Lower castes justify their subordination by discovering folklore of their own and offer justification of their own subordination through a moral discourse innovated by themselves rather than by upper castes. Lower castes have legends and myths that justify their lowly situation and transform it into a symbol of sacrifice and luster. Lohia gives an illustration from fisher folk's life. The Kaivarts (fisher folk caste) who presumably number more than one crore population tell stories about their mythical ancestors, who were simple, ungreedy, brave and generous and who lost everything to other ancestors of Kshatriyas and

other high castes because of their greater greed and deceit. The current lot of misery is attributed to the unending succession of sacrificial acts for the sake of high principles. This sacrifice is seen not as an active principle that seeks change but as a passive submission to the caste order. This sort of mythical sacrifices is wide spread among the lower castes. They secure their subordination.⁸

Weakens nation

Lohia argues that a great misreading of Indian history is that foreigners could invade and conquer India due to our internal quarrels and intrigues. This is plain nonsense. The single most cause is caste system which produced imbecility and passivity among masses who were hardly interested in nation's tragedies. Caste is the single most reason why national feeling, national solidarity and action in preventing national tragedies could not develop and still do not develop. Unless caste is destroyed new India could not revive. India would remain weak, not due to intrigues but due to caste inequalities. If political parties play with caste cards in electoral democracy, nation would remain dormant and docile. India would not be seen as a developed nation. So in Lohia's estimate caste and nation do have negative correlation. If one remains strong, the other remains weak. If caste remains strong, people's languages, their housing and general styles of living will remain undeveloped and their mind will have imbecility due to inferiority complexes instilled in them over thousand years.⁹ A vibrant India cannot be born in such situations. So the destruction of caste is more important for nation building.

NOTES

¹B R Ambedkar, “An Anti-Untouchability Agenda”, in V Rodrigues (ed.), *The Essentials Writings of B R Ambedkar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002.

²Ambedkar would have agreed with Lohia that he is not anti- or pro-Gandhi. See R M Lohia, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyasa, Hyderabad, Second Edition, 1978, p. 364.

³Ibid, pp. 157-158.

⁴B R Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste”, and “Reply to the Mahatma”, in V Rodrigues (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, 2002, pp. 263-320.

⁵R M Lohia, **The Caste System**, Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyasa, Hyderabad, 1964, p. 81.

⁶R M Lohia, *op. cit.*, n.5, p. 80.

⁷Hans Blomkvist, “Traditional communities, Caste and Democracy: The Indian Mystery”, Paul Dekker and Eric M Uslaner (eds.), *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*, Routledge, London, 2001.

⁸R M Lohia, *op. cit.*, n.5, p. 84.

⁹R M Lohia, *op. cit.*, n.5, pp. 83-84.

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(To be concluded)

(Continued from Page 8)

be declared double-member. If the legislators are sincerely genuine they could even submit an agreed list.

At present, of course, a fresh process has again to be initiated in Parliament, because the previous Reservation Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the previous Lok Sabha in 2014.

In the just finished election propaganda in Uttar Pradesh, not one party, including the so-called seculars, with the exception of the Socialist Party (India), included the item of reservation for women in their election manifestoes. Can such male chauvinism be allowed to exist in our country?

With the 2019 Parliamentary elections coming, is it not time for the women leadership in both the Congress and BJP, through Sonia Gandhi and Sushma Swaraj to jointly clench their fists and warn all the parties that they will no longer tolerate injustice and neglect to continue? They may legitimately continue their differences on other subjects in the light of their own respective programmes.

But let them give a rallying cry against the male chauvinists, like the one given by Spanish freedom fighters in the 1936 Civil War—“*no pasaran*, you shall not pass”, i.e. continuing this injustice by not passing the Women’s Reservation

Bill, otherwise the joint fight will continue and openly. They should request Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati to join hands with them on the issue of Women’s Reservation Bill.

Let me recall that Dr Rammanohar Lohia had opined that reservation for women was an instrument of social engineering—he could never have suggested splitting the strength of women’s quota by further splitting them in sub quotas.

Time is short. Only an effort by these four women political leaders will see through the Women’s Reservation Bill.

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**Communalism Trumps
Social Justice for Now**
Sandeep Pandey

**Musings of a Secular
and Liberal Indian**
Uday Dandavate

Tribute to Rabi Ray
Chandrabhal Tripathi

**Lohia's Immanent Critique
of Caste – II**
Arun Kumar Patnaik

Defeat in UP

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Between The Lines

Back to Square One

Kuldip Nayar

We are back to square one. The Supreme Court has advised the two parties, those who want the Babri Masjid to be reconstructed and those who claim that the site is that of Lord Rama's. In its judgment, the court has advised the different parties to sit together and sort out the problems through negotiations.

One surprising part of the advice is that the Chief Justice of India is willing to mediate for an out-of-court settlement. He has said "give a bit and take a bit. Make an effort to sort it out." He points out that these are issues of sentiments and he can even step aside and let his brother judges to decide. How can the chief justice or, for that matter, his brother judges mediate because their very office is supposed to be above controversies?

Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu icon, has been elected as the leader of the Uttar Pradesh legislative party with a huge margin and installed as chief minister. Whether the credit for securing this majority in UP goes to Prime Minister Narendra

Modi or to the Yogi, who has the reputation of being a hardcore Hindu leader, it shows that Hindutva is sweeping the country. Obviously, the RSS is behind the move.

In the past, the RSS always stayed distant although it was the final arbiter. But now it is so confident of the Hindu majority, particularly after the BJP swept elections in UP, that it doesn't mind coming out in the open. It is already preparing for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Its chief Mohan Bhagwat minces no words when he tells the swayamsewaks to be prepared to meet the increasing attacks on the RSS and get ready for the next Lok Sabha polls.

In the face of what has happened in recent assembly elections, the RSS fears that the opposition parties might join hands together to fight it out. In such a scenario, the BJP-led NDA may lose ground. The RSS, or for that matter, the BJP knows that despite getting 42 percent of vote share in UP, the combined efforts of the other parties fetched 55 percent

Communalism Trumps Social Justice for Now

Sandeep Pandey

of vote share. It means that the non-BJP parties would have to come together. This doesn't seem possible at present.

The bigger danger may force them to sink their differences and fight the saffron brigade. As Nani Palkhiwala, the late eminent jurist said, when the house is on fire you don't not think whether to save the drawing room or dining room. You want to save the entire house. He was referring to the looming threat of the erstwhile Jan Sangh getting a majority in parliament. It is another matter that Janata Party, comprising most Jan Sanghis, came to power at the centre in 1977. But the sticking point was to sever relations with the RSS.

However, the Jan Sangh elements which are now a part of the ruling BJP, refused to snap ties with the RSS. Subsequently, L.K. Advani walked out and founded a separate party, the BJP. Liberal elements in the party like Atal Behari Vajpayee, too, left the Janata Party. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise that his sobering influence did not allow the hardcore elements to take over when the party came to power.

It, however, shows that secularism has not taken roots in the country. It is unfortunate that the independence struggle, aimed at a secular democratic country that included this noble thought in the preamble of the constitution, seems to have gone awry. The Hindutva elements, slowly and gradually, swept the country. Today, you can see that soft-Hindutva has spread even in Kerala where the BJP, for the first time, has made inroads.

(Continued from Page 3)

After the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations by the Vishwanath Pratap Singh government at the centre in 1989 it has been only an Other Backward Class or Scheduled Caste leader in Uttar Pradesh at the helm, except for a five year period from 1997 to 2002 when the only Bhartiya Janata Party government formed after the Babri Masjid demolition had two upper caste chief ministers, Ram Prakash Gupta and Rajnath Singh. Post-1989 period was called the era of Social Justice indicating that communities which were not politically well represented or at least not in proportion to their presence in population got a chance to be in power. A popular slogan of Bahujan Samaj Party was 'numerically higher should have proportionate participation.' Before 1989 it was mainly the upper caste, a Brahmin or a Thakur, who headed the governments. The social justice politics was seen as a successful example of empowerment of the marginalised sections of society and Mayawati's ascension to chief ministership was nothing short of a miracle, probably the rarest example in a democracy where a person hailing from the lowest rungs of society, that too a woman, rose to power based on Constitutionally backed electoral process. UP's example was quoted as a successful model to fight the politics of communalism, for example, in the state of Gujarat. But the reverse has happened. The politics of communalism has defeated that of

social justice. With this is back the upper caste dominance in UP politics. It is an irony but had Yogi Adityanath been declared a chief ministerial candidate before the elections it is not sure whether BJP would have won in an OBC dominated state. To garner the non Yadav OBS votes Keshav Prasad Maurya was made the BJP President in UP. After the voters were tricked into voting for the BJP an upper caste chief minister has been imposed because that is where the BJP's core ideology and hence the vote bank lies. However, this vote bank is insufficient to win elections. BJP also went all out to secure the non-Chamar-Jatav votes from among the dalits this time.

The elite BJP supporter is under the illusion that merit will now take precedence over caste, law and order will be better and corruption will come to an end. It is abundantly clear that BJP could not have won without caste machinations and has replaced social justice politics by a retrogressive combination of entrenchment of the pernicious caste system and explosive communalism. The chief minister faces many cases including seven under seven serious Indian Penal Code sections. He has two charges of promoting enmity between different groups, two charges of injuring or defiling place of worship, one charge of criminal intimidation and more. Once when he was arrested by the District Magistrate of Gorakhpur he wept in the

Parliament alleging threat to his life. It did not probably occur to him that victims of violence, inflicted by his followers, or their families similarly may have felt threatened. Deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has eleven cases against him including 15 serious IPC sections. 20 out of 44 ministers have cases pending against them with 17 of them facing serious IPC sections. 35 ministers in the newly appointed cabinet are crorepatas. Is it all hard earned money? Did the candidates spend within the limits prescribed by Election Commission to contest their elections? One can only pity the gullible BJP supporter.

BJP secured 39.7 % votes. With its allies Apna Dal and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party the vote share of alliance went upto 41.4%. Samajwadi Party and BahujanSamaj Party together polled 44% votes. Along with Congress party, the share of secular alliance becomes 50.2% of votes. Hence the politics of social justice still has an upper hand in UP.

In terms of seat share if SP and BSP had formed an alliance, as the then chief minister AkhileshYadav of SP had suggested after the Bihar election results, they would have won 239 seats out of 403 and hence would have defeated BJP convincingly. If we add the Congress party votes to this alliance, number of seats would have gone up to 282 and with the inclusion of other like-minded parties such as the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Communist Party of India, the secular alliance would have won 296 seats. This would have helped realize AkhileshYadav's aspiration of securing 300 seats with the help of alliance partners.

The abovementioned numbers indicate that the game is still not over for SP and BSP if they open up to each other and revive the Mulayam Singh-Kanshiram era alliance. Mayawati, for whom political oblivion looms large, will have to overcome her antipathy towards the SP and contemplate an alliance. In any case she will not have to deal with Mulayam Singh and Shivpal, of whom she may not have very good memories. Akhilesh is a fresh face and she may not have a problem with him. But Akhilesh will probably have to cede

(Continued from Page 2)

As it is, the party has captured the imagination of people which has brought it to power in over dozen states. This also means that the secular party like the Congress has been losing its grip in the states which it ruled once. Even the regional parties are losing their relevance as it happened in UP. Obviously, the BJP has been able to influence the minds of most people. The Rajya Sabha elections look like strengthening the BJP's hands

The assembly elections in states of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh will really show whether the Lok Sabha would be captured by the BJP or not. However, the future is ominous. The revival of Ram mandir issue could shape the future of the country and would polarize the nation further. Yogi Adityanath has repeated the Modi words of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas.'

But the content of the party cannot change overnight. Though the UP chief minister may not be saying it in as many words, he will have to follow the RSS and the BJP agenda of the Ram temple at

the leadership of alliance to her as she comes from a more depressed background and is a senior leader. This is the sacrifice Akhilesh will have to make if at all he is serious about displacing BJP from power.

The BJP is trying to subvert the Constitutional values of socialism, secularism, sovereignty and even democracy. There is a need for parties and people with belief in such values to come together and defeat the mischievous designs of Hindutva politics.

Ayodhya, sooner or later. If the all-powerful Yogi has been installed as chief minister by the BJP high command, it must be with a clear-cut intention.

Whatever may the outcome, the court cannot decide on what is apparently a matter of faith. That is perhaps why the CJI has offered to mediate for an out-of-court settlement. But then there have been several attempts since 1986, involving five governments of different colours. It was mainly because both parties seem to be adamant since they don't want to make any compromises. Under the circumstances, another attempt by the CJI may not help.

Except for the BJP, none of the other parties is enthused over the offer by the Supreme Court bench. It looks as if the apex court also is not clear in its mind how to settle the dispute. This long-ranging issue needs a quick solution for the comforts of all parties concerned. But, unfortunately, it doesn't seem to coming, at least in the near future.

Notebook

Defeat in UP

I should make it clear that this piece is not a comment on the recent assembly elections, but is an effort to take note of the defeat of the Samajwadi Party in UP, and draw some lessons.

The Samajwadi Party has been defeated, and defeated decisively. It was in power for a full term and has met this ignominious fate. While there will be many analyses, from simple to more multi-dimensional and complex to explain the defeat, but with an objective of deducing some lessons for the socialists from the fall out, I have relied on common sense rather than highly sophisticated analyses.

There will be people who will blame the war in the Yadavpariwar or the alliance with the Congress for defeat, but those who do this will only be fooling themselves. Such explanations do not yield an effective response to such an overwhelming defeat. The first thing that is to be realized is that this defeat is not just the defeat of the Samajwadi Party, but is the defeat of all socialists and also of those who call themselves secularists. For those socialists who are not with the Samajwadi Party, to point out that the Samajwadi Party was not fully socialist or something similar will be creating an illusion that if the party were a little more socialist, it could have done better. Let's realize that in the public mind the Samajwadi Party was identified as a Socialist Party and hence all socialists will have to accept that the defeat of the Samajwadi Party is their defeat too, at least, in the public mind. Once this is accepted, socialists will be able to draw appropriate lessons.

As a first step, socialists should accept that the victory of the BJP is the victory of the Gujarat model. In 2014, on the basis of this model, the BJP won the Lok Sabha elections and now in 2017, it has won again at the assembly level. Once this is accepted, socialists have to develop a feasible road map to counter this model. The Gujarat model is essentially based on Hindu-Muslim polarization. The task therefore gets defined as how to prevent such polarization from happening. It should also be realized that the term secularism has taken on a new meaning in this country, thanks to the BJP and the RSS. The masses – an overwhelming number of them – have come to understand this term as little else but anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim. And therefore it will be good for the socialists not to fight their battle against Hindu-Muslim polarization under the banner of secularism. The moment they talk of secularism and posit it against the Gujarat model, they walk into a trap laid by the RSS-BJP.

The socialists should define a new, different ground for their battle and that can be the bread and butter issues for the masses, both Hindu and Muslim. Socialists will have to identify these issues and concentrate on them and fight till the end to solve them. One of these could be to fight for free, compulsory and equal education of quality for all – the rich as well as the poor. When the children of the rich and the poor study together, there is a certainty that the quality of education will not deteriorate. They can demand affordable health care and oppose its being handed

over to private sector. These two issues, education and health care, can be defined by socialists as essential infrastructure for development.

Another issue that socialists could take up is decent work for all. Almost all agree that the current model of development does not generate jobs. There is growth but it is a jobless growth, and given the demographic bulge, this can create an explosive situation. Socialists will have to identify and popularize an alternate development model which generates jobs, jobs for the children of the common man, and not just for those of the elite. Socialists are in a better position to do this because their thinking and upbringing has been sensitized by the thinking of the freedom movement. That movement had thrown up a large number of ideas for eradication of poverty and for full employment. Unfortunately, the country did not pursue these ideas after independence and started mimicking the West and forced a model on us of development, which is capital intensive. This needs correcting and socialists can do this, should do this.

The masses are aware of the obscene inequality that the current development model has thrown up and they will welcome any steps that would reduce it. The stoic acceptance of the pain due to demonetization should be read not merely as welcoming an attack on the black money but also as a step towards less inequality. While demonetization will not achieve more equality, socialists should work out strategies for reducing inequality and

press for these. During the freedom movement people were told that the rich can only have ten times more income than that of the poor. Socialists will have to popularize this once again. The masses will readily accept this and support any step that reduces inequality. This will require planned economy and socialists can demand the restoration of the Planning Commission.

And they should demand public housing. Despite all the noises by the ruling parties to provide housing for the poor, little gets done. The masses should be made to realize that only the state can provide housing to them, not the private sector. The latter will only invest in housing for the rich and this is precisely what is happening.

Socialists should also turn their gaze to rural India and the farmers' suicides. They need to sensitize the fast growing middle class to the fact that the country's economic policies are yielding agricultural distress and suicides. Not to be conscious and affected by these daily suicides is to be highly self-absorbed. The middle class, despite all that those who are for the current model, is sensitive to pain, to deprivation and it will be easy to arouse them to do something for the neglected hinterland. But if socialists wish to succeed in this, they will have to spend at least a few days in a year to go to the villages and participate in the pain of the small and marginal farmers and landless. This is what the freedom fighters did during the freedom movement. They went to rural countryside and settled down there, and it is this that mobilized the masses for freedom. Socialists have a task cut out for them. Are they up to it?

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Musings of a Secular and Liberal Indian

Uday Dandavate

The victory of BJP in recent elections and installation of Adityanath, an unabashed proponent of Hindu Rashtra as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has generated three types of reactions. Liberal and secular sections of India are feeling a combination of dejection, rejection and anger. In the streets of Uttar Pradesh and in many other states of India there is outpouring of celebration that shows an exactly opposite set of emotions - sense of victory over the traitors of Indian nationalism, unabashed joy at assertion of Hindu identity and a hope for better times generated by a Prime Minister who is demonstrating the will and a ruthless resolve to dismantle the old power structure and replace it with his own. I also see a third category of Indians, who is feeling victorious with a sense of having reached the finish line in a race to capturing the imagination of Indian masses in competition with secular and liberal elite of India.

I have been trying to make sense of what I see.

I see that the problem begins with the post-independence era. The leadership of the Congress party under Nehru was essentially the leadership of elite intellectuals disinclined to follow the path of Gandhi, who had a more grounded understanding of the realities of poor and underprivileged India. Had the Congress party followed the egalitarian vision of Gandhi, it would have succeeded in uniting India and offering its own framework of

governance - what Gandhi called Swaraj. It is important to note that Gandhi did not call his vision socialism; the terms and symbols he used in his political discourse were home grown. He also was a spiritual person and made a prayer a part of his political activism - though the core message of his prayer was unity of all sects.

The socialists were more drawn to Gandhi's vision of Swaraj. I truly believe that had Gandhi survived, the socialists who split from the Congress party would have aligned with him. Socialists chose their own course to follow on the path of a more egalitarian grass root level democracy championed by Gandhi. While socialists had their heart in the right place and led several mass movements, they could never keep their flock together and split like an amoeba. Also socialists did not recognize the spiritual ethos of India. They could also not translate the western ideas of democracy, secularism and liberalism into locally relevant lexicon as Gandhi could. Socialists could not even cultivate strong leadership from within the underprivileged masses of India, in effect turning themselves into an isolated group.

The Sangh Parivar, on the other hand, remained clear about its objective of achieving the dream of Hindu Rashtra. As much as Gandhi was a devout spiritual person he became an enemy of the Sangh Parivar for one simple reason - Gandhi was inclusive. Gandhi's politics struck creatively at the root of Sangh Parivar's core source of

power - hatred of Muslims. Masses were drawn to him because he was perceived as a home grown, spiritual person who could unite India. People of all faiths looked up to him. He would have been successful in nurturing the true spirit of Sarva Dharma Parivar. Sangh Parivar never lost sight of its objectives, kept consolidating and cultivating new people, while the socialists kept fragmenting and alienating people with a rhetoric that seemed to challenge the spiritual identity of an average Indian.

Though the Congress party were able to get the word secularism enshrined in the Constitution, albeit during the Emergency, they failed, and the Socialists too, in getting people to understand and embrace the true meaning of secularism - separation of religion and politics and freedom to practice every faith (and the freedom to be an atheist). The Sangh Parivar was able to twist the meaning to their advantage by branding secularism anti-Hindu, liberalism anti-national and environmentalism anti-development. The Indian ethos of Sarv Dharm Samabhav was sacrificed.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's contribution to the rise of BJP as the mainstream party cannot be undermined. He made the BJP appealing to the masses and created a space for increasing the presence of the BJP by gaining respectability in the company of other political stalwarts. From being branded the ideology that killed Gandhi to becoming a party of contemporary Hindu nationalism, the BJP usurped the place of home grown spiritual transformation that Gandhi created but pursued the path that he wanted India to avoid.

Lal Krishna Advani pulled the BJP out of the clandestine phase of warfare by openly leading the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement. It was time to symbolically strike at the real enemy - diversity of India and replace it with supremacy of Hindu identity.

Narendra Modi in the meanwhile was fast emerging as the ultimate weapon in the armory of the Sangh Parivar. He was able to harness anti-Muslim sentiment and convert it into a Hindu force. There is no doubt that Narendra Modi knows how to tap into modern technology and hire professionals to provide results. Though Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh initiated policies of liberalization and globalization of Indian economy, Narendra Modi was able to quickly assume the mantle of champion of capitalism and convince his followers that he will speed up the development agenda and give Hindus a central place in the new order.

The ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Gujarat, in fact, gave the BJP and Modi a political advantage. While his role in the riots was not proved, in the minds of masses he was seen as the one responsible for creating a psychological environment in which minorities would have to fall in line or perish. The much touted Gujarat model of governance acquired a new meaning and acceptance - a polity in which Hindus would live with dignity and reap the benefits of development, while others could expect a share in the benefits as long as they accepted secondary citizenship. Modi conducted the pilot study in Gujarati and scaled it up nationwide with support from his friends in big business who opened their purse strings to provide unlimited cash flow to build the new edifice.

Looking back at the developments, I remain unshaken in my beliefs. I believe in our primary role as responsible elements of nature's ecosystem. Ecological considerations must primarily drive our sense of identity. We must respect that diversity is the foundation of nature's design. We must respect the fact that every living being (that includes every element of nature) has the right to survive and we hold a responsibility to contribute to the beauty and harmony of our environment by constructively participating in the evolutionary process. In this process there will be conflicts there will be discomfort but a sense of accommodation and appreciation for the need to preserve the larger harmony would help us live life sustainably.

I believe anyone who espouses supremacy of one section of the society over another, of one species over the other, regardless of who enjoys numerical majority is hurting the cause of sustainable evolution. I also believe spirituality (not religiosity) gives strength and purpose to people as they go about resolving conflicts and finding a meaningful path in life. I believe consideration to local culture and language is important when building a participatory democracy.

Turning back to the challenges of responding creatively and positively to the success of Hindu Nationalism in India, I believe the solution is to nurture in people a sense of inevitability in developing a society that is glued with love and spirituality as opposed to hatred, one that is driven to prosper with frugal and responsible consumption of resources and is committed to preserve the diversity around us. It's a long path but worth taking.

Tribute to Rabi Ray

Chandrabhal Tripathi

On March 15, 2017 a condolence meeting was held at India International Centre, New Delhi, to honour the memory of the great unassuming socialist leader, Rabi Ray, former Speaker of Lok Sabha. A large impressive portrait of Rabi Babu was projected on the screen on the stage. No formalities, no chairs on the dais. In consonance with the legendary simplicity of the departed leader even the practice of offering garlands and flowers at the portrait of the leader, involving waste of time and money, was done away with. The speakers spoke from the floor.

Many speakers who paid rich tributes to the socialist leader bringing out his human qualities included eminent people from diverse fields like Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Kuldip Nayar, Muchkund Dubey, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Prof. Anand Kumar, Suhas Borkar, Sumit Chakravartty, Dr. Sunilam, Dr. Prem Singh. I too was asked to speak perhaps because among those who attended the meeting I had the longest association with him. In 1953 we were among the delegates to the Foundation Conference of the All India Samajwadi Yuwak Sabha. Though I had to join Government service in the very beginning of 1959 in the Constitutional organisation of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, I continued to have regular and cordial relations with several old socialist friends of mine. It is a coincidence that some of my prominent friends were born four years earlier than me in 1926: Rabi Ray, Ramakrishna Hegde

(thrice Chief Minister of Karnataka) and Surendra Mohan (socialist ideologue). Chandra Shekhar, a friend since 1947, who became Prime Minister in 1990-91, was born in 1927.

Rabi Ray was a symbol of Odisha's culture. The Odiya people are the most peace loving people in the country, may be since the days of Asoka and having developed abhorrence for war like the Japanese and the Germans after World War II. Modern ideas of justice and equality and fight against exploitation reflected in political, social, literary and cultural movements of Odisha have contributed towards establishment of an egalitarian non-violent democratic society in this cultural region. It produced stalwart socialist leaders like Sarangdhar Das, Nabakrushna Choudhury and Surendranath Dwivedi. Following in their footsteps Rabi Ray never used strong or derogatory words for anyone and in this respect he was a follower of Acharya Narendra Deva, the great Marxist and Indian socialist leader, who impressed anyone and everyone with his 'shaaleenataa' and for whom Rabi Babu had great personal regard.

The political class is well aware of the rich contribution of Rabi Ray as a socialist leader and a parliamentarian culminating in his elevation to the high office of Speaker of Lok Sabha where he distinguished himself as a non-partisan but firm presiding officer of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) of the biggest democracy in the world.

Here I would like to mention a couple of institutions seemingly non-political in character but intrinsically committed to high ideals of non-violence, democracy, social justice, equality, peace and communal harmony with which Rabi Babu was inseparably connected. The first of these two organisations was Lok Shakti Abhiyan which was set up by Rabi Babu in 1997 against corruption in high places, excessive centralisation and a decadent consumerist culture.

The other organisation I wish to mention is the Society for Communal Harmony that was set up by Dr. Bishambhar Nath Pande and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi aka Maulana Ali Miyan. Before Rabi Babu became its President in 2001 its past Presidents had been Dr. BN Pande, PN Haksar and Sadiq Ali. After the demise of Sadiq Ali my old and close friend, Surendra Mohanji, myself and Abdul Mannan approached Rabi Babu at his Canning Lane residence to request him to accept presidentship of our Society. He was a heart patient and not in good shape. Yet he agreed to shoulder this responsibility and despite his not-so-good health continued to head this organisation for fourteen years. (Rabi Babu was succeeded by Somnath Chatterjee as President of SCH and our present President is Kuldip Nayar.)

On a personal note, I will never forget Rabi Babu invariably introducing me to anyone, big or small, as a person about whom Dr.

Rammanohar Lohia, had written. With reference to our historic non-violent democratic student movement in 1953 over the issue of autonomy of students' unions in Universities, in which about 14,000 students went to jail, three persons were killed in police firing and ultimately the powerful State Government under the leadership of the towering personality of Pt. GB Pant had to accept our genuine demands, Dr. Lohia wrote a long article captioned 'The Lucknow Revolt' in *The National Herald* (Lucknow) and, *inter alia*, wrote a laudatory para about me. It was later included in one of his books. The prolific and serious writer that Dr. Lohia was, he seldom wrote about individuals. I am aware of the case of a leading kisan leader of Ghazipur, Dalsingar Dube, whom the police had beaten so badly that they left him thinking him to be dead. Dr. Lohia wrote on him with the caption 'The Hero of Ghazipur'.

It was very embarrassing. Rabi Babu would always say to me: "Chandrabhal, you are very lucky. You were a bright leader but you left politics and joined Government service. Dr. Sahab made you famous. We laboriously worked with and for him for decades but he has not written anything about us anywhere." In my tributes to this senior socialist comrade, who always treated me like his younger brother and always used to address me with 'tum', I mention this episode with some hesitation.

During my posting at Bhubaneswar (September 1980-March 1985) I regularly met him and his devoted wife, Dr. Saraswati Swain, Professor at Cuttack Medical College, and our common friend, Kulamani Mahapatra, at Cuttack. Kulmani and Rabi Ray were the two most prominent student leaders at

Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, where they unfurled the national flag in 1946-47 at this institution till then considered to be a bastion of the British Raj.

There are many good memories of this simple, honest, strong, unassuming Gandhian socialist leader which I shall cherish. The likes of him are rare.

Democratise the Universities and Stop Deaths of Dalit Scholars Like Rohit Vemuala (UoH) and J. Muthukrishnan (JNU)

The death of J. Muthukrishnan, allegedly a suicide by hanging, is a shocking addition to a growing list of young Dalit scholars who have been pushed towards taking the extreme step of ending their young and promising lives because of the hostile environment they are faced with even in India's premier institutions of higher education. Twenty-eight-year-old Muthukrishnan, who was from Tamil Nadu's Salem district, had completed his MPhil from the University of Hyderabad (UoH) in 2015 before joining JNU for his PhD. He had reportedly been active in the protest movement following Rohith Velmula's death. This can no longer be pushed aside as an issue of the individual psychology of the scholars, of their being in depression, or of their psychological ability to face 'tough' circumstances. For these scholars have faced and overcome almost insurmountable conditions of poverty, oppression and social injustice throughout their lives to arrive at a point where only about 8% of them are even able to reach. So we really do not need the patronizing platitudes and crocodile tears shed by upper caste ministers, officials and even sections of the academic community obsessed with ideas of their own prosperous and thriving lives of 'meritorious' achievement. The causes have to be sought far deeper in the disgraceful but persisting caste discrimination and oppression in Hindu society, and the continuing endorsement, encouragement and acceptance of this shameful and appalling practice. The devastating

consequences of this even at institutions of the highest levels of education located in modern metropolis's can no longer be ignored. Claims that modernization and development will themselves lead to solutions to these social prejudices and hatred only reinforce the arrogance of the privileged and weaken any social resolve to fight against such religiously sanctioned intolerance. The causes have also to be sought in the abject failure to punish the perpetrators of such hate-crimes, particularly when they are occupying positions of political and governmental power and responsibility. Had the previous Minister of HRD and the MOS of the Labour Ministry in the Central Government, not been let off by the deceitful ploy of denying the Dalit status of Rohith Vemula who was driven to suicide by their blatant interference and pressure on the university administration, a strong enough message would have gone out that would have intensified the struggle for social justice and made its crusaders more resolute. The recommendations of the Sukhadeo Thorat Committee's report on discrimination against Dalits in educational institutions have not been implemented. Nor has any action been taken to move on the formulation of the Rohith Vemula Act which students from SC, ST, OBC and other marginalized sections have been demanding. The Sukhadeo Thorat Committee's significantly

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Lohia's Immanent Critique of Caste – II

Arun Kumar Patnaik

Split personality among Hindus

Caste induces Hindus to commit biggest hypocrisies. Hindus like all other religious people tell lies to others. What is however unique about Hindus is that they lie to themselves. A Hindu tells lie to oneself as well as to others and feels most comfortable with its success. A Hindu mind, due to caste, is a bundle of contradictions. Unless caste is destroyed in belief and practice, a Hindu mind will no way seek to develop in him/her self a consistent character and sincere moral personality.

There is a very interesting discussion between Lohia and Gandhi. After Lohia returned from Germany, he met Gandhi. Gandhi called him a very brave man. Lohia responded by saying that the tiger is also brave. Gandhi called him a learned man. Lohia laughed it away, by saying that a lawyer who enjoys financial benefits as a result of people's growing conflicts is also learned man. Then, Gandhi concluded that Lohia had "sheel", which can best be translated as "continuity in character". Lohia kept silence.¹⁰

Lohia assumes that once we believe in caste moralities, our personalities will remain retarded and under grown. Thus, on my interpretation of his writings, Lohia thinks that an average Hindu mind (I would extend this idea to average caste conscious Muslims and Christians) may be brave or may be learned. But in

order to have continuity in character, he must believe in a caste free society, must prove that s/he is committed to the destruction of caste in practice. That means s/he must have social networks (friendship, trusts) across caste order. Any restriction of this will be hypocritical. Lohia gives two more examples from public life. He gives the cases of the PM and the President. The PM once over a week told the press that he would resign as nobody listened to him, even though people respected him. Next day, he would continue to hold the post. Next day, again, he would threaten to resign and next moment, he would withdraw. Thus, the PM would indicate how he lacked "sheel". The President was still worse. He was part of the constitutional post which believed in prohibition but he was also the President of the Calcutta Club, founded by Indian bourgeoisie, where wines flowed every evening. A rich Tanti (a weaver caste) wanted to join as member but was refused as he was not from the families of "the Tatas and Birlas".¹¹ And the President was still the chief patron of the Club, even after a weaver from upper class was refused its membership. Neither the President nor the Prime Minister did even blink that whatever they were doing was full of contradictions. Such imbecility of mind occurs because of the lack of commitment to a caste free society. Lohia somehow believed that continuity in character can

arise only if we the Hindus (or even non Hindus) are committed to the destruction of caste order in belief and social practice.

This theme remained dear to his writings and personality throughout his life. Let us devote time to this issue which was closer to his heart. He comes back to this theme in several of his writings. Lohia's argument about an average Hindu personality believing in caste order as a bundle of contradictions was anticipated by D D Kosambi, the Marxist historian. Kosambi argues that the average Hindu is like a python which assimilates contradictions, without attempting to resolve them. Caste order is indeed based on this kind of assimilation, without any attempt to resolve their contradictions. Contradictions surface and resurface, without any attempt to resolve them. Contradictions between Vedic Brahmin and non Vedic Brahmin, contradiction between Brahmin male and Brahmin female, contradiction between each Sudra caste trying to claim purity against pollution of other Sudra castes, contradiction within Dalit castes and contradiction between Dalits and non Dalits. If we take the case of the Lord Shiva's entourage, it will be very clear what Kosambi means. Let us examine closely what constitutes Shiva's entourage. In this entourage, we have different elements who are mutually opposed to each other. We have a bull, a cobra, an

elephant god with a rat in his convoy. We have Parvathi with a lion in her convoy. Quite a few of these characters induce us to believe in set of contradictions that our caste minds assimilate, without any attempt to resolve them. If we go deeper, you may find that caste order evolved by subjugating and assimilating different tribes with their different cults like snake cult, Basava (bull) cult, elephant cult and so on, thus produced an entourage of Shiva. In the process of preserving their cults, the tribes got assimilated into caste based occupations and a Hindu pantheon was established.¹² Sastras and Puranas began justifying this caste order and prescribed rules of precedence for different people differently, a point we have already seen from Ambedkar. Caste and Hinduism are essentially about assimilating contradictions without any attempt to resolve them. I do not wish to equate Hinduism with caste order. But there is a caste core of the Hindu social order which is also a core of the converts from Hinduism to Islam and also to Christianity in post Independent India.¹³

Lohia argues that an average Hindu personality is hypocritical. Like any other foreigner, he tells lies to others. But he is more than this. He also lies to himself.¹⁴ Lohia believes that this personality trait is the product of caste order. If I take this as a working hypothesis, I find his argument very interesting. Lohia gives some more examples from marriage. For example, a Telugu Brahmin boy may marry a Kannada Brahmin girl and may claim that their marriage is “pan Indian”. According to Lohia, such a marriage is actually a pan Brahmin

marriage rather than pan Indian marriage. This is a hypocritical claim. Such hypocrisies are rampant in caste society. Similarly an Oriya Kandayata gets married with an Oriya Chasa and calls this inter caste marriage. This is marriage within “touchable” castes and can hardly be called as inter caste. We can probably think of our contemporary examples. Politically, a Mala may claim that he is a Dalit but does not hesitate to excommunicate Madigas and their assertions for self identity, thus debunking his entire claim for a Dalit identity. Similarly Madigas may perpetrate discrimination against Erukulas and Erukulas against Chenchus. Such hypocrisy - from social or political life is plenty in caste order spreading from its top to bottom. These are all cases of a split personality of a person or a group owing to the peculiarity of caste contradictions whose resolution is not sought by them.

Classes oscillate as castes

In a way reminiscent of Gramsci’s model of reverse appropriation, Lohia suggests that Western classes also oscillate towards caste order, even though caste order is uniquely Indian. Gramsci argues that European ruling classes, after colonial experiences, readopt caste’s segregated forms to counter working class aspirations for equality. Gramsci hints that the Western ruling classes reinvent even caste-like language against class struggle. Caste like rigidities, privileges, imbecilities and excommunication exist in German, American and Soviet societies.¹⁵ Similarities exist between castes and classes in certain matters. Faced with class struggle since 1848 till

1990 (the period of ‘transformism’), classes shut the door against the lower order and develop rigid and exclusive forms. After 1848, the moment of the spectre of communism, the ruling classes were afraid of assimilating ‘new elements’, so argues Gramsci. (Dainotto, 2013: 84) Gramsci argues that the concept of class alone cannot explain this history. Marxists need to use caste in relation to class in those periods of crisis of hegemony. (Dainotto, Ibid: 85)

Caste is ‘immobile’ class as Lohia suggests. His formulation is akin to what Ambedkar calls caste as ‘enclosed’ class system. Lohia continues, when Western ruling classes develop enclosures against the initiatives of subaltern strata for equality in market, production, language, culture and politics, caste-like structures re-appear in all these spheres. Lohia recounts a form of enclosure (racial) in the market place in the USA. For example, like India’s untouchable castes, the American black people live in ghettos and cannot visit hotels marked for white population which he himself experienced in the USA when he visited an “all-white” cafeteria in Jackson in the Mississippi state in 1964. He was blocked at the entrance by the owner, ably assisted by the police, under “the rules of privacy”. By merely having purchasing power is not enough in such situations. A culture of segregation, practised by one’s colour or birth, exists everywhere.¹⁶ Caste like barriers are created by people in liberal democratic class societies, even though people may believe in equality for everybody. In such situations, classes oscillate towards castes. So a struggle against caste barriers is simultaneously a struggle

against class inequalities. There is however a subtle difference. In class struggle, socialism is concerned with equality or distribution of resources, whereas socialism is concerned with justice or dignity of each human being in all anti caste resistance.¹⁷ But class struggle must oscillate towards caste struggle as classes veer towards caste system. Otherwise, we may end up in socialism as existed in the then Soviet Union, without any concern for justice, so argues Lohia. Thus anti caste movements concerned with justice issues are basically international by nature, and are not just India centered.

If we recall, there was a huge debate on this issue in India in 2001. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Tolerance (WCAR), was being organized by the United Nations in Durban in 2001, when the NDA government was in power. Both the national government and the Sarkari intellectuals did not want to internationalise the caste question, and refused to participate in the WCAR in 2001.¹⁸ They claimed that caste is not same as race and tried to argue that caste is uniquely an Indian phenomenon and thereby should be delinked from the concerns of international black people's movements.¹⁹ Even if the history of caste is not the same as that of race, a point made by Ambedkar against Tamil Dalit intellectuals, Lohia would have argued that the Sarkari intellectuals tried to prevent India's anti caste movements to learn concerns of justice raised by Black movements.

If they have similar concerns of justice – opposing forms of segregation on the grounds of

human dignity, then such issues are international rather than national. They have ample scope to learn about moral, political, ideological doctrines of justice from each other. Lohia argues that caste question is concerned with justice, whereas class question is concerned with equality. So a struggle for equality must be interlinked with a struggle for justice, if democratic socialism must avoid the disastrous path of Soviet socialism under the Bolshevik party which was singularly concerned with "class". Incidentally, Ambedkar raises a similar concern against Marxism, for the latter is singularly concerned with equality by ignoring liberty and justice. Movements for justice must be internationalized along with movements for equality. Internal oscillation must take place in between these two social movements and must provide feedback to each other.

Reconstructing fables

It is indeed Lohia's creative imagination to have read internal caste contradiction in fables or myths. After discussing a 'history' or philosophy of caste, let us now pay attention to Lohia's engagement with fables of Brahminism/Jativad.

Three forms of opposition

Lohia argues that there are three kinds of opposition to caste order. First, there are ones who believe in the wordy opposition to caste like Nehruvian liberals, the communists and the Praja Socialist Party. Second, there are those who believe in partial opposition to caste by the Sudras like the DK politics in South during his time or Yadava politics of the North during our time. Third, there are those who believe in a

wholesale opposition to caste order. Lohia prefers the third alternative as the first two groups are basically hypocrites. True to his character (Sheel), he prefers a broad based opposition to caste involving Dalits, Sudras, Muslims and women who are all victims of caste based hypocritical politics. Here, he disagrees with Ambedkar's strategy of relying on Dalits only. Let me elaborate this aspect now.

First, Lohia argues, "The wordy opposition to caste is the loudest in respect of such generalized condemnation of caste as it leaves the existing structure almost intact".²⁰ Raise everybody economically, this thesis claims. It also argues, the caste denies equality of opportunities. So to solve this problem of denial, we must ensure equality of opportunity to everybody irrespective of caste. Communists, the PSP and Nehruvian Congress stand for this thesis. Any other social and political attempt to do away the caste inequalities is condemned as "casteist". As a result, economic equality for Dalits and Sudras are seen as the most important. But this thesis forgets that the policy of equal opportunity in economic sphere has helped the upper caste people entrenched into higher positions. Only the most talented one from among the Sudras and Dalits could be absorbed in the economic sector.

This economic strategy also leaves behind caste traditions in marriage and other aspects of life intact. By condemning anti caste efforts of all other forces by non economic means it fails to see how its economic strategy does not help elevate lower castes into economically equal to upper castes. It has fostered caste based

inequalities in job sector. As a result, 80% of jobs are still cornered by the upper castes who account for 20% of population in India. To quote him, “when more than 4/5th of nation’s vital leadership is traditionally selected from among 1/5th of its population, a state of atrophy is bound to ensue”.²¹

Secondly, the wordy war on caste is evenly matched by the second empty struggle against caste led by select Sudra groups. Among Sudras, certain castes are numerically powerful. The age of adult franchise has placed power in their hands. The Reddys, Mudaliars, Marathas, Yadavas or Ahirs, along with Brahmins and Khatriyas, are nearly 25% of population. They still leave out 3/4th of population. So sectional elevation brings about some changes within the caste system, but leaves the basis of castes unaltered. Still worse, sectional elevation is dangerous in another way. Those among the lower castes who rise to high positions tend to assimilate themselves to the existing high castes. In this process, they appropriate baser qualities of the high castes. It also generates bitter caste jealousies and intrigues. Caste divisions do not vanish at all. Caste distinctions reappear. Women are segregated and sacred threads reappear among the non Dwijas.²²

Finally, a true struggle against caste is concerned with elevation of all rather than one or the other section of lower castes. This struggle aims to pitchfork the five downgraded groups such as women, Sudras, Dalits, backward caste Muslims and Adivasis, into positions of leadership, irrespective of their merit as it

stands today. A doctrine of preferential opportunity in employment must be followed up along with a social and political programme against caste system. Eighty percent of jobs in the leadership of political parties, national economy and government service should be reserved for 3/4th of our population. However, Lohia thinks that there should be a distinction between equal opportunity in education and preferential opportunity in employment. No child must be preferred or prevented by a policy while pursuing education. Discrimination should be exercised only in the case of government jobs. Educated Dwijas should try their luck in other fields. To end caste, social measures like mixed dinners, and inter caste marriages and economic measures like “land to the tiller” from among the lower castes must be encouraged. Women’s issues like fetching drinking water from distant areas or building of lavatories for women in rural areas must be resolved, apart from the distribution of property to press for women’s rights. Discussions, plays, and fairs should be organized.²³ Even, in government jobs there should be reservation for those who marry outside their caste. This is a sure way of breaking caste barriers. The socialists must make all efforts towards the destruction of caste order among Hindus and non Hindus.

In retrospect, we must distinguish Lohia’s critique from those followers of Lohia who surrendered his manifold criticism of caste into the sectional politics of Sudras in North India through the Samajwadi Party of Mulyam

Singh Yadav and the Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo Prasad Yadav. Lohia’s attempts in characterising such partial elevation of Sudras in South India should not be forgotten. He criticizes the Sudra politics in South for being concerned with “partial elevation” of Sudras, for alienating itself from Dalits, women, backward Muslims and Adivasis and for not showing interest in carrying out the agenda of destruction of caste system. While Lohia’s critique of caste must be distinguished from his followers in electoral field today, his alternative model merely relies on state action for equality and justice.

There are two major difficulties in accepting Lohia’s model of socialism. First, there could be an anomaly in his claim that equal opportunity in education must be followed, whereas preferential treatment in employment is to be adopted. As Ambedkar argues, caste has denied education to many social groups: women, Sudras, Dalits and Adivasis. If there is no preferential policy protecting education for these groups, it would not be possible for spreading education among common people. So any anti caste measure must aim at affirmative policy on education, for education alone can develop initial capacities of subaltern strata that were historically denied education by caste system. Lohia’s argument for equal opportunity in modern education may reproduce educational inequalities caste wise.

Second, he believes in putting pressure on the state for public egalitarian policies through civil liberties movements. So his model of socialism could be called as state socialism which ultimately gets one

sided in its emphasis for neglecting a community organisation of resources that may also weaken caste communities and help in the emergence of territorial communities with sharing of specific resources at each territorial level. By sharing resources at each territory from below to a summit of pyramid, one can simultaneously retain powers of communities and also push them beyond caste order,

without exclusively relying on state action as Lohia proposes. In Lohia's state socialism, the state is all powerful and communities have no role to play in breaking barriers of caste order. Though his model state is a democratic state, the state is still the motor of social change. This is a theme of Jayaprakash's critique of state centered socialism through his concept of Lokniti, which socialists may have to pay attention

in order to explore if these thinkers may complement each other in the withering away of caste order in future India.²⁴²⁴ I would like to propose an eclectic approach to socialism rather than take side of state socialism of Lohia and Ambedkar or communitarian socialism of Jayaprakash and others. An alternative construction, however, may need to be worked out later.

NOTES

¹⁰ Harris Wofford Jr., "About Lohia", Lohia and American Meet 1951 & 1964, B R Pub, Delhi, 2002, p. V

¹¹ R M Lohia, op. cit., n.5, pp. 132-134.

¹² D D Kosambi, The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline, Vikas Pub., Delhi, 1990, pp. 169-171.

¹³ Thus it is possible for all non-Hindus (including atheists) to believe in caste just as it is possible for a reformist Hindu to reject caste order. For a long time, Ambedkar thought that as a Hindu it should be possible for him to rejuvenate Hinduism by abolishing caste order internally. Cf. Ambedkar, op. cit. n. 4. Gandhi probably did not understand caste order in details and yet he did not believe in casteism. Ambedkar rightly calls Gandhism or Marxism as an egalitarian ideology against caste order, even though, according to him, there are serious inadequacies in these ideologies.

¹⁴ See R M Lohia, "Hinduism", in his Fragments of a World Mind, Maitrayani, Calcutta, (n.d.), pp. 112-125.

¹⁵ R M Lohia, Wheel of History, B R Pub., Delhi, 1955, pp. 33-34.

¹⁶ R M Lohia: "I make it perfectly clear. I am not trying something foul in American life. ... Such foul spots exist everywhere – also in India." (op. cit., n. 10, p. 204)

¹⁷ R M Lohia, Wheel of History, op. cit., p. 37

¹⁸ A Pinto, "UN Conference against Racism: Is Caste Race?", Economic and Political Weekly, July 28, 2001.

¹⁹ A Betteile, "Race and Caste", Opinion Page, The Hindu, 10 March 2001.

²⁰ R M Lohia, op. cit., n. 5, p. 95.

²¹ Ibid, p. 97.

²² Ibid, p. 101.

²³ R M Lohia, op. cit., n. 5, pp. 136-137. July 28, 2001. A Betteile, "Race and Caste", Opinion Page, The Hindu, 10 March 2001. Hans Blomkvist, "Traditional communities, Caste and Democracy: The Indian Mystery", Paul Dekker and Eric M Uslaner (eds.), Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life, Routledge, London, 2001. R. Dainotto, "Notes on Q6&32: Gramsci and the Dalits", in Cosimo Zene (ed.), The Political Philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and B R Ambedkar, Routledge, Oxon & New York, 2013: 75-86.

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The Idea that Pesticides are Essential to Feed a Fast-Growing Global Population is a Myth, According to UN Food and Pollution Experts

A new report, being presented to the UN human rights council, is severely critical of the global corporations that manufacture pesticides, accusing them of the “systematic denial of harms”, “aggressive, unethical marketing tactics” and heavy lobbying of governments which has “obstructed reforms and paralysed global pesticide restrictions”.

The report says pesticides have “catastrophic impacts on the environment, human health and society as a whole”, including an estimated 200,000 deaths a year from acute poisoning. Its authors said: “It is time to create a global process to transition toward safer and healthier food and agricultural production.”

The world’s population is set to grow from 7 billion today to 9 billion in 2050. The pesticide industry argues that its products – a market worth about \$50bn (£41bn) a year and growing – are vital in protecting crops and ensuring sufficient food supplies.

“It is a myth,” said Hilal Elver, the UN’s special rapporteur on the right to food. “Using more pesticides is nothing to do with getting rid of hunger. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), we are able to feed 9 billion people today. Production is definitely increasing, but the problem is poverty, inequality and distribution.”

Elver said many of the pesticides are used on commodity crops, such as palm oil and soy, not the food needed by the world’s hungry people: “The corporations are not dealing with world hunger, they are dealing with

more agricultural activity on large scales.”

The new report, which is co-authored by Baskut Tuncak, the UN’s special rapporteur on toxics, said: “While scientific research confirms the adverse effects of pesticides, proving a definitive link between exposure and human diseases or conditions or harm to the ecosystem presents a considerable challenge. This challenge has been exacerbated by a systematic denial, fuelled by the pesticide and agro-industry, of the magnitude of the damage inflicted by these chemicals, and aggressive, unethical marketing tactics.”

Elver, who visited the Philippines, Paraguay, Morocco and Poland as part of producing the report, said: “The power of the corporations over governments and over the scientific community is extremely important. If you want to deal with pesticides, you have to deal with the companies – that is why [we use] these harsh words. They will say, of course, it is not true, but also out there is the testimony of the people.”

She said some developed countries did have “very strong” regulations for pesticides, such as the EU, which she said based their rules on the “precautionary principle”. The EU banned the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which harm bees, on flowering crops in 2013, a move strongly opposed by the industry. But she noted that others, such as the US, did not use the precautionary principle.

Elver also said that while consumers in developed countries

are usually better protected from pesticides, farm workers often are not. In the US, she said, 90% of farm workers were undocumented and their consequent lack of legal protections and health insurance put them at risk from pesticide use.

“The claim that it is a myth that farmers need pesticides to meet the challenge of feeding 7 billion people simply doesn’t stand up to scrutiny,” said a spokesman for the Crop Protection Association, which represents pesticide manufacturers in the UK. “The UN FAO is clear on this – without crop protection tools, farmers could lose as much as 80% of their harvests to damaging insects, weeds and plant disease.”

“The plant science industry strongly agrees with the UN special rapporteurs that the right to food must extend to every global citizen, and that all citizens have a right to food that has been produced in a way that is safe for human health and for the environment,” said the spokesman. “Pesticides play a key role in ensuring we have access to a healthy, safe, affordable and reliable food supply.”

The report found that just 35% of developing countries had a regulatory regime for pesticides and even then enforcement was problematic. It also found examples of pesticides banned from use in one country still being produced there for export.

It recommended a move towards a global treaty to govern the use of pesticides and a move to sustainable practices including natural methods of suppressing pests and crop

rotation, as well as incentivising organically produced food.

The report said: “Chronic exposure to pesticides has been linked to cancer, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, hormone disruption, developmental disorders and sterility.” It also highlighted the

risk to children from pesticide contamination of food, citing 23 deaths in India in 2013 and 39 in China in 2014. Furthermore, the report said, recent Chinese government studies indicated that pesticide contamination meant farming could not continue on about 20% of arable land.

“The industry frequently uses the term ‘intentional misuse’ to shift the blame on to the user for the avoidable impacts of hazardous pesticides,” the report said. “Yet clearly, the responsibility for protecting users and others throughout the pesticide life cycle and throughout the retail chain lies with the pesticide manufacturer.”

–*Transcend Media Service*

(Continued from Page 5)

But their task does not end here. While doing all this, they should work; work with zeal and dispatch, for their coming together. They should realize that they lost their glory because of splits and they can regain it only if they unite. The cadres are all for it, but the leaders will have to be made to accept it. It is difficult, but will have to be done. United socialists will easily inspire many other non-BJP splinter groups to come together and if that

happens, the country will see a powerful force against the BJP. However, it should be remembered that mere numbers do not become a force. Those who are ruling us have never had to go through the ends and means debate. For them any means is acceptable to achieve a goal. In contrast, those who wish to oppose the BJP will have to be of sterling character. Each group will have to reflect on its past and make amends. As for example, the

Congress lost not merely because of corruption but also because they gave up their ideology honed during the freedom movement; or the Samajwadi Party leaders could not resist the temptation to reward their kith and kin. If the socialists and other like minded groups are able to do this, the country will benefit and the masses, irrespective of their caste or religion, may get Achhe Din.

–**GGP**

(Continued from Page 8)

recommended an equal-opportunity cell in all educational institutions to facilitate necessary coaching for students from marginalized communities as well as affordable hostels, free tuition, research grants and additional capacity development for SC scholars. The Central Government’s approach runs counter to this. The latest UGC circular being imposed in the JNU makes it clear that the restriction on the number of students that faculty can take on for research will not only affect the intake of research scholars, but also the changes in admissions policy doing away with deprivation weightages and examinations except for determining ‘eligibility’ while full powers for admission will lie with the interview committee, will gravely reduce opportunities for the marginalized and affect any program for social justice. Further, the central government is stopping the funding of centers for the study of exclusion

of Dalits and for the gender studies. At a protest meet, Dalit teachers and students from Delhi University, Jamia and JNU rejected police claims that absence of a suicide note meant that charges of discrimination could be discounted.” Prior to Rohith Vemula, were there any suicide notes in other deaths? Does that mean there was no discrimination?” A Facebook post by Muthukrishnan dated 10th March 2017 criticized “discriminatory” admission policies in JNU:” There is no Equality in M.phil/phd Admission, there is no equality in Viva- Voce, there is only denial of equality, denying Prof Sukhadeo Thorat recommendation, denying students protest places in Ad- block, denying the education of the Marginal’s.” When Equality is denied everything is denied,” he wrote.

AIFRTE demands

- Immediate action to implement

recommendations of Thorat Committee;

- Immediate negotiations with Dalit students and faculty including their organizations on steps to meet the demands for equality and an end to discrimination;
 - Immediate withdrawal of the UGC policies reducing scholarships and intake for research scholars and undemocratically altering admissions policy;
 - Immediate withdrawal of administrative strategies to restrain student protest by withholding scholarships, suspending and rustivating students; expelling them from hostels and university campuses;
 - Stop withdrawal of funding to centers of Dalit Studies and Gender Studies
- Dr. Meher Engineer** and othes

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