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A Plea for Justice – Women Reservation

Rajindar Sachar

Sonia Gandhi has written to Prime Minister Modi to get the Women Reservation Bill passed in the parliament and is reported to have promised full support. This has led to war of words between Congress and BJP as to whose fault it is that this Bill has not been passed in spite of both parties professing their support for it. One is reminded of a picture in newspaper in March 2010 flashed in all newspapers where, one saw fiercest political opponents Sonia Gandhi and Sushma Swaraj in a happy embrace in the precincts of the Parliament. What was the occasion for this un-precedent spectacle and close bon homie.

Though introduced by former Prime Minister 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.

Thereafter the Women Reservation Bill was referred to Parliamentary Standing Committee but nothing happened till 2010, when women reservation bill or the constitution (108th Amendment Bill 2008) which was 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 each other 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, because no further progress was made in the matter of women reservation.

The reality is that male chauvinism will never reserve seats for women because it will take away 1/3 of the present strength of parliament for women. I therefore feel that way out can only be by increasing the strength of Lok Sabha to 750 and making 1/3 of seats to double member constituencies with one seat therein to be reserved for women. Of course the women will be eligible to contest from other than reserved seats and may therefore increase their number beyond 1/3 of the total parliament 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 in 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 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 this injustice and neglect to continue? They may legitimately continue their differences on other subjects in the light of their own respective programmes.

Now that Sonia Gandhi has promised full support to the Bill, Modi who claims to stand for Swachh Bharat (which is a programme to enhance the dignity of the women in the country) cannot have any objection. His request to Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati should invoke immediate positive response from those leaders.

Any suggestion by opponents of the bill by creating hurdle by suggesting that women quota be further sub-divided by reserving proportionate number of seats for OBC and SC women separately is cheap trick to deny women a real share in power.

Let me point out that biggest supporter of Dalits and backward castes Dr. 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.

At present there are only 61 Women Members in Lok Sabha. The shame of discrimination against women can only be corrected by providing reservation for women's share in the legislatures – both in Parliament and State Assemblies.

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Between the Lines**Are Refugees Outsiders?****Kuldip Nayar**

Communist leader Jyoti Basu ruled West Bengal for two and a half decades. He fought relentlessly against the communal forces. It is surprising how the RSS has penetrated and practically taken over the state. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress is in power in the state at present but even her adherence admits that they are fighting a losing battle.

The RSS has moved into the interior of the state and its morning shakhas are being held in every park. How and why it has happened is for a case study. Communist ideology is what the Left pursued. In sharp contrast is the RSS preaching, completely archival and conservative. The rich Bengali culture is today sandwiched between the RSS and communists.

Mamata is accused of trying to appease the Muslims when she vainly banned the immersion of Durga idols beyond certain hours. The state government, according to news reports, apprehended that both immersion processions and the Muharram processions will be taken out deliberately to cross each other's path, putting the contaminated administration to a stern test. However, the Calcutta High Court intervened to restore the status quo.

Perhaps, what prompted Mamata to order the ban was the steady string of communal riots that have been breaking out in the districts. Controversies over the routes of Muharram processions, too, had ignited the spark. In addition, the accusations by belligerent Hindu groups, comprising both Bengalis and

non-Bengalis, had sprung up to resist 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' and 'Islamic terrorists.'

All these added to the communal cauldron that was already boiling, thanks to a steady exodus of Hindus from Bangladesh in recent times. The upper caste Hindus, who were a part of Bangladesh before the country was liberated from West Pakistan, had migrated to India and even today they maintain two houses, one in Bengal and the other in Bangladesh. Their children study in Indian schools and have even acquired identity and become citizens of India in some cases.

However, the rising Islamic radicalism and the steady attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh have led to fresh exodus over a decade. Unable to find a living, the economically poor are mostly confined to the border districts, eking out a living through odd jobs. Understandably, the Bengalis harbour deep resentment of 'the other' Muslims. And these are the ones that RSS has targeted cleverly to pull on to its side.

Against this backdrop, the Bangladeshis are going through a peculiar problem of exodus of Rohingyas, a minority Muslim community, from Myanmar. Dhaka has provided shelter to these refugees on humanitarian ground but beyond a point it cannot help much. The number of Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar to Bangladesh since late August has reached 480,000, challenging efforts to care for them, according to UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

"The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says

that the number of Rohingya refugees who have fled Myanmar into Bangladesh since late August has now topped 480,000," he said. "This brings the total number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to more than 700,000. The Rohingyas are denied citizenship under a 1982 Myanmar citizenship law. The Myanmar government recognizes them as illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.

The exodus of Rohingyas has also posed a problem to New Delhi since some of them have infiltrated into India through the northeastern states which are sharing a long border with Myanmar. Even as the government is trying to prove to the court their association with Pakistani terrorist groups, BJP MP Varun Gandhi has advocated asylum for Rohingya Muslims who have escaped the violence in Myanmar. This is a view that is in contrast to what the government has advocated. In a recent *editorial in The Navbharat Times*, Varun has expressed that Rohingya refugees should not be deported but treated humanely.

No doubt, it has created a stir in political circles, particularly with Minister of State for Home Affairs, Hansraj Ahir, saying that Varun Gandhi's view was against India's interest. "Anyone who cares about national interest will never give such a statement," said Ahir.

The government recently told the Supreme Court that it will give evidence to the court. According to the government, some Rohingya militants are linked with Pakistan-based terrorist groups. The centre has said it will deport

Abject Failure of a Vice Chancellor

Sandeep Pandey

all 40,000 Rohingyas who are illegal immigrants. The move has been challenged in court by two Rohingya petitioners who said that their community is peace-loving and that most of them have no link to any terror activity.

New Delhi has to face the refugee problem stoically. There are Kashmiri pundits in Jammu and Bangladeshi Muslims in Kolkata and Guwahati. So is the case with Sri Lankan Tamils who have taken asylum in Tamil Nadu. Small skirmishes are already taking place and pose a serious problem. But the Rohingyas exodus has forced the government to revisit the issue of refugees, giving a political colour to a human issue.

What is disconcerting is that the problem is slowly getting a communal colour—Hindu versus Muslim. West Bengal, which is already sitting on a volcano, has to retrieve the situation which may get out of control. In fact, the secular and democratic forces would have to join hands to fight against the onslaught of Hindutva elements.

Sadly, one has to admit that the country is going towards a philosophy which has been fought by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Our heritage is pluralism and its essence has to be kept alive. This is not a one-party task. All like-minded and non-BJP forces have to come together to fight against the creeping communal forces.

With the Hindu extremists getting an upper hand in every sphere, it is an uphill task. But there is no option either. If we want communalism to be rolled back to restore the ethos of pluralism, the secular forces have to go to the grassroots. The communists are giving the impression as if they alone are putting up a fight. The Congress is also doing so relentlessly, however irrelevant it looks in the present scenario.

Professor Girish Chandra Tripathi, according to his own admission, became the Vice Chancellor of nationally important Banares Hindu University because of his service to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of the ruling dispensation of Bhartiya Janaata Party in India. He is not particularly known for his academic credentials. In a question asked to the Allahabad University under the Right to Information Act, the Department of Economics, where he used to teach before coming to BHU, says that no records are available about Tripathi's research activities, papers published or students who carried out research under his guidance.

So, it came as no surprise that he restricted the hours of a 24 hours cyber library started on campus by his predecessor, as he believed that students use the facility to watch pornography. His further decisions shocked even the most conservative of citizens. Girls' hostel gates were to shut at 6 pm, they were not to use mobile phones after 8 pm, they would not be served non-vegetarian food in mess and worse, would be required to sign a statement declaring that they'll not participate in any protest against the university. The VC justified these rules saying they would make them 'cultured.' It is noteworthy that male students were not subjected to any of these restrictions. This has allowed breeding of a culture on campus which has become oppressive for the girls. On the other hand indulging in misdemeanour by truant men is ignored or incidents are covered up. It is unclear what kind of 'culture' the VC wants to

promote? One thing is clear - the overbearing presence of Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of RSS and its ever growing shakhas have failed to make it a safer campus for girls and women.

In spite of iron clad system for security of girls a Bachelor of Fine Arts student was sexually harassed by motorcycle borne youth on campus on the evening around 6 pm on 21 September. Security guard posted near the site of incident did not come forward to help and Proctor and Dean shamed the student by admonishing her for being out so late. The attitude of authorities provoked a backlash and the next day hundreds if not thousand female students were protesting at the main gate defying the statement all of them had signed for keeping away from such an activity.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was visiting his constituency of Varanasi, home to this University, when the protests broke out. Within hours of his departure on 23 September there was a crackdown by male police on female students, which is illegal, in the dark hours close to midnight. Number of students received bruises, some even had to be admitted to Trauma centre of the University hospital.

A mockery was made of the right to free speech and dissent, guaranteed by the country's Constitution. The arrogant administration tried to browbeat the students. Professor Tripathi's instinctive RSS values tell him to use brute force to suppress any opposition. He doesn't believe in niceties like dialogue. To his RSS trained mind dialogue will signal

weakness and disciplining the students by punishing them strength. The haughty power has blinded him.

University authorities blamed the 'outsiders, mischief makers, propagandists and anti-national' elements for instigating the protests. Obviously they were more worried about the outsiders and miscreants who infiltrated the protests than the ones who were responsible for sexual harassment on campus. For them the protests defamed the University more than any molestation. The initial reaction was to cover up the molestation attempt.

There were further lathi charges on protesting students twice on 24 September during the day on campus. The students have been asked to proceed on an early Dussehra holiday and vacate their hostels. What can be more irresponsible act by the University administration than this? The girl students who are not feeling safe on campus are being evicted from the safe environment of their hostels and without any travel bookings being asked to leave for home.

Tripathi who first prayed to Lord Vishwanath in the famous Vishwanath temple in city and then in a temple by the same name on campus, before taking over as VC three years back now must realize that running a university is more difficult than running a teachers' union or a RSS shakha. But it doesn't look like that Lord Vishwanath is going to stand by him for very long. It should dawn upon him that his days are numbered. This anti-academic, regressive, arrogant person has vitiated the atmosphere of BHU and the University needs to be saved from its own VC. Even to begin with he was an inappropriate choice to head such a prestigious university. He was further thrust upon the Indian

Institute of Technology on campus as its Chariman, Board of Governors even though his name was not among the panel of five recommended by the Board to the then Minister for Human Resources Development Smriti Irani. Tripathi has used his association with

RSS to occupy high offices for which he is not competent enough.

But the BJP is not known for admitting mistakes. The students will have to make the government realise it and force the exit of Tripathi.

Unacceptable Demand of Dogras of Jammu

The demand of the Dogras of Jammu to declare the birthday of the late Maharaja Hari Singh as a State holiday for the whole of J&K state is absolutely unjustified in view of the fact that this particular gentleman was not at all popular in Kashmir valley and presumably in Ladakh region as well. He might be popular among a section of Dogras on the basis of caste identity, but we cannot forget the fact that he was against the freedom movement, arrested Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1945-46, was inimical to the New Kashmir movement led by the popular and tall leader Sheikh Abdullah and dithering in the matter of accession to the Union of India until the circumstances compelled him to sign the instrument of accession.

The objective of a section of the Dogras to achieve abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution is not achievable in the present circumstances in any case. They acted foolishly by voting for the BJP in the last General Election if they hoped that the Parliament of India would delete Article 370 on the basis of a majority in the Lok Sabha. Even Home Minister Rajnath Singh, after meeting the PDP Chief Minister of J&K, had to announce that there was no question of abrogating Article 370. Grabbing power and retaining power are two different things. The floodgates cannot be opened for the benefits of money bags from outside the State who would be too willing to buy the lands and orchards of the Muslims of Kashmir valley at any price.

The capitalist class of India has already usurped the lands and other natural resources of the tribals in several parts of Middle India throwing all the Constitutional and legal provisions to the winds in collusion with the political powers of the day. The Sardar Sarovar Project, actually intended to benefit the landed class of Gujarat, specially Saurashtra, is a standing monument to the exploitation of the poor Adivasis of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The one significant defeat these capitalist forces, patronised by the political rulers at the Centre, had to face was in the Niyamgiri forests of Odisha where the valiant Dongria Kondhs carried on a sustained and successful struggle against the steel magnate and his political patrons. The brave people of Kashmir valley will never permit these outside exploitative elements to succeed in their nefarious game.

India's Quest for Security Council Permanent Membership

D. K. Giri

India made yet another bid for becoming a permanent member of United Nations Security Council. Sushma Swaraj, our External Affairs Minister, in her speech at the 72nd UN General Assembly Session in New York taking place from 12 to 29 September reinforced New Delhi's initiative in revamping the premier world body. Her plea for securing the membership of UNSC followed our Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic forays into major countries of the world including the mighty United States, lobbying for India's membership.

It may be recalled that, in 1955, India was offered the membership of the UNSC by the US and others to come in from the Asian region. Our then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru declined it and suggested that it should be reserved for China which was then under dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek. India was preferred to China as the former was a democracy. Ever since, as we lost the opportunity, India has been courting Russia, an original permanent member of the Council for its veto on Kashmir whenever UNSC threatened to pass any resolution indicting India. India's foreign policy has been largely influenced by Soviet veto in India's favour on Kashmir. However, that is history.

In the current scenario, United Nations, the highest body of the world clearly lacks legitimacy as UNSC remains under-represented. Jeffery Sachs of Columbia University, a leading expert and commentator of world politics, says "Asia's inadequate representation poses a serious threat to the UN's legitimacy, which will only

increase as the world's most populous region assumes an increasingly important global role." He suggests that one possible way to resolve the problem should be to add at least 4 Asian seats: one permanent seat for India, one shared by Japan and Korea, perhaps on a basis of two-year or one-year rotation, one for the ASEAN countries, representing the group as a single constituency and fourth rotating among other Asian countries.

Over a decade ago, on 21 March 2005, Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN at the time, called on the members of the United Nations to reach a consensus on expanding the Security Council to 24 members. He had devised a plan for expansion of the Council called "In Larger Freedom". Sushma Swaraj implored in her speech that the current SG, Antonio Guterres, the former Prime Minister of Portugal, should make it happen. She said in her speech that "we have high expectations from the new Secretary General. If he wants to reform the peace and security architecture in the world, he will also need to address reforms related to peace keeping that have been urged for long." The reform of the UN requires the support of two-thirds of its 193 members. From the records of the formal speeches made at the UN sessions, 160 members have expressed their concurrence for the long-pending reforms of the United Nations.

For long, India has been advocating for reforming the UN. On the fringe of the UN General Assembly, the G-4 countries – India, Brazil, Germany and Japan – met to push for the change in UN Security Council by expanding the

number of both permanent and non-permanent members. There was support for restructuring of UN in general and for permanent membership of India in particular. Sushma Swaraj reminded the General Assembly that "there was a consensus in 2005 Summit that the early reform of the Security Council was an essential element for peace and security in the turbulent world".

Let us look the arguments in favour of India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council. To start with, India has been a founding member of the UN, although the permanent membership has been elusive, since Nehru denied the offer for some inexplicit reasons. However, the arguments in support are many. To cite a few, India is the second most populous country with 1.3 billion, and is likely to overtake China to become the number one in population. So it is incongruous that the biggest country in terms of population, one-sixth of the world humanity remains unrepresented in the highest body of the world. Second, it is the largest democracy in the world. One of the missions of the UN is to foster democracy in the world, and India has remained a beacon light for countries in the whole of Asia as an unflinching democracy. Third, India has been a non-permanent member of the UNSC for six terms spanning 12 years. It is time that it becomes a permanent member. Fourth, India is the 7th largest economy in the world. Indian economy is growing steadily with minor hiccups. It is expected to contribute to the world trade and economy as in 20 years' time or so; it is expected to overtake the Chinese economy. Fourth, India is

already the member of the groups of rich countries like G-4 and G-77 which produce goods and services for the entire world. Fifth, India has the 3rd largest army in the world and has contributed so far 160,000 soldiers to the UN peace keeping forces to difficult conflict areas. Indian soldiers have laid their lives for the freedom and security of the countries under domination or in war.

No doubt, the membership of the UN Security Council will not be easy to come by. Although New Delhi is doing diplomatically well to push our case with the so-called warmth, rapport and charisma of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the efforts have to be taken to the logical end. One can count a few road-blocks in India's membership journey. The UNSC membership has to expand from 15 to 24, in order to accommodate Asia, Africa and Latin America. Also, all the 5 permanent members have to agree to the expansion. The United States and the United Kingdom have openly endorsed India's bid. France has also committed its support. Russia will not oppose it, given our long-standing friendship with it. China makes occasional sounds in support of India's membership, but is non-committal. For instance, when Xi Jinping visited India in 2014, he said in a press conference that China supports India's membership of the UNSC. It could have been rhetorical and a diplomatic statement, as China has been unremittingly displaying anti-India posturing. India's growing partnership with Japan will further alienate China.

New Delhi has to initiate a different method of expanding the UN with the help of its friends. Narendra Modi has been rubbing shoulders with the rest of the 4 permanent members and other important countries like Japan and Germany. Can he pull a rabbit out his

hat and secure the membership of UNSC for India before he goes to the polls in coming 18 months? Looks unlikely, as with many of his initiatives, he has impressive beginnings with his persuasive slogans and one-liner policy formulations etc., but the ends are yet to be seen. The effectiveness as well as legitimacy of the foreign policy of a country is a function of the conditions at home of the particular country. Indira Gandhi was seen as a strong leader outside India, but her performance at home in development of the vast majority of people was dismal. One sees a parallel in Narendra Modi, although his Prime Ministerial stint is too short to compare. Indira gave the famous slogan *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty), and "poverty is the worst polluter" in UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) conference at Stockholm in 1972, she could not make any tangible dent in India's widespread and chronic poverty. About 4

decades later, we have another Prime Minister who gives himself the epithet of Vikas Purush 'a person for progress', but the development on the ground is not visible. So, in order to become a world leader, by being a member of UNSC, Modi needs to make India better and more vibrant development-wise. Then the membership will come to us; without much lobbying, as others would like to emulate India's democracy, diversity and economy etc.

Finally, it is typical of India's foreign policy establishment from Nehru era onward to drag issues until they fizzle out naturally. I have been commending Modi for 'breaking the mould in India's foreign policy without rocking the boat'. But the real and the toughest test would be the UNSC membership. Will he succeed? We would like to think so in the national interest of India, and especially if he displays grit and integrity in policies at home.

Gandhi's Message to Our Troubled World

Bharat Dogra

In a world increasingly plagued by violence and strife Mahatma Gandhi's message remains highly relevant today, 69 years after the assassination of this man of peace.

Gandhi's work and writings covered a very wide range of activities, but perhaps what our troubled world needs to learn most from Gandhi is his overwhelming emphasis on non-violence to resolve any conflict or to confront any injustice. More than that, he emphasised non-violence as an entire way of life, emphasising its importance in our daily life (even relationships within family) as much as in huge movements for justice and freedom. Non-violence (ahimsa) for Gandhi is all-encompassing, bringing in

its range not only all human beings but also all forms of life. Non-violence in action is considered far from adequate - it should extend to our innermost thoughts.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence is so pervasive that it will not only help the cause of world peace - rightly practised it'll help to significantly bring down the incidence of domestic violence and mental illness as well. The movement for animal rights or compassion to animals will also benefit from a wider spread of Gandhi's ideas.

About the role of non-violence in his own life, Gandhi wrote "I have been practising with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an

unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed. Where it has seemed sometimes to have failed, I have ascribed it to my imperfections. (*Harijan*, 6-7-40, pp. 185-86)

Gandhi had big hopes from harnessing the tremendous force of non-violence. He wrote, (*Harijan* 10.12.38 p. 377) “more powerful than all the armaments, non-violence is a unique force that has come into the world”. Elsewhere he said “We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. (*Harijan*, 25.8-40, p. 260)

The path of non-violence is noble, but it is not easy. As Gandhi says (*Harijan* 14.5.38) “If the method of violence takes plenty of training, the method of non-violence takes even more training and that training is much more difficult than the training for violence. “A votary of Ahimsa has to be incorruptible, fair and square in his dealings, truthful, straightforward and utterly selfless. He must have also true humility. (*Harijan*, 20.5.39, p. 133)

“The very first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in terms of non-violence, it is not mere policy. Policies may and do change. Non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. (*Harijan*, 2.4.38, p. 65)

“Non-violence, to be a potent force,

must begin with the mind. (*Young India*, 2-4-31, p. 58)

“...unless there is a hearty co-operation of the mind the mere outward observance will be simply a mask, harmful both to the man himself and to others. The perfect state is reached only when mind and body and speech are in proper co-ordination. (*Young India*, 1.10.31, p. 287)

“The alphabet of Ahimsa is best learnt in the domestic school, and I can say from experience that, if we secure success there, we are sure to do so everywhere else.” (*Harijan* 21.7.40, p. 214)

“If one does not practice non-violence in one’s personal relations with others and hopes to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken. Non-violence, like charity, must begin at home. (*Harijan*, 28-1-39, p. 441)

Gandhi captured the spirit of non-violent struggle in the following words - “I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant’s sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him.”

For Gandhi religion was clearly a place for peace and there was absolutely no room in his thinking for religious differences turning violent. He wrote, “I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures

of different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.” (*Harijan* 16.2.34 P.5-6)

Gandhi saw clearly that the aggressiveness of the great powers is rooted in greed. He said world peace “is clearly impossible without the great powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic designs. This again seems impossible without these great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and to desire to multiply wants and therefore increase their material possessions. (*Harijan* 16.5.36 P.109)

The ideal he urged to his own countrymen was “we will exploit none just as we will allow none to exploit us.” (*Young India* 16.4.31 page-9). He added “I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities.”

In fact Gandhi was an internationalist much ahead of his times. He wrote, “The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent States warring one against another, but a federation of friendly inter-dependent States. (*Young India*, 26-12-24, p. 425)

“The structure of a world federation can be raised only on foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally given up in world affairs. (Gandhiji’s Correspondence with the Government - 1942-44, (1957), p. 143)

“Federation is undoubtedly a greater and nobler end for free nations. It is a greater and nobler end for them to strive to promote Federation than be

(Continued on Page 10)

With Prices Rising Post-GST, has the Government taken the Public for a Ride?

Arun Kumar

Have prices of goods and services risen because the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is faulty or because it was not designed properly? Eighteen percent GST is levied on the food in a restaurant. This has raised the cost of eating out. Is this what was intended in the original design of the GST? One of the benefits of the GST touted by the government was that prices would come down, but the opposite has happened. Prices of most services have also gone up as they are now taxed at 18% while they were charged 15% in the pre-GST regime. Hence, insurance, credit card charges, banking charges and so on have all risen.

Unfortunately, the wholesale price index (WPI) does not capture much of this price rise since services are not a part of this index and constitute 60% of the production in the economy. Consequently, the rise in prices of services is not reflected in the inflation index based on WPI. Since it is the prices of services that have risen the most in the last several years, inflation is being grossly underestimated. Why have the prices of services risen? Because the government has increased the tax on services from 12% to 15% and now to 18%. It is well known that when an indirect tax is raised on any good or service, it is passed on to the consumer by the producer.

Why were prices expected to come down under the GST?

The GST is supposed to eliminate the cascading effect of taxes. Cascading effect signifies the levy of a tax on a tax

so that the effective rate of tax becomes higher than the rate of tax levied. For example, in a restaurant, the inputs bought contain an element of tax paid on them so their price is higher by the amount of this tax. When food is prepared and the final bill is given to the customer, the price in the bill contains the tax paid on the inputs. So when a tax is levied on this price, a tax is levied on the tax already paid on the inputs. This is the cascading effect of tax on tax.

Under the GST, there is an input credit for the tax paid on the inputs so that the price of the purchased goods and services declines and therefore, the price of the final product should be lower and the GST should be levied on that lower price. The restaurants are not doing that and therefore, they benefit twice over. They are getting the input credit which adds to their profit and are also charging the customers a higher price.

The list price of food items in the menu of a restaurant should have been lowered to reflect input credit and on that lower price, 18% GST should have been levied. Alternatively, if the list price is not changed then the GST rate in the bill should have been lowered in proportion to the purchased inputs.

If a restaurant buys Rs 500 worth of inputs to produce a dish selling at Rs 1,000, then the total GST collection ought to be Rs 180. But the restaurant is getting Rs 90 as input credit and collecting Rs 180 from the customers. However, they have to pay the government only Rs 180. Hence, their

profit rises by Rs 90. Ideally, the restaurant should only collect Rs 90 from the customers (9%) and pay the government Rs 180 because they got the benefit of Rs 90 from the input credit.

Alternatively, if the input credit is accounted for in the cost of producing the dish, the cost should be Rs 410 and not Rs 500. With the same mark up as earlier, the list price of the dish should be Rs 820. On that, the GST of 18% would amount to Rs 148. So the final price to the customer should be Rs 968 and not Rs 1180, as is now happening. In brief, if the input credit works properly, prices should drop but the public is being taken for a ride.

However, the flaw in the design of the GST is that the input credit is available only if the invoices of the buyer and the seller match. How many suppliers can the restaurant owner chase? Switching to alternate suppliers would be costly. Supply chains are not easily built. So the restaurants are not reducing the list prices because they are not sure of getting the input credit.

What is happening in restaurants is happening across the board in most businesses. Input credit should lead to lower cost to business and so, it should reduce the basic price on which the GST is to be levied. Consequently, the prices of various items should remain the same as they were earlier and not rise, as has happened all across the board.

It is true that India has not gone for a full GST. Important items like,

petroleum products, electricity, real estate and alcohol are out of the purview of GST. These are key inputs into production and there is no input credit for their use. They are also heavily taxed items so there is a strong cascading effect associated with them. But that was also the case earlier, so this cannot be the cause of additional inflation.

Various essential goods, constituting 50% of all items, are out of the GST net so that their prices should not rise. This should especially benefit the common person whose consumption basket mostly consists of these items. For instance, rice, milk, eggs, salt, handloom etc are charged at zero rate of tax.

However, indirect taxes are deceptive. The point at which a tax is levied and where it is felt are different. Hence, while milk has a zero rate of tax, it has to be transported and stored, and accounts have to be kept. All these services are included in the GST and as their prices go up, the cost of milk also rises. Thus, when GST is levied on trucks, increase in its price is felt in the price of milk even though it has zero tax. In brief, the effect of GST is felt even on those items which have zero tax and inflation is experienced even by the common person who consumes very little of the taxed items.

How were the rates fixed?

First, the government determined a revenue neutral rate (RNR) of tax – that is, the average rate of tax at which the same amount of tax would be collected as in pre-GST times. Two different committees suggested 12% and 15.5%. The government has chosen the latter. It is too high because alternative calculations suggest that the rate could have been lower at about 8% since the GST net has been widened.

The next step is to fit each item close to the tax rate it was paying earlier (called fitment). So, if an item was being taxed earlier at 15% (all taxes taken together), it was fitted either at 18% or 12% – the two allowed rates. In the former case, its price would rise, while in the latter case, its price would fall. To keep inflation from rising, the government should have chosen the lower rates except in the case of sin or luxury goods.

The implication of the arguments given above is that cascading effect is back in spite of the GST and Value Added Tax (VAT). Since input credit is not being accounted for by businesses, the tax is not collected as VAT but as ‘ad valorem’, which was the reason for the cascading effect. This has raised the profitability of businesses

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self-centred, seeking only to preserve their own freedom. (*Harijan*, 9-8-42, p. 265)

Speaking optimistically of his vision of a future world he wrote, “The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. That is the first law: out of it all other blessings will flow.

“...An individual can adopt the way of life of the future - the non-violent way - without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals? Whole nations? Men often hesitate to make a beginning, because they feel that the objective cannot be achieved in its entirety. This attitude of mind is precisely our greatest obstacle to progress - an obstacle that each man, if he only wills it, can clear away.

“...Equal distribution - the second great law of tomorrow’s world as I see it - grows out of non-violence. It implies

while demand has fallen due to the price rise. Production has faced a setback, especially in the small and cottage sectors because of the difficulty of implementation of the GST.

The public needs to pressurise restaurants and other businesses to lower the list price on which GST is levied in their bills. But is it in a position to do that? The government has to do that but it is too caught up in the implementation glitches to think of anything else. All this shows that the GST is awfully complex and has confused not only businesses and the public, but also the government. One can conclude that both the design and implementation of the GST are below par.

–*The Wire*

not that the world’s goods shall be arbitrarily divided up, but that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply his natural needs, no more. (*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, PP 458-60).

“...only truthful, non-violent and pure hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above, the existence of such a society is impossible. (*Harijan*, 13.7.47, p. 232).

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Banning of Nuclear Weapons

Siby K. Joseph

The 20th September 2017, will be ever remembered in the history of human civilization, because more than 50 countries have signed the landmark treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in New York on the eve of annual opening of the United Nations General Assembly.

In the high-level ceremony at the United Nations headquarters, the document was first signed by President of Brazil, Michel Temer. The ceremony was attended by several heads of state and dozens of foreign ministers, including Austria, Ireland and Cuba.

It is significant that this historic treaty was signed 72 years after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings during the Second World War. The bomb dropped at the Hiroshima was nicknamed as Little Boy. According to one estimate, it killed 1,30,000 people. On the 9th August the US dropped a second one called Fat Man on Nagasaki killing 70,000 people. It is reported that 200,000 still suffer discrimination due to ignorance about the ill effects of radiation.

On 6th August 2017 more than 50,000 people, including survivors of the atomic bomb attack, their descendants, peace activists and representatives from about 80 countries, assembled at the Peace Memorial Park in the city of Hiroshima to commemorate 72nd anniversary of the atomic bombing in 1945 during World War II. On the Hiroshima day, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons urged all nations to commit to signing the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

Everyone in the world is aware of the widespread and catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction without a prohibition treaty. Biological weapons were banned in 1972, chemical weapons in 1993, Land mines in 1997, and cluster bombs in 2008. With the adoption of this treaty, nuclear weapons also join the club of biological and chemical weapons as weapons of mass destruction that have been declared illegal under the international law. The Treaty will be coming into force 90 days after it is being signed and ratified by 50 countries.

On 7 July 2017, 122 nations, comprising almost two-thirds of the total UN membership voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It is a landmark agreement that outlaws the weapons of mass destruction and establishes a pathway to their elimination. The Netherlands was the only country voted against its adoption. It claimed that US nuclear weapons are essential for its security.

Once the treaty has entered into force, further nations can join it at any stage. It is to be noted that even if a nation that possesses nuclear weapons, it can join the treaty, so long as it agrees to remove them from operational status immediately and destroy them in accordance with a legally binding, time-bound plan. In addition, it is also required to eliminate its entire nuclear weapon programme, which includes nuclear materials, delivery systems and related facilities.

Then the question arises how to resolve a dispute if it happens between two or more nations under the treaty? To resolve the issue they must consult together with a view to settling the dispute by negotiation or by other peaceful means.

Nuclear Arsenal possessed by the Countries

Country	Size of Arsenal
United States	6,800 warheads
Russia	7,000 warheads
United Kingdom	215 warheads
France	300 warheads
China	270 warheads
India	110-20 warheads
Pakistan	120-30 warheads
Israel	80 warheads
North Korea	<10 warheads

Source: Federation of American Scientists 2017

Major chunk of nuclear warheads are in the hands of nine countries viz. U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. These countries neither participated in the process nor adopted the convention. The United States and Russia are the major players, which possesses approximately 6,800 and 7,000 nuclear warheads respectively. The US made it clear that it never intends to join the treaty and thereby failed to fulfill its legally binding disarmament obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In a joint statement issued immediately after the adoption of the treaty, the U.S., France and the U.K. expressed their strong opposition to

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Gandhi on Princely and Temple Property

K. Venkateswarlu

The nation was awestruck at the vast precious wealth brought to light (by the order of Supreme Court) from the five sub-terranean vaults of Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Tiruvananthapuram. Apropos the subsequent public discourse relating to proprietary rights, protection and preservation, value and utilization of the wealth, the following anecdote may be of interest and a guide to action.

Late Professor Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya, re-knowned Marxist philosopher and a “thought transformer” of modern India (Walter Ruben), was visiting Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Andhra University, during the academic year 1977-78. We were drawn together due to shared interest in the study of Marxism and the dialectics of its theory and practice in the colonial as well as independent India. We used to meet frequently and engage in long and stimulating conversation. In one of his impromptu dialogues, he referred to a bunch of letters exchanged between M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in the latter half of 1947, which did not become a part of the public archive. The central issue of this correspondence is of great interest and importance to us even today. It seems, Nehru sought and appealed for foreign aid to help the new nation. Gandhi sharply asked, why do we need foreign aid? Nehru’s response was simple. We are poor and do not have resources to modernize our economy and reduce the poverty of people. Gandhi interrogated Nehru regarding the volume, form and value of the wealth held in the possession of Maharajas and Zamindars, and

temples, mosques, churches, Mandirs and trusts in our country. He suggested to tap this vast hidden and unproductive wealth and use it for national development. DP said this correspondence between Gandhi and Nehru did not see the light of the day as it dealt with very sensitive political and cultural issues. He concluded that Professor Amalan Datta, Director of Gandhi Centre, and Vice-Chancellor of Viswabharati University, and a very small circle of academics in West Bengal were knowledgeable in respect of the location and contents of the letters. I will comment on the veracity of DP’s dialogue a little later.

The objective of this note is two-fold. First, it gives an account of the ideas of Gandhi relating to the property of temples and religious institutions and bodies, and of Maharajas and Zamindars. Second, the ideas and ideals of Gandhi may provide a lead to the current public discourse regarding the wealth found at Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple, and also of the enormous wealth which is in possession of famous religious institutions and the former princely rulers of India.

Gandhi delivered a speech on February 6, 1916, at a meeting presided over by Annie Besant in the Benares Hindu University. It was a festive gathering of the students, faculty and princely rulers, who were benefactors of the University, and top bureaucrats of the Raj. Gandhi said: “I want to think audibly this evening..... I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self-government, we shall have to do

the necessary plodding. I have turned the search light all over and as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you, I am laying my heart bare. Surely we must set these things right in our progress towards self-government. I now introduce to you another scene. His Highness the Maharajah, who presided yesterday over deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen : ‘There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India’. (“Hear, hear” and applause). Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say : “Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists”.

Earlier, in the same speech, he said: “I visited the Viswanath temple last evening and as I was walking through those lanes, these were the thoughts that touched me. ... I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even our temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness what can our self-government be?

Shall our temples be abodes of holiness, cleanliness and peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either on their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage” (vide The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol: 15 (21 May 1915-31 August, 1917) pp 151-152, 4th ed. 2000. New - Delhi: publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India).

At this point I will examine the trustworthiness of DP’s reference to the said correspondence of Gandhi and Nehru relating to the theme of foreign aid vis-a-vis internal resources in India’s economic development. First, DP is a person of high professional and personal integrity.

Second, Gandhi was in Bengal from 13th August, to 7th September, 1947.

Third, we do not have an opportunity to check the veracity of the matter with Prof. Amalan Datta, since he died in March 2010. Perhaps Prof. Amalan Datta and the small circle of academics had an unenviable task in putting the said correspondence under the carpet in the given historical context of independent India in the latter half of 1947. The aftermath of the Partition of India and the surcharged religious emotion was an awesome and almost unmanageable situation. The process of integration of Princely States with the Indian State was in the initial stage. The new Indian State encountered complex problems, and the administrative system faced an unprecedented and up-hill task in the governance of the nation. Perhaps Prof. Amalan Datta and his friends wisely thought that public knowledge of the contents of the said correspondence, specially Gandhi’s ideas on the property of religious

institutions of all denomination and of princely rulers, would threaten the stability of the Indian State. Therefore, their thoughtful decision to keep the said correspondence in the dark was a product of its time. After he returned to Delhi from Bengal, Gandhi had a Talk with P.C. Joshi (General Secretary, Communist Party of India) on September 9, 1947. He initiated the Talk with the following observation. “First of all I want you not to report our conversation in any paper. Not that I have anything to conceal, but it will not serve the cause” (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol: 96. P.353). The observation of Gandhi is a testimony to the historical context for the decision of Amalan Datta and his friends.

Fourth, Gandhi landed at Bombay on January 9, 1915 from South Africa via London. His speech at the Benares Hindu University dated February 6, 1916 was delivered during the initial phase of his long and eventful political struggle in India, when our nationalist movement was led by Gokhale, Tilak, Annie Besant, Motilal, Lajpat Rai and other illustrious leaders. The letters of Gandhi to Nehru which were referred to by DP were written in the last year of Gandhi’s life. One finds a striking similarity in the views of Gandhi on the property of religious institutions and of Maharajas and Zamindars expressed in 1916 (BHU speech) and 1947 (letters to Nehru). Consistency or strict adherence to a set of fundamental ideas is the governing principle or virtue of Gandhian thought and practice. For these reasons, I am inclined to think that DP’s dialogue relating to the said correspondence of Gandhi and Nehru is authentic.

For Gandhi, the goal and agenda of Swaraj and Swadesi was to serve the poor and wipe out their tears, and provide succour to the most needy

and deprived sections of our people. He was firmly of the opinion that wealth held in the custody of princely rulers and religious institutions and bodies was produced by agriculturists, workers, craftsmen and artisans. Religious institutions should be centres of prayer and holiness, learning, good conduct and cleanliness. The princely order should hold its wealth in trust for the good of the society and poorer strata.

The meaning and message of Gandhian ideas are very clear. It is our bounden duty to properly utilize the wealth, except objects of historical and artistic value identified and certified by experts, found in the vaults of Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple for financing programmes and projects to cater to the needs of poor people, and for national development.

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the treaty. According to them, it disregards the realities of the international security environments and nuclear deterrence is essential for maintaining the peace. It is to be noted that Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey are the nations hosting nuclear weapons. Albania, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain (plus the five host nations) are the nations in nuclear alliance. Rest of the world is nuclear weapon free but not from its effects. Now time has come to show the commitment of countries including India towards nuclear weapon free world by signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and promoting the cause of peace.

—MKGANDHI Newsletter

Constitutionalism, Social Justice and Black Money - III

B. Sudershan Reddy

According to C. Rammanohar Reddy, another scholar in this area, “the Government commissioned three studies from three independent organizations for the preparation of the 2012 White Paper. The results of those studies have not been made public, though media reports of the estimates of one of the studies place the black income in 2014 at as high as 75 percent...”¹ Arun Kumar finds that the black economy has grown from 21 percent of the GDP in 1980 to as much as 62 percent of GDP in 2012.²

A large black economy and huge stashes of black wealth in various forms would have a tremendous impact on how resources are distributed across the economy. Taxation is also expected to serve another purpose: redistribution of the benefits of social action and lessen the degree of inequality. Tax evasion, and illegal and undue rents from exploitation of natural resources or through operation of businesses, would necessarily reduce the efficacy of the tax system in achieving that goal. A little over two decades ago, Prof. Arun Kumar also estimated the numbers who controlled this black economy. According to him, it was mostly in the hands of the wealthiest 3% of the population. In his more recent book, he suggests that this number has not really changed much. In fact we would probably have to assess that the concentration has tightened considerably. In some recent reports it has been estimated that the wealthiest 1% of this country own nearly 58% to 60% of all the wealth of this country. In large part

this increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few has been on account of the working of the black economy.

Obviously, the loss of tax revenues, insufficient realization of revenues from illegal exploitation of natural resources, and undue economic rents that are not properly accounted for by the avoidance of regulatory regimes implies that the State would have a lot less financial resources under its command. We have already noted as to what impact it may have had on our economy, in terms of its size. It has been estimated that it could have been about seven times bigger than what it is. This would mean that an argument can be advanced that, but for the black economy, the State could have also been realizing greater revenues to undertake programs that would push forward the goal of social justice at a faster pace. And we would have also had less to do in terms of numbers of our citizens we would be protecting from deprivations.

We need to firmly grasp that a black economy necessarily implies that the resources needed for building state capacities have been severely restricted. Even with respect to the numbers of police personnel we employ, and the training that is giving to them, has been adversely impacted on account of funds crunch. We simply have not invested enough in our legal system to be able to provide our citizens with speedy justice. And in many instances our capacity to project our strengths in the geo-strategic

sphere has also been severely restricted by virtue of paucity of financial resources at our command.

Let us take note of the text of just a few of the Directive Principles of State Policy that are said to be foundational to governance and see what the impact of black economy has been on the State’s primordial promises:

Article 38(1) provides that “The State shall strive to promote the welfare of our people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

Article 39(b) mandates that the State shall direct its policy towards securing... “the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as to sub-serve the common good”

Article 39(c) mandates that the State shall ensure “that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment...”

Article 39(f) provides mandates that the State should seek to ensure “that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that children and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.”

Article 41 provides that “The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.”

Let me reiterate that I am only mentioning a few of the Directive Principles to provide us with a broad picture of important areas of human welfare that we have failed in.

Take Article 38(1), which mandates that the State shall undertake such steps as to ensure that all institutions of our national life are informed and guided by principles of complete justice – social, economic and political. Now consider the issues faced by our women, our female children and even our female fetuses. How horrific is the scale of injustice that is being perpetrated on a daily basis? How many millions of fetuses are aborted in India every year, primarily because of our preference for boys? How many new born female infants are being killed every year, again on account of preference for boys? Look at the horrendous sex ratios in our population. The shocking fact is that our sex ratio today is worse than what it was in the early 1900s. And then consider the incidence of sexual violence against our women. Every day, a new headline screams about one more horrific instance of rape, gorier than the previous one.

Obviously, the issue is on one plane also a matter of law and order – an institution that affects our national life. What are the resources we have been able to allocate to tackle these problems, given that they place at risk nearly 40% of our people? A few years ago there were promises made that every district would get a centre

to handle the issues of battered and sexually assaulted women. Apart from providing shelter to victims for a few days, these centres were also to help the victims secure medical attention, get justice by interfacing with the police to ensure that action is quickly taken against perpetrators and the guilty brought to justice, and also undertaking locally contextualized programs to change the attitudes about women. Each of these centres was envisaged to be independent and to be developed at a cost of about Rs 10 to 11 crores. The promise was that these centres would be developed rapidly. However, it seems that powers that be have decided to pare down the program considerably, and while the development of the centres is still being pursued it is moving at a much slower pace than what the nature of the issue warrants. Obviously budgetary issues have a constraining impact. And then we have not really begun to bring to the table the resources that would be consonant with the urgency with which we would be treating female infanticide and feticide. An argument could be made that if the black economy had been curtailed, then people and policy makers would have been less lax in taking steps to combat such issues.

Take Articles 39(f) and 41. How do we expect poor children to grow in a healthy manner, and in conditions of freedom and dignity, if we do not invest in building good schools with proper facilities and well trained teachers? Especially in the rural areas? Article 41 talks about “undeserved want”. What can be more undeserved than deprivation of education to a child. Article 41 recognizes that we can undertake such activities only to the extent that the State has the economic capacity. However, the case here, with the size of the black economy and wealth being what they

are, is that the State’s economic capacity is being undercut severely, and is being prevented from undertaking those activities that can secure a better future for our children.

I have already observed how natural resources can be exploited in a manner that deprives the State of revenues. In fact many forms of illegal exploitation of natural resources lead to other problems, especially where they affect the lives of the locals adversely, Mining mafias have often spawned revolutionary counters thereby creating major threats to the welfare of the people of that area, and their fundamental rights. This in turn also imposes huge financial burden, among other things, upon the State in combating revolutionary activities and getting embroiled in a never ending saga of tussle with the local populace too. Article 39(b), which I read out a few minutes ago mandates that the State shall endeavour to ensure that ownership and control of material resources, such as natural resources, be vested in a manner that subserves the common interest. The operation of mining mafias and other forms of illegal mining/extraction of natural resources generates huge amounts of black money and black wealth, attracting more people to such activities, so much so that it begins to appear like a vicious cycle. And the “common interest” that the Directive principles sought to protect is thrown by the wayside.

As pointed out earlier, Article 39(c) mandates that the State shall not allow the economy to function in such a manner that it leads to concentration of wealth. This principle has obviously been violated, as 58% to 60% of all national wealth is now held by the top 1% of our country. And black economy has contributed towards intensifying such concentration. This

would have implications for our democracy as the 1% fund political parties, and in return get more opportunities to further corner nation's resources even more. The ordinary political freedoms then might just become inconvenient customs to be squashed when exercise of such freedoms is uncomfortable to the 1%.

In summum bonum we would have to categorically assert that to a significant extent we have not really adhered to the guiding principles of our Constitution and in fact a legitimate conclusion would be that we have actually abandoned the Directive Principles. It is almost as if we have read the Directive Principles out of the Constitution, an excision of the soul of the Constitution without any constitutional amendments. And that too, notwithstanding the fact that the judiciary used the text of the Directive Principles in fleshing out the content of Fundamental Rights in general, and Article 21 in particular, and mandating that the State shall fulfill at least some obligations.

How did this happen? The easy answer would be to suggest that if the Directive Principles had been judicially enforceable, fully, then litigation against the State would have compelled the politicians and the permanent establishment to pursue policies that would have hastened the achievement of the goals set forth in the Directive Principles. I would submit that would not only be an easy answer, but in fact an incorrect answer. The fallacy of such claims is easily demonstrable: the judiciary has, albeit not very consistently, read many of the Directive Principles of State Policy into the Fundamental Rights and issued orders from time to time. One famous one, and which is critical to any notion of social justice, was the declaration of right to education until the age of 14

as a fundamental right. It took the political dispensation 20 years to enact a statute to give that decision legislative legitimacy and I am sure most reasonable people would accept the fact that its implementation is shoddy at best. Even today. Twenty years ago, Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy, in his pragmatic idealistic approach, posited that this would be a part of the minimal moral content of Article 21. Most analysts agree that implementation of the Right to Education laws are spotty at best. We are entering a world in which many people speculate that Artificial Intelligence is likely to be the next big revolution, and that it would make many or even most human skills obsolete. Only those who have developed the skills at much higher levels of artistic and cognitive skills could find themselves useful and fulfilling work. How will our children even attempt scaling such heights, if they are deprived of basic education? And we still have elites, who control almost all of the black money and nearly 58 to 60% of the nation's wealth, grumbling about how any attempts by the State to raise revenues to educate our masses, to get them to be barely functionally literate would mean economic disaster, and how their incentive structures to be "productive individuals" and their "animal spirits" would be dampened.

Over the past two and half decades, increasingly the discourse has been against the State undertaking any welfare and social justice programs even as subsidies after subsidies and tax breaks after tax breaks were being extended to the big players in the private sector. With the discourse increasingly turning neo-liberal, the attitude of powers was that they could turn a blind eye to the tax evasion issues, and also issues relating to realizing appropriate revenues from

exploitation of natural resources.

Given the impact that black economy and black money has on the State capacity, and the extent to which the constitutional responsibility of ensuring social justice informs all walks of national life was compromised, I believe that it would be amoral, and socially and constitutionally irresponsible to suggest that tax collection regime, and the regime of allowing private players to exploit natural resources, both under and outside contracts and without the state realizing appropriate revenue from them, be allowed to continue in the same fashion.

Post the decision by the Supreme Court in ordering a SIT, because the Court felt that the State was not being sincere in its efforts to prevent illicit outflows of black money, and tackling black economy in general, it appears that the GoI has taken some steps to address the issue with greater urgency and focus. While ordering the SIT, the Supreme Court also cautioned the Government and the people of two things: (a) the first was that the issue was extremely complex, especially with regard to identifying and attempting to bring back black money from abroad; and (b) that the battle would be a long one, with hits and misses and hence requiring patience. In order to ensure that, in the long and hard road ahead, the enthusiasm of the Government does not flag, the Supreme Court converted a High Level Committee looking into the issues surrounding black money and black economy into a Special Investigation Team.

I would not like to go into a number of steps, and some may say even missteps, by the GoI to tackle this issue. That would make my lecture unnecessarily long. Yet, I suppose the

thousand pound elephant in the room has to be touched upon – “Demonetisation.”

Let me start with a word of caution, after asserting a fact. Given the magnitude of currency withdrawn, and the numbers of people affected at one go, irrespective of whether we agree with the decision of the GoI on November 8, 2016 or not, we have to admit that it was a historic and an unprecedented move. It is not as if others had not spoken of demonetization as a means to combat the black economy. In recent years, Kenneth Rogoff, a professor of Economics at Harvard University, and the author of a book “the Curse of Cash” has been one of the strongest voices in favour of limiting or eliminating high denomination currency from circulation, permanently, as an effective means of combating criminal activities and tax evasion. In his interviews about demonetization decision in India, Professor Rogoff, taking on board the stated claims of Government of India, noted that the motivations seemed to be similar to the ones he advocated in his book the “Curse of Cash.” However, he also outlined two specific ways the demonetization in India was proceeding differently from what he had advocated – the first was that he had advocated that demonetization be done over a long period of time, some seven years, and that too with respect to large notes; and the second was that he had recommended that large notes be done away with all together, whereas India was issuing an even bigger denomination note than the one demonetized.

From the available record, it seems that the White Paper of 2012 of the Government of India did contemplate the possibility of using demonetization as a means of combating the black

economy. In particular the White Paper of the Government of India says:

“...given the primary importance of cash in relation to both the generation and use of black money, there is no alternative but to target cash transactions in a way that will not affect those complying with the law, while making it difficult for those intending to generate and utilise black money.”²³

So at a broad level it would appear that an internal study of the Government had indicated that demonetization could be a legitimate policy tool, provided however it was effectuated in a manner that it would not affect those complying with the law. Given the secrecy, scale and speed with which the Government of India proceeded on November 8, 2016, we would have to conclude that the Government of India decided on a course of action that was not in consonance with what a study commissioned by it had recommended. This is so because demonetization affected not just or mostly the ones who were suspected as hoarding black wealth in cash, but also everyone else. And it affected the poor the most adversely.

The chief concern obviously was with the impact of demonetization on such a massive scale would be on the weaker segments of the population who essentially depended on cash transactions, both to earn a livelihood and to sustain themselves. As most of you are aware, there were many, many reports in the media, both print and electronic, that there was disruption in the lives of the people at a massive scale and that suffering was also wide and intense. There have been many reports of entire industries in certain regions having to shut shop, and many economists have opined that the

negative impact from demonetization and the time taken to inject cash back into the system in new notes, would be extensive and deep.

My own impressions are that ordinary citizens have suffered a lot more than the better off, the salaried classes and the rich. Whatever our own estimates may be as to the extent of black wealth stored in cash, when demonetization was announced, surely we would have to agree that the largest numbers feeling the pinch were the ones least likely to have black money/black wealth. And it is my belief that any policy decision that seems to affect the poor the most, and especially on this scale and intensity needs to be subjected to intense analysis, prior to its implementation with regard to what elements went into the decision making process, with regard to the impact on the people during the implementation phase, and also after the process has been completed. In fact, we are not yet sure whether the process has really been completed even now, because we still keep hearing about cash shortages for days on end, in at least a few ATMs and banks.

What the gains are, of course we will have to wait and see. The early indications are not very encouraging; however, we need to wait and see what follow on and collateral benefits there might be. However, the situation with the poor, or at least a large number that I have interacted with, is that they have suffered a lot but still believe that it may do good for the country. And many of them have consistently stated that even if they suffered more than the the ones with black wealth, it would still have been worth it. Because it sends a message that accumulation of black wealth is not acceptable to them. Dr. Y.V. Reddy argues that the decision by the Government is of questionable

merit; he nevertheless finds that the more important message from the manner in which the poor have behaved may be that the people are unwilling to abide by the amoral conduct of the well to do and agents of the state with regard to the black economy.⁴

It is my belief that the manner in which the poor have taken on the burden of demonetization raises some very important moral questions about what is to happen next. I will try to raise a few, to give a sense of what has been engrossing me for the past three months or so:

(1) Are there any attempts by the Government to assess as to the full extent of suffering and damage to the sectors and economic spheres in which the lives of the poor are most implicated? And the steps to be taken to make sure that the poor do get the succor and help to be made whole again rapidly?

That the poor have shown immense forbearance cannot be taken to mean that those of us who are better off, and the powers that be who have taken the policy decision are off the hook in being solicitous of their welfare. Nor does a victory in election absolve the ruling party of the responsibility of taking all the steps necessary to attempt ameliorating the continued negative impact on the poor. The message by the Government of India to the poor was that their suffering was in aid at reclaiming the soul of our country. To not truly reclaim that soul, in terms of the constitutional morality, would be a betrayal of the trust that the poor have placed, again, in the State, and those who control it. That should not and cannot be allowed to happen.

Is the Government of India doing

everything possible on this front? I don't know. We need to ask, and it is imperative that the Government of India explain what is being done.

(2) It has become clear that whatever gains we may reap, in terms of reducing the size of the black economy because of demonetization, there are many other segments of the population which hold and enjoy immense amounts of black wealth and who have not been affected by demonetization. In fact, many reasonable people would probably say that demonetization, even if one were to assume it to be well intentioned, has not even really dented the real holders of black wealth. The battle of black economy now really needs to move to the big players in this.

India cannot afford to perpetuate the sense that crony capitalists, the big babus and the political operatives and parties looting this country have been allowed to get away scot free. The suffering that the poor have undergone and undergo everyday implies that the goal of social justice cannot be compromised.

Yet we hear about strange things. For instance the reported new law that sources of political funding need not be revealed. How do we even begin to conceive the nature of such a move to make political funding less transparent when it is widely acknowledged that political funding plays a key role in how the power of the people vested in elected representatives and the permanent establishment gets exercised in a manner that is detrimental to public interest? And that political funding is the fount of black economy? I am at a loss as to what I should say about the contradictions in public values and destruction of constitutional morality by such a step. Can such a cynical

move be the grand gilt edging for our Constitution?

There are yet other questions that arise about maintenance of integrity of institutions and bodies of governance. The houses of parliament, the judiciary, the army, the RBI etc., are intricately implicated in a finely wrought fabric of governance by our Constitution. They cannot be compromised willily. So we need to ask questions such as:

(1) Were there consultations with a wider array of experts and/or heads of various institutions as to whether such a massive policy step ought to be taken, under what circumstances, and with what sort of preparatory steps being taken?

(2) Given that a Government of India commissioned White Paper cautioned against inflicting a burden on those who abide by the law, in the course of demonetization exercise, the sheer scale of demonetization effected on November 8, 2016 implies that everyone was caught up in the maelstrom. Surely, the Government would not have been unaware that even the law abiding citizens, and especially the poor were also going to be hit. What are the reasons and rationale by which the Government of India convinced itself that the warning in the White Paper need not be heeded?

From the perspective of constitutionalism, irrespective of whether the demonetization exercise turns out to be a roaring success or not, questions need to be asked about whether Indian constitutionalism ought to countenance such a mode of policy making and implementation. From all accounts, this was a big step, a big decision. With potentially humongous implications for the lives and welfare

of the people of India. The questions then would have to be about whether such a decision ought to be taken without wide consultations, and obtaining the inputs of the widest range of experts? Constitutionalism implies a wariness of decision making by one person or even a small coterie of people surrounding the main power centers. This is so because the risk of failure, and catastrophic consequences goes up exponentially as the scale and complexity goes up, and the coverage extends to most of the populace. Moreover, once such decisions are accepted, they become a precedent. Modern constitutionalism is always worried about the exercise of unquestioned power by a tyrant unwilling to be stopped by the magnitude of negative consequences. We need to be worried about what exercise of power on this scale, and apparently without involving other institutions would mean to making elected officials accountable to constitutional principles.

I think most of the answers to the questions I have raised above are covered by Babasaheb Ambedkar's speech at the ratification of the Constitution. He cautioned us that if we were to succeed as a constitutional democracy, we would need to do the following three things:

(a) Forswear unconstitutional means of pressurizing the State to do something or not do something and hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives.

(b) Not engage in such hero worship of the big man, or believe that one big man will solve all of our problems, that we end up suspending our faculties to see, observe, analyse, and critique the decisions being made by the big man.

(c) Finally, never waver from the goal of instantiating social justice in all walks of life, and being particularly solicitous of the welfare and progress of the weakest among us, and reduce inequalities. And bring an urgency to our endeavours in pursuing the goals set forth in our constitution. If we do not genuinely do that, and show concrete results, the poor might stop believing in the promise of democracy. And that would be disastrous for our country....

(Footnotes)

¹I am deliberately avoiding the "anarcho-capitalist" model, because we have seen no modern society built on alleged principles which advocate such complete absence of the State and any kind of collective action that even protection against child kidnapping is seen as detrimental to individual liberty.

² Friedrich Hayek, "Road to Serfdom" and "The Constitution of Liberty".

³Roy, Tirthankar: Economic History and Modern India, Redefining the Link. (Journal of Economic Perspectives 16(3):109-130 · February 2002)

⁴Heaney, Seamus: From the Cure at Troy, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment-july-dec98-pinsky_10-29/

⁵Kumar, Arun: "Understanding the Black Economy and Black Money in India" (2017)

⁶Reddy, C. Ramamanohar Reddy: Demonetisation and Black Money (2017)

⁷Ibid, page 32.

⁸Kumar, Arun: "Understanding the Black Economy and Black Money in India" (2017)

⁹Reddy, C. Ramamanohar Reddy: Demonetisation and Black Money (2017)

¹⁰Ibid, page 32.

¹¹Ibid, Foreword page xviii

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A part-time Chief Minister

Kuldip Nayar

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath has said that he would be taking five days off in a month to attend to his duties as head priest of the Gorakhnath Temple. Television networks ran this part of his speech only once. Either the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) forced the channels to take the story off or the chief minister himself felt so embarrassed that he withdrew his statement. That could be the reason why the speech did not see the light of the day in print.

What Yogi had said was that he would continue to be the head priest and attend to the religious duties along with his callings as chief minister of the state. But this is only for the consumption of the people. Otherwise, he is continuing as head priest of the temple and also in his post as chief minister.

However, one disturbing thing which is obvious is that the gulf between Hindus and Muslims is increasing further. There is an atmosphere of communal tension. More than half of UP is under the gaze of police because there is a riot-

like situation in most places. So much so the centre, despite being ruled by the BJP, has expressed anxiety over the situation.

Unfortunately, Chief Minister Yogi is openly attending to the duties as mahant and also carries out what he considers is his task as chief minister. The situation is whimsical and the opposition parties have rightly criticized the Yogi for saffronising the office of chief minister. Apparently, the RSS backing is so strong that the chief minister could get away with what is parochial and partisan.

But this should not raise eyebrows. We all know that the appointment of the Yogi as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh came as a surprise to political observers. During the UP campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the main campaigner, largely concentrated on the agenda of development. This was true despite his attempts, halfway through the election, to consolidate the Hindu vote through the use of communal speeches and words. Nor was there any major communal incident or riot, as happened prior to the 2014 national elections. But then

what had become clear was that even if the BJP were to bring in development in UP as promised, the path to winning the 2019 general elections will be through communal polarization.

This is where Adityanath, a familiar face in national politics due to his communal remarks from time to time, including those prior to the voting in western UP in an attempt to gain the Hindu and particularly the OBC vote in the face of Jat opposition, fitted it. A five-time MP from Gorakhpur since 1998, he was appointed the mahant in 2014 and the Gorakhnath mutt has been involved in political matters for decades.

What may not be as well known is the manner in which the Yogi rose to prominence in the late 1990s, gradually replacing the upper-caste mafia of the 1980s that dominated the politics of the region. This mafia had vast patronage and solid connections with political parties, but still had no communal linkages. The decline of this mafia provided space to Yogi, leading to a shift from caste-centric mafiadom to religious criminalization. Adityanath also had the advantage of being a Rajput with good connection in the dominant upper-caste besides forging successfully an alliance with the OBCs and dalits to maintain a balance. That is how he, as a 26-year-old, was fielded as the BJP candidate from the Gorakhpur Lok Sabha constituency and, as they say, the rest is history.

Emerging as a leading force and communalizing the politics of the region, there could not have been a better option than Adityanath to help the BJP win elections in 2019 as UP, with 80 Lok Sabha seats, would be vital in the party's scheme of things

to capture power at the centre. Yet, there was much speculation as both Modi and party president Amit Shah wanted a person with a developmental image to lead the state. But the RSS had its way and persuaded Modi and Shah to accept Adityanath as the chief minister.

There are a number of reasons why the BJP-RSS has selected him to head the state. First, the 2000s have witnessed the attempt by the BJP to create a strong non-Brahmin Hindutva, not only in UP but in many states in the country. While in the 1980s and early 1990s the BJP was viewed as largely an upper-caste Hindu party, since at least the mid-1990s in UP there has been an attempt to consciously mobilize and bring into the ambit of the party non-Yadav OBCs and non-Jatav dalits, who constitute the large majority, in order to meet the challenge posed by the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

The chief minister should be attending to the immediate problems facing the state like the deaths at the Gorakhpur hospital and the burning issue of the Banaras Hindu University where the students have been agitating. The recent issue about the Taj Mahal, which is our heritage, having been removed from the list of UP Tourism attractions has added to the chapter of controversies.

We have the bitter experience of having part-time Prime Ministers. They embarrassed the party or a combination of parties and did little work when so many problems were awaiting solutions. This is what the BJP and chief minister Adityanath should remember because the party won the assembly polls on the *(Continued from Page 8)*

Llargest Money-Laundering Plan

Slamming the Narendra Modi government over sliding economic growth and increasing job losses, former Union minister Arun Shourie has likened demonetisation to suicide, saying the latter is too "a bold step". He also called the Modigovernment as "government of two and-a-half persons".

"This is a government by `ilhaam' (revelation). The PM has the `ilhaam' one night that demonetisation should be done and he does it. In any case it was a bold step. I have to remind you suicide too is a bold step," Shourie said in an interview with NDTV when asked why in his view the government went in for demonetisation. He said, "It was the largest money-laundering scheme ever, conceived and implemented by the government." It was an "idiotic jolt", he said, "everyone who had black converted it into white".

"Which argument (offered by the government in defence of demonetisation) today survives?"

Black money? All of it turned white. Terrorism? Terrorists are still coming into India," he said. Shourie also took a dig at BJP president Amit Shah, terming him "that famous economist" and underscoring that official figures cannot be brushed under the carpet.

"This is a government of two-and-a-half persons, Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and one in-house lawyer. They don't have the expertise and they have surrounded themselves by persons who don't have the expertise," he said.

Mess in Education
Sandeep Pandey

BHU IIT

The controversial Vice Chancellor of Banares Hindu University, Professor Girish Chandra Tripathi's has now gone on leave indefinitely. It turns out he was not only a disaster for the university but was also eroding the credibility of the reputed Indian Institute of Technology on campus as its Chairperson, Board of Governors. The Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj mentioned IITs among India's achievements in the United Nations General Assembly speech but this VC could care less.

His name was not there in the panel of five for appointment to Chairman, Board of Governors of IIT at BHU, yet he was foisted upon IIT by the then Minister for Human Resources Development Smriti Irani. Irani's educational qualification is suspect and Tripathi's academic record is dubious, with no research publication in his name to date. As mediocre people meddled in the affairs of academic institutions of national and international importance, it was bound to boomerang at some point. While Irani had to be replaced as Minister of HRD because of mishandling campus after campus, Tripathi now stands thoroughly exposed as anti-intellectual, intransigent, morally bankrupt, patriarchal, arrogant, irrational and tyrannical administrator. His capacity for shamelessness is unfathomable. Three days after the incident of sexual harassment on campus on 21 September which snowballed into a major controversy, he tried to regularise the appointment of Dr. O.P. Upadhyay, convicted of sexual misconduct by a Fiji Court, as

Medical Superintendent of the Hospital on campus. It was because of his trying to push such cases of inappropriate candidates that Professor at IIT Gandhinagar, Michel Danino, also a member of Indian Council of Historical Research, had resigned from the university's executive council in 2015 November.

Tripathi treated the University as his fiefdom and the IIT a toy to play with. It turns out that he had not finalised the minutes of meeting of IIT Board of Governors held on 8 July, 2016 with more than a year having elapsed. Until these minutes are passed next meeting cannot take place. Other members of the Board suggested to him to call a meeting to finalise the minutes. But Tripathi remained incommunicado on this issue.

As a result of Tripathi's shortsightedness important decisions are pending implementation. Appointments of five Deans of IIT - that of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Research and Development, Alumni Affairs and Faculty Affairs - has been put on hold as acting Deans manage the day-to-day affairs. Besides the Director, Deans play an important role in running of IITs. Several appointments, especially security related, are also awaiting finalisation of Board decisions. In the light of recent events on campus the importance of security appointments cannot be underestimated. But the most serious damage it has caused to the IIT is that democratic functioning of administration has been usurped. Whereas in the normal

course decisions were taken in Board meetings and implemented, now since the last over one year every decision has been personally approved by the Vice Chancellor as Board's chair with other members having no say.

According to rules at least two meetings should be held every year. Only a special meeting was held in June 2017 to approve the pay scale in which the VC refused to discuss the approval of minutes of 8 July 2016 meeting saying that special meeting was called to discuss only a specific matter. He almost held the institution to ransom. Now that he has been made to proceed on indefinite leave, the situation of Chairperson, IIT Board of Governors has been left in a limbo. The IIT is in a state of uncertainty not knowing what is in store for future. It is unthinkable that it didn't prick a pygmy VC's conscience, who subscribes to an ideology which constantly harps on nationalism, that he was hampering the functioning of an institute which is a symbol of national pride.

It would be instructive to see who the various chairpersons of several other IITs are? IIT Kanpur, Board is headed by R.C. Bhargava, Chairman, Maruti Udyog Ltd., IIT Delhi by Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairman, Aditya Birla Group, IIT Mumbai by Dilip Sanghvi, Chairman, Sun Pharma, IIT Kharagpur by Sanjiv Goenka, Chairman, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, IIT Chennai by Pawan Goenka, Managing Director, Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd., IIT

Guwahati by Dr. Rajiv Modi, Chairman & MD of Cadila Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and IIT Roorkee may have a new Chairman in the form of Anil Kakodkar. Most IIT Boards are chaired by industry leaders who are there because of their vision and dynamism. Can we imagine any of them sitting on minutes of a Board meeting for over a year?

Let us compare Tripathi with the names that were originally proposed by the IIT Board from among

whom it wanted its chairperson to be chosen. The panel of five included N.R. Narayana Murthy, co-founder of Infosys, Pankaj Chandra, earlier Director of Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru and now VC, Ahmedabad University, Kiran Karnik, presently one of the Directors of Reserve Bank of India, Sanjay Dhande, former Director, IIT Kanpur and Narendra Ahuja, formerly Professor at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. All of them established themselves and build their credibility over years.

What is Girish Chandra Tripathi's claim to hold this prestigious position? He has no achievements to show in any field which makes him fit to be even a Professor, leave aside positions of VC and Chairperson of Board of Governors, that too of an IIT.

The performance of G.C. Tripathi has been so hopeless that even the persons involved in elevating him to a position for which he was not deserving must be taken to task.

Taking Institutions Backwards

On 11 September, 1893 Swami Vivekanand delivered his famous speech in the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago. The Bhartiya Janata Party government decided to celebrate the event and Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the youth of the country. Incidentally, he shares his first name with Vivekanand's original name Narendra Nath Datta.

Vivekanand has inspired the youth of this country for long. His preachings are thought provoking. For example, he says, 'As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a Personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what Vedanta call atheism.' At another place he pleads with his audience, 'If you are not a prophet, there never has been anything true of God...Everyone of us will have to become a prophet.'

However, when this occasion was celebrated on 11 September, 2017 on university campuses, students were

asked to memorise the speech of Swami Vivekanand delivered in 1893 and regurgitate it. When students did not even bother to learn it by rote, they were allowed to read it from paper. Such is the sorry state of affairs of our academic institutions. If Swami were alive today he would have cringed in despair.

He wanted everybody to have complete faith in themselves and feel like a sovereign but our higher educational institutions do not want our students to develop independent thinking. Had the students been asked to give their comments on Vivekanand's speech they would have had to exercise their brain. But it is amazing that university level students are just being asked to memorise and reproduce a speech. The entire idea of putting a curb on students' thinking is contradictory to Vivekanand's idea of empowerment. How can the students have belief in themselves if they are merely activating not the analytical power of brain but only its photographic ability? Quite clearly the authorities want to produce followers and not leaders.

That Vivekanand is not taken seriously by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of ruling dispensation in India, is also clear from his statement in the same speech, 'We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth.' However, in the context of current migration of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar the Home Minister Rajnath Singh says they are illegal immigrants and not refugees who have not followed the procedure to apply for asylum, but it is not clear whether Government of India would welcome them even if they were to seek entry through proper channel. They obviously don't have Vivekanand's large heart. Narendra Modi chose not to raise the issue of persecution of Rohingya Muslims during a meeting with its famous leader, Aung San Suu Kyi in his recent maiden visit to Myanmar. That demonstrates India's overall insensitivity towards Rohingyas.

Vivekanand also said in Chicago,

‘Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendent, fanaticism, have long possessed the beautiful earth. They have filled earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now.’

However sectarianism, bigotry, fanaticism and violence have increased with the BJP’s ascent to power. Some Sangh parivar loyalists can argue that this is in response to the rise of similar tendencies in Islam globally. The moot question is could there have been a different response rooted in Vivekanand’s and Mahatma Gandhi’s ideologies to it?

Also it is worrisome that senior functionaries of the BJP governments are indulging in negating scientific and rational thinking. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath while speaking at the convocation of the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow on 16 September claimed that China was researching how Hindu God Ganesh’s head slain by his father Lord Shiv was replaced with an elephant’s head and exhorted the Indian doctors to delve into the treasure of our scriptures. He also beseeched the faculty and students to find the herb which brought back Laxman to life. According to him Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was inspired by the Mahabharat to work on missiles. Yogi Adityanath holds a Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics.

The State Minister for Human Resources Development at the centre Satya Pal Singh claimed in a programme of All India Council for Technical Education on 20

(Continued on Page 10)

Y. S Subramanya

Under the veteran socialist leader, the late C.G.K Reddy and Sogal Nagabhushana, the erstwhile state of Mysore in Karnataka had seen a flurry of socialist activities with a band of dedicated, young and educated student leaders. Both J.P and Lohia were the guiding stars for the enthusiastic band of workers who laid the foundation of socialist movement in the Mysore area. Y. S, Subramanya, who passed away on 25-09-2017 at the age of 93 was one among such unsung heroes of the socialist movement, who were the witness to the birth, rise and fall of the great socialist movement in this part of the country.

It was the job of Y.S Subramanya to supervise the distribution and sale of “Jagruti Patrike”, started under the stewardship of the late Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya. The late veteran journalist Khadri Shamanna was its editor. Initially, it was published from Mumbai and subsequently shifted to Dharwad, Karnataka. Subramanya had opened a small office in Balepet of the busy Majestic area of Bangalore and he and other young band of enthusiastic socialist workers would read the catchy headlines of the paper loudly, and within a few hours of the receipt of the Jagruti, the copies would have been sold out. Whatever the subscription collected would be utilized in the evening by Subramanya and other youngsters to purchase groundnuts and that was their staple food. He used to narrate these anecdotes and with all pride, he would say “We used to eat *Kadlekai* (Groundnuts), drink some water and then go to bed!” They were indeed a great, dedicated band of selfless socialists.

Hailing from a traditional family, it was great news when he joined the Bata Shoe Company and incidentally, this company was a shield for all his activities. All national and state leaders like Yusuf Meherally, C.G.K Reddy, S. Gopalagowda, J.H Patel, S. Venkatram and a host of others were in his close touch. None missed him while in Bangalore. Another reason for this was the acute shortage of currency in the hands of our leaders. He was a willing aid to all of them. He was a treasure house of Mysore socialists to this author and others who were curious to know about the activities of the socialist movement of that period. He himself remained in the background and contributed significantly for the movement.

Come Emergency in 1975, he became very active. He along with a band of activists would collect underground literature and without any sound and fury, would see to it that the same was distributed among the general public. Many of the English literature on Emergency he got translated to Kannada and arranged for its distribution. None could cast their doubt on Subramanya.

After the lifting of the Emergency, a small meeting of the socialists was held at his initiative and it was decided to bring out a series of booklets on J.P and other socialist thinkers in Kannada. The publishing house was known as “*Janaprakashana*”. First, the book on J.P’s Total Revolution was brought out and was priced at just

(Continued on Page 15)

Farmers Exist Despite the State and Pundits

Sankara Naayanan

Corporates Tata (Rs558 cr from Gujarat government for Nano plant) and Laxmi Mittal (Rs1200 cr from Punjab government for a refinery) had received mega government loans at 0.1 per cent rate of interest and 20 years repayment period: This is just the tip of the iceberg. Super efficient corporates and their super meritorious pundits will collapse like pack of cards if the state freebies are withdrawn. The naked truth is that farmers are subsidising the entire nation for decades because we don't pay the real price for the farm produce. Poor subsidise the rich!

Most of the farmers and farm labourers get credit from Microfinance Institutions and private moneylenders at interest rates ranging from 25 to 60 per cent and much more with fortnightly cycle of repayment. Contrast this with the free credits enjoyed by the Tatas and Mittals.

Whenever a farm loan waiver is demanded, pundits say it will solve the farm crisis. Many thanks for admitting there is a farm crisis after killing 4 lakh farmers. Pundits further argue that it will only help the big farmers because most of the small and marginal farmers are not given loans by the banks. If they are so much concerned with the small farmers, why didn't they tell this injustice/anomaly earlier?

Then they lecture that this money should be invested productively to improve rural infrastructure like roads, irrigation, cold storage, market facility, modern technology to step

up productivity etc. That, according to them, is the real help needed by the farmers. 'It is disincentive to those honest farmers who repaid the loans' is one more dharmic discourse.

Yet another sagacious advice from pundits: Farming sector is burdened with too many people. That is why it became non-viable (Not because they deliberately made it non-viable). So 50 per cent of them must be taken out of agriculture and employed elsewhere. World Bank also gave the same directive to Manmohan Singh 25 years ago. Who will employ the people taken out from agriculture? Should we dump them in Bay of Bengal or Arabian Sea? If you ask these questions, the pundits will sidetrack the issue putting the blame on politicians, non-governance, corruption etc.

When massive corporate loans are written off regularly, selfish classes call that an incentive and imperative. Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian justifies those waivers in fashionable language. Industrialist had failed not deliberately. In spite of their best efforts, they lost money due to reasons beyond their control, international economic crisis, recession, lack of demand in the market and so on and so forth. But farm loan waiver is cursed as leaky train/drain of tax payers' money, because farmers are lazy and drunkards. And they have no problems like the ones faced by the industrialists. You need really an iron-like heart to forget the droughts, floods, price crash etc faced by the hapless farmers. No Arundhati

Battacharya will grumble about damage to credit discipline; nor any dharmic lecture as a slap for those industrialists who repaid loans.

0From 2004-05 to 2016-17, more than 55 lakh crore rupees worth tax concessions (Revenue Foregone) were given to corporates in a free market economy for nothing. Pure crony capitalism. No Pundit lectures us on using this mega freebie instead on infrastructure development. Nor any discourse that there can never be a Free Lunch. 'Why should a Maai Baap sarkar dole out public money to private individuals' like lecture has taken a long leave because they share a part of this super loot. Sagacious advices like banks will fail, credit discipline will suffer, infrastructure can be built with this money etc are not applicable to corporate freebies or loan waivers. So much for the neutrality of our pundits.

As regards the building of rural infrastructure for helping the farmers: Punjab has the best roads and mundis. 98 per cent of the land is getting assured irrigation. It is a world record. Punjabi farmers' productivity is comparable with their counterparts in the USA and China. Yet Punjabi farmers are in severe debt crisis. Will the classes respond why Punjabi farmers commit suicide despite the best infrastructure and productivity?

If you compare these pundits with pigs, it is real disgrace to the pigs. The anti-farmer pundits will shut their mouths only if the farmers greet them suitably.

Whipping Boys of Policy

Devinder Sharma

Farmers continue to subsidise living conditions for the country's growing middle class at the expense of their own lives and livelihood.

Studies in Punjab have shown that 98 % of rural farming households of that state were in debt, and that in 94 % of the cases, the average expenditure exceeded monthly earnings.

The picture that may come to mind if one is asked to visualize an Indian farmer would probably be that of a frail person clad in a sullied dhoti-kurta, with a loose turban on his head and worn out jutis on his feet. And if he happens to come calling at one's house, one may in all likelihood prefer to meet him outside the gates rather than let him into the house and spoil, say the expensive carpet on the drawing room floor.

Not everyone treats a farmer so, but many do. There are people who question the media fuss about farm loan waiver in UP being as low as Rs 10 to Rs 300. They feel farmers should accept what they receive with gratitude as they don't pay income tax and also get huge subsidies. They believe farmers won't have bad loans if they were not lazy and worked hard in the first place.

Farm loan waivers coming to 9 paise, 19 paise, 90 paise, Rs2, Rs6 and so on, and of 4814 farmers getting a waiver of less than Rs100 have been highlighted by the media. According to reports, 11.93 lakh farmers in UP have so far received loan waiver

certificates under the first phase involving Rs7371 crore from the total package of Rs36,359 crore the UP govt has promised small and marginal farmers.

While 4814 farmers received waiver of less than Rs100 per head, another 6895 got waivers of Rs100 to Rs500 on outstanding loans; 5583 farmers got waiver certificates for amounts ranging between Rs500 and Rs1000 and as many as 41690 received waiver certificates for Rs1000 to Rs10000. Altogether, 57982 farmers got loan waivers under Rs10000.

This was only the first phase of the much talked about farm loan waiver. But more than Rs29000 crore in waivers are yet to come. At the given rate, the number of farmers getting paltry sums waived would add up to a few lakhs.

Many would say the amounts waived are princely sums and that the farmers should remain perpetually obliged to the state for its largesse. And such gratitude fits well with the image of the farmer implanted in the imagination. But it is at best a cruel joke.

The fact remains that the successive governments and large sections of the middle class have treated farmers as a burden; they feel farmers live on alms the society affords them. The entire effort today is to offload the burden as quickly as possible.

But is the farmer really lazy?

Does he not work hard to earn a livelihood? A report published in 'Gaon Connection' (September 12, 2017) provides the answer. The report quoting analytics of the department of agriculture of UP, says on average every month a farmer incurs a net loss of Rs1307. Against an expenditure of Rs6230, the net returns a farmer receives is only Rs4923. At this rate, the daily income a farmer earns is barely Rs164. In neighbouring Haryana, a study by the Haryana Agricultural University (HAU) had computed the average income from wheat cultivation at Rs800 per acre.

With such a low income, how can a farmer's family survive? One can't even rear a cow on such low incomes. Year after year, farmers have struggled to produce bumper harvests. But little do they realize that they are actually cultivating losses. The minimum support price (MSP) worked out for almost all crops are below the cost of production. If one were to look at the cost of production of different crops in different states and compare them with the prices farmers get, one would find that farmers are suffering huge losses. They are, therefore, left with no option but to seek credit, often from multiple sources, and get into a debt trap.

Studies in Punjab have shown that 98 % of rural farming households of that state were in debt, and that in 94 % of the cases, the average expenditure exceeded monthly earnings. If a front-line agricultural

Purushottam Lal Kaushik

state like Punjab has such a problem, the condition of the farming households in the rest of the country can be imagined. All this has happened because successive governments have denied the farmers their rightful income. Agriculturalists have been deliberately kept impoverished to ensure that food prices remain low for the urban population.

In other words, the farmers have been subsidizing the nation all these years. It is high time the middle class understood how they are directly responsible for the agrarian crisis in the country.

Loan waivers may bring short term relief to the farmers. But their expectations are belied when even that little solace does not reach them. In UP, although the government promised to waive the outstanding loans of small farmers, they are finally written off unpaid loans only till March 2016. And the waiver is only for those farmers whose accounts are linked to Aadhaar. Is it not grossly unfair?

At the same time, when it comes to striking off toxic loans of corporate, the government is more than keen to oblige. As much as Rs81,683 crore in bad debt of corporate was quietly written for the FY 2016-17. No defaulting company got loan waiver as paltry as Rs100 or Rs10000 or even Rs 1 lakh. Each company gets several crores of rupees written off and that too without hassles. That is how economic policies are designed. Writing off corporate loan is treated as a measure aiding economic growth, whereas writing off farm loan is treated as credit indiscipline and a drain on the national exchequer.

Former Union minister and Socialist leader Purushottam Lal Kaushik passed away on 5th October 2017, due to age-related ailments at his home in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district. He was 87. Born on September 24, 1930, in Mahasamund, Kaushik had obtained his LLB degree from the Nagpur University in 1954. Inspired by the ideas and political movements launched by Socialist leaders Rammanohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan, Purushottam Kaushik had entered into politics as a Socialist Party member led by Dr Lohia and became Secretary General of the Samyukta Socialist party (SSP). He was pioneer of Socialist movement in the united Madhya Pradesh and led many farmers' agitations in the sixties and seventies in the state. He formed 'Khetihar Sangh' in pursuit of fighting for the socio-economic and educational up-liftment of agricultural labourers and adivasis.

He was elected as an MLA from Mahasamund seat in 1972 on united Socialist party ticket to the then Madhya Pradesh Assembly. Purushottam Kaushik was imprisoned during the Emergency for many months defending the democratic aspirations of the

common masses. In the year 1977, he was elected to Lok Sabha from Raipur parliamentary constituency as Janata Party candidate by defeating Congress stalwart Vidya Charan Shukla.

He had served as tourism and civil aviation minister in the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai's cabinet during 1977-1979. He headed the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in the Prime Minister Charan Singh's cabinet during July 1979-January 1980. During 1980 to 1989 he was associated with Lok Dal, Janata Party and Janata Dal respectively and elected to Lok Sabha again as Janata Dal candidate from Durg parliamentary constituency.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh expressed his deep condolence over the death of the veteran leader. In his condolence message, the CM said the state had lost a legendary socialist thinker and well-wisher of farmers." Kaushik toiled tirelessly for the welfare of depressed sections of the society - villagers, farmers and the poor. He served the state as an MLA, MP and central minister," Singh said.

—Qurban Ali

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promise of development. The greatest harm to the office of chief minister is that it is seen something like a temporary arrangement.

The UP chief minister staying away from his Lucknow office with all security to perform the rituals as the head priest for the five days is a

violation of the Supreme Court order stating that public money cannot be used for religious purposes. A PIL should be filed to protest against the loss it has caused to the concept of democracy. Even otherwise, the larger question that needs an answer is whether Adityanath is a mahant first or the CM.

Right-Wing Surge in Germany

D. K. Giri

Liberals as well as progressives in Germany are shocked by the 19th Bundestag (Parliament) results. For the first time in German politics a right-wing anti-immigration, anti-Europe Party Alternative for Germany (AfD, entered the Parliament with 12.6 per cent votes translating into 94 MPs.

Said, a senior Social Democratic Party member, “the elections are a breaking point for parliamentary democracy in Germany”. His statement reflects their shock and disappointment at the right-wing surge not only in German politics but also as the whole of Europe is experiencing a shift to the far-right in their respective countries.

Undeniably, the German results are dramatic. The incumbent Chancellor Angela Merkel secured a fourth term albeit with a diminished electoral base. Her Party CDU/CSU suffered a massive loss of votes percentage and seats and got reduced from 41.5 per cent of popular votes to 32.9 per cent and from 311 seats to 246 in the Parliament, their lowest score since 1949.

The second largest, party SPD which was a partner in her previous Government met a similar fate, down from 25.7 per cent to 20.5 per cent of votes and from 193 to 153 Members of Parliament. This was the SPD’s worst electoral show since the Second World War.

The other four parties in the Bundestag are the right-wing extremist party AfD with 12.6 per cent, centre-right Free Democratic

Party (FDP) with 10.7 per cent, the Left, Grand Linke, 9.2 per cent and the Greens, 8.9 per cent.

Notably, the coalition building process post-election is difficult and lengthy in Germany. It is likely that CDU/CSU will invite the FDP and the Greens to join them. In the last Parliament Merkel entered into a coalition with her biggest rival SPD to form the Government.

Surely, the SPD finds the defeat too bitter to stomach easily and have refused to join Merkel’s coalition Government again. Instead they would rather reflect on their performance and re-build the party. Its leader Martin Schultz who had distinguished himself as the President of the European Parliament failed to prevent Merkel from winning her fourth consecutive term.

As she faced the doubts and dilemmas of German voters over her open-door immigration policy the SPD did not have an alternative and persuasive narrative. That is why, the anti-Merkel voters went to right and left wing parties who could not form a Government on their own.

Certainly, the SPD, a progressive social democratic party could have formed the Government if they could articulate the anti-Merkel sentiments of the voters into a coherent agenda of their own. That was not to be. The Social Democrats hooked to a centre-left approach, are not known to be inventive in their ideological platforms.

Coming back to the right-wing

lurch of European politics the whole of Europe is swept by a new wave of right-wing populism and extremism for the last two decades. Belgium, which headquarters the supranational European Union had a ‘black Sunday’ in 1991 when the right-wing populist Flemish Block gained 6.8 per cent of the national vote to enter the Parliament.

Likewise, there are the Dutch Freedom Party, Front National in France, Austrian Freedom Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Finns Party in Finland, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, Viktor Orban’s Fidesz Party and another far-right Party Jobbik in Hungary, Sweden’s right-wing racist Party Sweden Democrats and Golden Dawn in Greece, etc.

All these parties are anti-immigration, ultra-nationalist, anti-European Union, isolationist and perfectionist. The biggest threat posed by these is to the European Union - by far the most successful regional integration of 28 countries, now 27 with UK’s exit.

Remember, the EU signified functional federalism, multiculturalism and pooling of sovereignties for greater good. It is the beacon of hope, peace and prosperity for the world, especially as it was born after the destruction of Europe in two world wars and disruption of its politics and economy in several smaller regional wars.

Pertinently, the right-wing parties want to pull out of the EU. The relentless populist campaign by UKIP in Britain took UK out of

European Union. The Sweden Democrats and Hungary's Jobbik want to hold referendums on their membership of the European Union. So do almost all the European right-wing parties. There are other concomitant damages that might accrue from their policies.

Questionably, how are the right-wing parties gaining support from the educated, sophisticated electorate of Europe? All of them are falling prey to the populist rhetoric of the right-wing parties. The answer to this is not hard to find. European countries have been mono-cultural societies. Their concept of nationhood rested on a single culture - one language, one religion, one race, etc.

Although they accommodated other non-Europeans owing to their colonial compulsions, their policies and attitude were not geared to pluralism. Even the construction of the EU did not help much as it could not transcend the white racism and Europeanism so far.

Indian Model

Hence, can the Union of India offer a model of politics to the European Union and its member countries? India, barring the latest activism of the Hindutva brigade, homogenizing the culture by imposing food habits etc has been a viable model for multi-culturalism and political federalism. Even the majority religion, Hinduism is pluralist and polytheist in its practice.

India recognizes multiple identities like caste, colour, faith, language, region, etc. But subsuming all of them is a supra identity, citizenship, based on the Constitution. Consequently, nation and state became two complementary but distinct political and cultural units. The principles, policies and practices

are reflective of pluralism in every walk of life. Of course, there are exceptions but exceptions do not make the rule.

Clearly, Europe should look at Indian pluralism which synthesizes modernity and tradition and absorbs alien cultures into its framework. Only in such a pluralist framework can one stunt the growth of right-wing extremist tendencies. In fact, right-wing populism grows in the absence of a narrative that accommodates 'the other', the so-called culture usurper while, at the same time, it assures the majority that they are not threatened.

Curiously, while the right-wing parties speak to the majority and capture the gullible, the progressive parties talk of the minorities. A pluralist agenda will appeal to the majority and minority, the insider and the outsider.

Let's finish with a word on the refugee crisis that gripped the European countries and caused the seismic shock in the electoral results. Many countries, including India, are facing a large humanitarian refugee problem. But dealing with the refugees is like treating the consequences of a problem, not the cause.

Europeans have been reluctant to engage with the Middle-East, leaving it to the Americans to handle. But by being closer to the Middle-East than the Americans, they have to deal with the refugees. Secondly, they should treat the refugees as transient displacees, who should eventually be helped or facilitated to return to their homeland. That would mean bringing an end to the fratricidal wars in the Middle-East.

However, identity, pluralism, a spirit of accommodation are the

keys to lock right-wing populism and extremism. These principles ought to be embraced and practiced by progressives, in fact, all politicians in any country. Democracy which has become a universal political aspiration will be fructuous only with such principles. Without them, democracies will be chaotic, one-party authoritarianism, and worse, incapable of delivering the political and economic goods. European countries will have to look East to make their democracies viable and vibrant.

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September in Delhi that Shivakar Babuji Talpade in India invented the air plane 8 years before the Wright brothers. According to him plants in Ravana's kingdom were not required to be watered as they contained a mythical elixir Chandramani. He wants engineering students to learn about Hindu deity Vishwakarma, puranas and mythology. Singh holds a Masters degree in Chemistry and is a former Indian Police Services officer.

By not letting analytical thinking develop in students the RSS is ensuring that there will be no one to ask Yogi when he makes the suggestion to doctors to research how an elephant's head replaced beheaded Lord Ganesh that if indeed doctor's were successful in doing this surgery whose brain would the resultant creature possess - human's or elephant's? Or they don't want any students to ask Satya Pal Singh if India possessed the know-how of making planes why is it not investing in rediscovering that knowledge rather than buying Rafale jets from France?

—Sandeep Pandey

Towards Understanding Mahatma Gandhi

A. Raghu Kumar

Mahatma Gandhi introduced non-violence as a method of political struggle in India's anti-colonial struggle. This method was adopted as a considered choice in many later struggles in many parts of the world. Post-Gandhi, the method of evaluation of a political struggle has to undergo a necessary test on this new touchstone. Even the chances of violent struggles, except for few internal coups, have become almost bleak. Another difficulty in understanding Gandhi has always been that unlike other intellectuals and activists, Gandhi has never 'become' a final product, rather he was always and eternally in the stage of 'being'. Also, an intriguing phenomenon for many – he provokes love, respect and veneration from some and, simultaneously wrath, abuse and ridicule from many others.

We know him as the chief architect of freedom struggle but what made Gandhi – the saint and the political activist, the two widely held opposite views to co-exist in him in due proportions deserved serious investigation. Like the publication of Marx's "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" of 1844 in 1930s which offered fresh reading of Marx, Gandhi also needed an explanatory note from a philosopher to understand his varied stands on various issues, most of the times axiomatic, but yet antagonistic. In a correspondence with Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, it appears he left it to the philosophers to interpret him. To the charge that he contradicted himself, Walt Whitman, the American poet, once replied that it

was not that there were contradictions in him, but the fact that he embraced multitudes made his critics to understand so. In the history of thought, Socrates, Marx and Gandhi present such paradoxes. They are contradictory because they embraced multitudes in multitudes.

Gandhi lost much of his ground almost in his own country, except for some **Ashramite Gandhians**. Marxists and all shades of Communists, Ambedkarites, RSS and other pro-Hindu forces, and even Muslims for whose cause he derived the ire of Hindu organizations vilified Gandhi to such an extent that Gandhi regaining his ground in his mother country is almost uncertain as on now. There is one emerging Swatch Bharat icon Gandhi, a poster boy for only cleanliness on his own birthday. We have successfully and without remorse disowned a person who all through his life devoted his time and energies to the freedom of his country and people. Instead we started running after those who consciously acted against the freedom struggle, ridiculed it, or even derailed it on every opportunity. For Tagore he was "the Mahatma", or 'the great soul in beggar's garb'; for Winston Churchill he was a 'half-naked fakir' and a 'cunning fox'; for Jinnah he was a 'cunning fox', and 'a Hindu revivalist'; for Ambedkar he was "a blue-blooded Tory" and "a fanatic Hindu"; 'a mascot of the bourgeoisie' for Marxist Palme Dutt; 'the most important class collaborator within the nationalist movement' for M. N. Roy. Through his acts and gestures,

writings and expressions, he fashioned his own 'sahasranama'! We can also see a convergence of thought – though emanating from various people representing various political ideologies! How could one individual be defined or understood in so many ways by so many people having divergent goals and political ideologies is a wonderful subject matter for another independent analysis.

Presently, we, who sincerely take pride in the role of the Mahatma, need to understand how Gandhi could combine a saint and a politician within himself, and how far his understanding is based on the traditional texts he revered and where he consciously differed in arriving at certain conclusions. In this effort, recently I came across the works of Anthony J. Parel, a Canadian historian, author and academic. It appears, he has so far written four books on Gandhi – (1) "Hind Swaraj and other Writings (1997)", (2) "Gandhi, Freedom and Self-Rule (2000)", (3) "Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony (2008)" and (4) "Pax Gandhiana : The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi (2016)". So far, I could lay my hands only on the first and the third one. Here, I prefer to present my initial impressions on my first reading of his work "Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony". For this work, Parel constructed the philosophy of Gandhi on one of the important traditional concepts, "Purushartha".

It almost begins with an anecdote

when Gandhi was in South Africa, raged with so many doubts about his future course of action. “..... *In 1894, in an attempt to meet an intellectual crisis that he was experiencing in South Africa, he wrote his famous letter to Rajchandbhai ... The letter raised twenty-seven questions regarding such grave matters as the nature of the soul, God, Moksha, the universe, avatars, etc. As many as five of these questions were connected with moksha, the fourth purushartha; what it was and how it might be attained. Rajchandbhai’s answer was that moksha was the release of the soul from the state of ignorance and its involvement with the affairs of the world. Mystical knowledge and withdrawal from the world were the chief means of attaining it.*” [p. 14] Gandhi accepted the first part of the advice, but not the second, the part that required the withdrawal from the world. Instead of withdrawing from it, he sought to engage with it. He decided to plunge into politics of South Africa – and the rest is history, writes Parel. Rajchandbhai was disturbed by the fateful turn that Gandhi had taken. He went so far as to warn him – “*for the good of his soul – not to get too involved in the politics of Natal.*”

What prompted Gandhi to understand the elements of Hindu traditional texts and philosophy differently than others? In fact, it is not the first or the last occasion that he contradicted the traditional wisdom. His many such conclusions violently differed with many so called experts of his times in his life. We find such stunning and unconventional deductions of Gandhi on various texts and issues, including “*Yoga Vasishtha*” or

“*Bhagavad Gita*”. Rajchandbhai had supplied him with an important reading list, for the resolution of his philosophical doubts, which included Yogavasishtha, a lengthy philosophic poem, an account of conversation between a despondent Prince Rama of Ayodhya and the ancient sage Vaishta. Rama was not sure that he could combine his kingly duties “*Artha*” with the pursuit of “*Moksha*”. Vasishta advised him that he could, provided he exercised his “*purushartha*” in a proper balance. In Hindu philosophy, it is considered that along with Chaturvarnya [fourfold class/caste], Chaturashrama [fourfold stages of life], the Purushartha [fourfold aims and objectives of life] is also a defining attribute of human beings. One of the major obstacles that stood in the way of its proper exercise was the belief in fate. Yogavasishtha’s position was that there was no such thing as fate, and that it existed only in the imagination of the weak and the indolent. This reading allowed Gandhi to actively involve himself in the social problems faced by the weak around him, while simultaneously continuing his endeavors for the Moksha, the liberation of the individual soul from the wheel of ‘samsara’.

Why Gandhi had chosen Gopal Krishna Gokhale as his “Political Guru”? Because he found in Gokhale more balanced understanding of this concept of purushartha. The author thus quotes the conclusion arrived at by Gandhi on this issue: “*No Indian who aspires to follow the way of true dharma can afford to remain aloof from politics ... One who aspires to a truly religious (dharmic) life cannot fail to undertake public service as his life mission*” [quoted from M.K.Gandhi, The Collected Works of

Mahatma Gandhi, 51:259 at p.20 of this book]. This leads us to the understanding of Gandhi that he attempted to redefine the concepts of ‘*purushartha*’ so as to suit the requirements of the current stage of human history. Writing in July 1930 from Yeravada jail, it appears, he asked for help from one of his female disciples to find a gender sensitive alternative description for this word “purushartha”. He did not accept the traditional interpretation as the correct interpretation. However, he took his clue from Gita [Gita V:13 compares the body to a city, in which dwells the spirit]. The spirit being gender-neutral, things done for its sake could have nothing to do with the gender of the ‘doer’. So, the word ‘purushartha’ has been retained as a gender-free concept. The most important contribution that Gandhi makes to our understanding of the concept of purushartha concerns its relationship to Karma and fate. Gandhi believed that the law of Karma operated in a universe subject to divine guidance and that God’s grace could therefore cancel the results of bad Karma. This is the result of the influence of Vaishnava philosophy on him. Arguably, the best known statement on the dynamic nature of the relationship of politics to moksha is found, according to Parel, in Gandhi’s autobiography. Those who aspire to moksha “*cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics*” [quoted from CW, 39:3 in this book pp.20-21].

The great thinkers of India, including Sankara and Ramanuja, supported the ascendance of “*moksha*”, the last of the purusharthas, over all the others. In fact, prior to these developments in

Indian philosophy during the 8th century and onwards, saints or truth-seekers had never withdrawn themselves totally from mundane activities. All saints, thinkers and philosophers from Vyasa, Vasishta, Sukra or even Satyakama Jabali to the last well known case of Kautilya did not restrict themselves to mere contemplative ashramite life. They were always consulted, and on many instances they actively participated in day-to-day affairs of the society. This asceticism as the only means of moksha, and moksha as the only important purushartha is the tendency that crept into Indian philosophic tradition much later. According to Parel, the achievements of Kautilya were rendered nugatory and, as a result, Indian political philosophy stagnated for nearly two millennia. Gandhi revived the original tradition of India i.e., of combining the four purusharthas into a lively dynamic relation.

Politics and Economics: In Part II of the book, Parel deals with politics and economics as part of 'artha', underscoring the significance attached to them by Gandhi. Historically, he says, the rise of the renouncer (Brahminic) movement compromised the importance of artha. Gandhi reversed this trend and restored artha its due place in the scheme of the four purusharthas. Artha, according to Gandhi, represents a positive human value and contributes to the material well-being of humans. Only when pursued 'artha' for 'artha' sake, alienated from the other purusharthas, it becomes harmful. Parel rejects the description of Gandhi by some as 'utopian' or 'anarchist', and considers him as a constructive political thinker.

Gandhi considered "Non-violent nationalism is a necessary condition of corporate or civilized life". He had wholeheartedly embraced the modern idea of nation. According to Parel, Gandhi's conception of nation was heavily influenced by the civic or liberal notion of nationalism notably that of Giuseppe Mazzini. However, he invokes certain specific Indic terms for constructing his idea. '*Praja*' is the specific word he used to convey the concept of '**nation**'. The State, according to Gandhi, is an institution necessary for the realization of the values of artha. Gandhi went far beyond Kautilya, says Parel, in identifying the basic functions of the State. For Kautilya, the State's main function was external expansion through war and internal stability through punishment (danda-niti), but for Gandhi the emphasis is shifted from war to peace and from punishment to rights. Gandhi is criticized for idealizing Ramarajya, an often misunderstood connotation. "*He certainly did not mean by Ramarajya a Hindu Raj. What he meant was "Divine Raj", the kingdom of God in human hearts, the sort of thing Tolstoy meant in his work, The Kingdom of God is Within You.*" (p. 63).

Dharma is another 'purushartha' that underwent fresh and independent interpretation in the hands of Gandhi. According to Parel, Gandhi used the concept of dharma in three senses: as duty, religion and ethics. The two famous institutions that depended on dharma as duty were the four *Varnas* – brahmin, kshatriya, vaisya and shudra, and the *Ashramas* [the four stages of life] – the brahmacharin (student), the Grhstha (householder), the Vanaprastha (the hermit) and the Sanyasin (the ascetic). The first one i.e., the Four Varna dharma was

the most controversial of all Hindu Dharmas, which can provoke contentious debates in modern political environment. The Purushasukta metaphor, and its further explanation in Bhagavad Gita on "varna" origins continue to excite hostile debates. There is a need to re-appreciate Gandhi's understanding on these issues to have a comprehensive evaluation of his philosophy. Gandhi considered that "*Dharma does not mean any particular creed or dogma. Nor does it mean reading or learning by rote books known as shastras or even believing all that they say.*" Dharma is a quality of the soul for Gandhi and is present, visibly or invisibly, in every human being. Through it we know our duty in human life and our true relation with other souls [P. 92, quoting from CW, 32:11].

What is implicit, Parel writes, in the above passage is that there are two kinds of dharma, the dharma that is found in positive sources such as revelation and tradition, and the dharma that is found in the quality of the soul, or the dharma that is discovered by the faculty of "buddhi" (intelligence and will). The first we may call "positive" dharma and the second "natural" dharma (P.92). Gandhi never wavered in his conviction that dharma and rights had to work in tandem. The obsolescence of the dharma of varna or caste and of stages of life, does not undermine the continuing validity of universal dharma.

Dharma as religion: Being religious, according to Gandhi, is a means of achieving the supreme purushartha. While he adhered to the view that religion was necessary for the achievement of our purushartha, he also advocated the

view that the State should be neutral in religious matters. In the understanding of Gandhi the neutral does not convey the meaning of irreligious or materialistic State. The State, being rooted in artha, had its own immediate ends, which were not the same as those of moksha. In the present context of the religious fundamentalism challenging the very goals of independence movement and the aims and objectives of the Constitution, Parel concludes saying: *“The religious fundamentalism of Hindutva or jihadism is not the only intellectual force that Gandhi’s moderate secularism has to resist. It has also to resist the hyper-secularism of the sort that Orwell represents.”*

Similarly Gandhi’s views on the Art and Society were also elaborated in this work. The general perception of intellectuals, and even of some of his close aides, has always been that Gandhi has no perspectives of art. *“There is no need to belabor the point: in assessing Gandhi’s understanding and appreciation of the arts, there is one mistake that no one should make. No one should regard him as an ignoramus. He had settled views on art and aesthetics, although he did not write about them. The choice was deliberate, and the proffered reason was “ignorance” – i.e., Socratic ignorance”* (P. 159). The point was made obliquely clear, says Parel, that in *Hind Swaraj*, by putting the works of two giants of art theory and art history i.e., of Tolstoy and Ruskin as Appendix I of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi had indicated the place of art and society in his scheme of things.

Moksha or Spiritual Liberation is the most important issue that tilted the balance of discourse of

purusharthas at the end of the first millennium. Gandhi found in the Gita, all that he needed to know about the pursuit of liberation. *“The pursuit of moksha supplied the force unifying all of Gandhi’s different activities”* (P.177). Parel refers to Margaret Chatterjee [Margaret Chatterjee, Gandhi’s Religious Thought (1983)] and says, Gandhi **“rethought”** the philosophy of moksha. *“Part of the rethinking involved making a crucial distinction between moksha as an achieved state of affairs and moksha as a pursuit”*. Gandhi approached moksha not as an abstract or imagined goal, but as a goal to be realized in history, in and through action in time. He fought against the traditional otherworldly approach ... (p. 178). Two of Gandhi’s contemporaries, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi were thought by many to have achieved the status of liberated souls. But they withdrew themselves from taking any active part in political life whereas Gandhi stood in the midst of the world affairs and considered active involvement with a sting of consistent withdrawal from the fruit of the effort, the ‘sthitaprajna’ of the “Karma Yoga” as the mode of liberation.

In charting his own course in the interpretation of the Gita, Gandhi wanted to avoid the doctrinaire secularism and the traditional asceticism. He wanted a course that would affirm the values of the world and the purusharthas on the one hand, and those of a world transcending spirituality open to every human being. *“Karma yoga or action is the real test whether one is pursuing stable wisdom. Of the three paths mentioned in the Gita – those of action, knowledge, and devotion – Gandhi favored*

the path of action. Not that the others were ignored, but that he gave primacy to action. The reason was that the other two, if given undue emphasis, had a tendency to promote a world abandoning sort of spirituality” (P. 190).

The concluding chapter of the book sums up various aspects of Hindu Philosophy and the appreciation of Gandhi on these aspects. *“Participation in politics was for him one way of realizing the truth”* (P. 195). *“Very typically the spiritual life for Gandhi was inseparable from action in the world, from the active life in the fields of politics, economics and social reform. In this respect his spirituality differed radically from the spirituality of the yogis and ascetics of the past and the present....”* (p. 196). *“The political too has several meanings in Gandhi. In the first place, being a purushartha politics belong to the field of artha. As such it is the pursuit of legitimate self-interest, both individual and collective, attained through the exercise of constitutionally permitted use of force....”* (P.197).

Under the heading “Gandhi faces challenges” (P.200) the author says: **“Gandhi is fortunate to have many positive interpreters in the twenty first century.”** Parel says: Indians who are committed to realizing the vision of Marx have splintered into different groups. They agree on their rejection of the Gandhian paradigm They do not seem to believe that there can be an independent Indian canon of political thought – which is in keeping with Marx’s own belief. ...”*Gandhi was committed to social change, but, unlike the Marxists and the Neo-*

Marxists, he was able to integrate the idea of social change within the frame work of an independent Indian canon. If Indian Marxists and Neo-Marxists can follow Gandhi's example here, they will have a chance of integrating what is still viable in Marx within an independent Indian canon. They can then take Marx in Indian terms instead of taking India on Marxist terms.” (P. 201).

On the issue of the relationship of Buddhism and Gandhi, Anthony J. Parel observes that “Navayana Buddhism”, also called “engaged” or “political” Buddhism, and its challenge to Gandhi comes from the resentment the Dalits feel against the stand that he took in 1932 against separate electorates for them. But questions as to how can one practice the politics of modernity (which is hostile to all religions) and live by the ethics of Buddhism, especially since the latter sees no positive value in artha” persist [p.202]. Parel further suggests: “*Gandhi solved the problem of the relationship of artha, dharma and moksha thanks to his theory of the purusharthas..... If Navayana can find a way of integrating satisfactorily the anti-religious modernity with itself, it can have a political philosophy that can do justice to both politics and religion. And if it chooses to do that it will find in Gandhi a sympathetic model.*” [p. 202] “*A final question arises: is the Gandhian Paradigm still relevant, given India's emergence as a major political and economic power in the world. The answer is plain it is more relevant now than ever before.... Indeed if they[Indians] do not follow this paradigm they may well lose their identity as a polity and as a civilization....*”[p. 205].

I am deeply enlightened by Anthony J. Parel's "**Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony** (2008)" on many aspects of Gandhi, and more specifically on the independent interpretations of traditional texts by Gandhi. I am more educated on how out of his

(Continued from Page 5)

a Rupee only. The copies were exhausted and another book of collection of articles titled J.P Towards Navanirman was published and it was priced at just two rupees. The Bata company backyard used to be the place of weekly regular meetings of a band of socialists and Gandhians like Satyavratha, Khadri Shamanna, Venkata Swamy, Babu Heddur Shetty, B.Y Lalithamba and Film and television directors like T.N Seetharam and Shankarappa and others used to participate actively in the discussions about books and subjects, and used to decide about bringing out socialist literature in Kannada. This *Janaprakashana*

independent reading and interpretation he reconciled the Purusharthas to construct a theory and practice that suits the social and philosophical requirements of the present. The reading created an urgent need to share my pleasure with all of you.

and weekly meetings continued regularly for almost five years.

Y.S Subramanya refused to accept any awards and honors and used to say even at his advanced age, that he was a humble socialist worker. The demise of this great, unsung soul of socialist is certainly the end of an era and the closure of the storehouse of information. The M.P Prakash foundation came forward to honour him with the Lohia award and he very humbly declined the same and said that he was a devotee of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia.

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Khadri S. Achyuthan

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a Socialist Family**
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Judiciary Embarrassed

Rajindar Sachar

The Supreme Court Collegium while taking understandable self-pride for its open functioning when it put its Resolution dated, 8th October, 2017 on the website to the effect amongst other, "THAT the decisions henceforth taken by the Collegium indicating the reasons shall be put on the website of the Supreme Court, when the recommendations is/are sent to the government of India, with regard to the cases relating to...elevation to the post of Chief Justice of High Court..." would have still enhanced its worth had it at the same time given the reasons for not appointing Justice Jayant Patel the senior most judge of Karnataka High Court as its permanent Chief Justice. To me this action of the Collegium has, with respect, embarrassed the judiciary and reminds me of Urdu couplet: "The house got burnt with its own house lantern" is a loose colloquial translation of "*Ghar Ko Aag Lag Gai , Ghar ke Chirag Se*", which shockingly hit me when I read of resignation of Justice Jayant Patel of Karnataka High Court.

Justice Jayant Patel, while he was the acting Chief Justice in the Gujarat

High Court, directed CBI investigation in to Ishrat Jahan fake encounter case, which involved the name of Amit Shah, who was then the Home Minister of Gujarat and who is now the President of BJP. All of a sudden Justice Jayant Patel was transferred to High Court of Karnataka in February 2016.

The present Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court was due to retire on 09.10.2017. In usual course Justice Patel should have been made a permanent Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court. But suddenly the Supreme Court Collegium orders his transfer to Mumbai High Court (where he would be 3rd in seniority). Hardly had this news made to the public, Collegiums changed orders for his transfer to Allahabad High Court where he would be no 2.

One can appreciate Justice Patel's anguish and even more his resentment at this unexplained action of the Collegiums. He sent in his resignation to the President. Both Karnataka High Court and Gujarat High Court Bar Associations held protest and boycotted the courts for a day.

In order to justify the cancellation of transfer of Justice Patel to Mumbai High Court and then transfer to Allahabad High Court immediately thereafter, a feeble explanation was got published in the newspapers that in Allahabad he would rank higher than he would have been in Mumbai High Court, (as if the injustice of being denied rightful claim to be the Chief Justice could in any way be lessened).

Justice Patel lived up to the reputation of sitting judges when notwithstanding this grave provocation he refused to answer questions as to the reason for his resignation, citing “institutional discipline”.

We should be all praise for Justice Patel’s dignified response. But this question touches the serious issue of independence of the judiciary and the functioning of the Collegium system. Therefore, uncomfortable questions must be asked by the legal fraternity, and those with all respect, must be answered by the Collegium in detail because it is well established that the Bench and Bar are the two wheels of same chariot, and any deformity in either of them can only spell the ruin of administration and independence of the Judiciary. More so now that the Collegium has decided to swing the pendulum to the other extreme of recording reasons why it has declined to promote the senior most judge to the office of Chief Justice and sharing it with the public.

May I in this case make a wild guess – could it be that the executive which was bent on harming Justice Patel felt that (in case of Justice Patel agreeing to go to Mumbai) he will at least be in more familiar surroundings, as there is a strong link

between Mumbai and Ahmadabad. But as the viciousness of Modi government was determined to keep Justice Patel isolated, which he would be if he were to be sent to Allahabad, a place probably where he may not have gone throughout his life. I feel sad that Executive could have been able to use such an influence on the Collegium – may be I am mistaken. If so, a greater reason for the Collegium to make those reasons known to public, especially to the Supreme Court Bar Association and other Bar Associations, (especially Karnataka High Court Bar Association.) and Bar Council of India.

This is not in any way provocation for confrontation with the Collegium. It is only in recognition of the fact that this incident has shaken the whole Bar in India and all aspects of this case should be publically disclosed and discussed.

I would therefore suggest that Supreme Court Bar Association and Bar Council of India take the lead and jointly discuss out this matter with the Supreme Court Collegium to prevent patent arbitrariness, which will make the Executive decision supreme thus harming irretrievably the independence of judiciary.

I hope the Collegium does not take offence and make it a matter of undue superiority and take the stand that this matter, notwithstanding that it has disturbed the whole Bar of India, it will not discuss it with the Bar because it is its sole privilege. May I in all humility submit that this assumption proceeds on the belief that the judges are immune to human frailties even while making non-judicial decisions (such as appointments and transfers). This self-glorification is not accepted even

by members of the judiciary itself vide expostulation of Justice Frankfurter of the US Supreme Court that “all power is of an encroaching nature. Judicial power is not immune to this human weakness. It must also be on guard against encroaching beyond its proper bounds and not the less so since the only restraint upon it is self-restraint”.

The former Chief Justice A S Anand, reminded the judges that though “our function is divine, the problem begins when we start thinking that we have become divine”.

If I sound a bit harsh, I can only invoke the caveat of Justice Holmes of the U.S. Supreme Court, who said, “I trust that no one will understand me to be speaking with disrespect of the law because I criticize it so freely.....But one may criticize even what one reveres.....And I should show less than devotion, if I did not do what in me lies to improve it. “

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Lessen for Journalists

Kuldip Nayar

It was a disappointing memorial gathering a few days ago. I thought that the meeting held to attract wide attention towards the murder of Kannada journalist Gauri Lankesh at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, would draw many journalists, particularly the senior ones, to the venue. But it turned out to be a gathering of no more than 30-35 people, very few among them being journalists.

It has become a habit with senior journalists to stay indoors and not mix with the ordinary scribes. I can understand that editors are too busy, planning and editing the paper. But what about those who are a peg lower? They behave as if they are equally busy and have no time for such meetings, even if it relates to the fraternity.

But all these journalists, after retirement, come down to the earth because their utility is very limited. They are among many who are trying to get space in the paper, writing columns. Not many make it because the readers are interested in those who have fought on principles. Those who gave their all, refusing to be cowed down, are very few.

Gauri Lankesh was one of them. She has been a loud dissenting voice against the excesses committed in the society. The ideals Gauri stood for as a journalist and social activist—she edited a Kannada weekly *Gauri Lankesh Patrike*—are unlikely to be forgotten even if she is no more in

our midst. Gauri had been getting threatening messages every now and then but she was never afraid. Apparently, she was ready for any kind of sacrifice, including putting her life under threat.

An outspoken critic of the Hindutva politics, Gauri was gunned down by unidentified assailants at the entrance of her residence in Bengaluru. Of course, there were initial protests all over, including the Press Club of India condemning the killing, saying, “A fearless and independent journalist who gave voice to many causes and always stood up for justice has been shot dead in the most brutal manner in order to silence her voice.”

But this is not the first time that such attacks have taken place. In a democracy, the rule of law should prevail but, unfortunately, what we see today is mob lynching and harassment in the country. Incidents like Alwar, Dadri and Udampur should serve as an eye-opener. In addition, there have been attacks on cultural, academic and historical institutions, universities, especially Nalanda University and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

Gauri's murder is being compared to the August 2015 assassination of Kannada journalist M. M. Kalburgi, who was similarly gunned down at his home. She had, during one of her speeches, mentioned Kalburgi, pointing out how a Bajrang Dal leader had remarked after his killing, saying

“Mock Hinduism and die a dog's death.” She, too, met the same fate.

She was also critical of the politics in her own state. She had a few years ago warned that Karnataka's trajectory from a progressive, secular state to a communal state has been a very interesting and crippling one, when the BJP was ruling the state. Karnataka, she said, was witnessing an increase of attacks in the name of Hindutva and faced the prospect of falling under a “communal, casteist, and corrupt BJP government.” Gauri also vehemently opposed the RSS, the BJP, and the Hindutva forces and her killing is the silencing of that voice against hate politics.

Kalburgi's murder remains unsolved after two years. These attacks are growing at a shocking rate, and as we remember the September 1995 murder of human rights defender, Jaswant Singh Khalra, we are reminded that ‘my way or the bullet’ has become a pattern in India. As a journalist, Lankesh knew her outspoken nature earned her a share of enemies. As a citizen of India, she opposed the BJP's fascist and communal politics. In her interviews to a few journals, she said: “I oppose its misinterpretation of ‘Hindu Dharma’ ideals. I oppose the caste system of the ‘Hindu Dharma,’ which is unfair, unjust and gender-biased.”

(Continued on Page 5)

Whether Alarm Bells will Stop Economy Caught up with Falling Growth

Mrinal K. Biswas

There is no more any gainsaying that the Indian economy is caught up with falling growth, failing business and stalled employment generation. Discontent is brewing and government appears clueless as to how it can address the problems but claims nonetheless that there is nothing much to worry about.

Of the two schools of thought, that one which sounds alarm over the present state of affairs is weighing heavily over that of the other that holds out bright prospects of the Indian economy not very far off. The issues are primarily the fall-out of demonitization of high value currencies suddenly imposed in November last and goods and services tax (GST) introduced country-wide in July this calendar.

The most scathing criticism of these measures was indeed an inside job, in the sense that a former finance minister belonging to the ruling party, Jashwant Sinha, cried hoarse alleging that private investment has shrunk as never before in two decades, industrial production has all but collapsed, agriculture is in distress, the big employer construction industry is in doldrums, highly potential services sector has slowed in the backdrop of oncoming disruption technology, exports have dwindled. "Sector after sector of the economy is in distress," Jashwant Sinha said. Similar views abounded in across the political economists' circles and broad spectrum of the society is worried.

Modi government's junior minister Jayant Sinha demurred but is not prepared to take on the gauntlet thrown down by his father Jashwant Sinha. He says demonitization, GST and digital payments are "game-changing" socio-economic scenario of the country. These will raise tax revenue, reduce friction in the economy and make it easier for people to prove their creditworthiness. More loans and servicing will be digitized and available for inspection. Replacing political favours, coal mining licenses, telecommunication spectrum allocations and passenger flight routes have been allocated through auctions, defaulting borrowers will be taken to bankruptcy courts. In his long list also comes government handouts (money given as subsidy to targeted sections of people) that are now going straight into beneficiaries' accounts. On the positive side Jayant Sinha points out to the government investments in the rural power supply, highways, rural roads, housing and air transport leading all these to all-round cost reduction.

The warning of the growth fall came immediately after demonitization measures with its dire consequences predicted by former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh who said the gross domestic product (GDP), measured as total production of a country in a particular year construed in terms of money, would fall by about 2 per cent because of "organised loot and

legalised plunder" effected through demonitization of high value currencies. Indeed, GDP fell dramatically in January-March 2017 to 6.1 per cent after suffering the demonitization trauma in November 2016 giving the total GDP figure at 7.1 per cent for the financial year of 2016-17. The fall became clear as GDP had reached 8 per cent in the previous fiscal 2015-17. The falling curve continues unabated as evident in the current (2017-18) fiscal's April-June GDP touches the lowest mark at 5.7 per cent.

In the backdrop, Modi government's objective of quelling black money, counterfeits and terror funding fell flat as almost all the currency demonitized in November found its way into banking system. Reserve Bank of India in a cautious tenor says "subject to future corrections based on verification process when completed, the estimated value of specified bank notes (500,1000 rupee notes) received as on June 30, 2017, is Rs 15.28 lakh crore." This is against Rs 15.44 lakh crore of such notes in circulation till November last. This pitiful amount of Rs 16,000 crore gain for the government fell far short of its expectation of Rs 4-5 lakh crore coming back. So black money people escaped the net to the discomfiture of the government. However, the high-finance operator like Kotak Mahindra Bank vice-chairman Uday Kotak said India should look beyond these numbers and pointed to demonitization in intangible benefits – providing trail

for investigative agencies to follow and hunt down tax evaders besides boosting digital payments that can be better tracked, making it virtually impossible to evade tax.

In the midst of all these, demonetization hit hard the great majority of the people. About 90 per cent of them belong to the informal sector and 55 per cent of our workers in agricultural sector reeled under distress while cooperative banking system practically became non-functional. Most of them were, and still are, used to and comfortable with, cash transactions only. The economy came to a standstill which is still to come out of the trauma.

GST is another blow though it was perceived as a good thing by the knowledgeable people in public finance. It has been shaped after long negotiations with state governments. Anxiety-prone small and medium business down line fears gripped soon after introduction of new tax regime as few of them could understand the nitty-gritty of GST particularly because of digital payment system. For the millions of people cash has worked well and digitization could be an abstract practicer. This mindset cannot go easily. Things have become complicated because of various glitches coming up and threshold framing not to the liking of business communities. Consumers generally feel GST-infused price rise, too. To remove the charge of GST implementation as a mess and to give the business some relief government has made some concession in the form of duty cuts on 27 items and in the procedures for filing tax returns. Still the business feels these are at best ad hoc measures. There is a fear that

GST instilling a sense of uncertainty the trade and business will suffer grievously resulting in further stress on the economy in crisis.

The only good thing could be the government has seen the letters on the wall which negate their

(Continued from Page 5)

Attacking directly the BJP-led massacres of Muslims and other minorities, she declared, "I oppose Advani's Ram Mandir Yatra and Narendra Modi's genocide of 2002." In a 2016 interview, she also expressed how her journalism exposed her to "the rabid hate the Hindutva brigade and Modi *Bhakt*s have for its critics and naysayers."

Gauri knew her life was in danger. Yet, she brushed aside all threats and continued to defy the establishment and plugged the same line as an activist. In the last article she wrote for her weekly, *Gauri Lankesh Patrike*, she challenged the archaic forces in her own inimitable way. The Hindutva forces never forgave her.

As a parting shot, she wrote: "I know very well that you are all devastated. I am also unhappy that I left suddenly without a word. But tell me, what else could I do? Tell me what was my fault in this final separation? This Tuesday also began just like the hundreds of other Tuesdays of my life. But I did not even have a hint that it would end with me being permanently taken away from all of you. Till that moment when the assassin's bullet split my chest and made me roll down to the earth, my mind kept thinking about the next day's issue of the paper. I am starting this last

continuous tall claims on the economic health of the country. The Narendra Modi government has in the face of falling growth and scathing criticisms appointed an economic advisory council to help stem the domestic economic downturns.

conversation with all of you with the belief that you will understand this critical situation..."

True, Gauri had a premonition, witnessing her own death and describing it exactly the way it happened. She doesn't falter even in the face of death. This is a lesson for journalists. At times, they have to face even the gravest situations. They cannot their eyes shut to the realities. This is what the profession expects from them.

Gauri was a rare species of journalists. She said in the article that she was willing to pay the price for what she stood up in rebellion for her India and had no regrets. "I have a sense of fulfillment," is what she said. Such words are rare.

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By

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India and EU Growing Partnership?

D. K. Giri

The India-European Union 14th Summit meeting in New Delhi on 6th October focused on closer cooperation on counter terrorism actions. Importantly, the joint declaration named Hafeez, Saeed, Dawood Ibrahim, Zakir-Ur Rehman, LeT and JeM et al as those perpetrating terror.

In fact, terrorism has become a common focus and gained currency as Europe has been subjected to repeated terrorist attacks recently even though India has been in the throes of cross-border terrorism for long.

Besides this, trade was another key issue as there has been a clear mismatch both in India's and EU's external relations. Notwithstanding, the EU has been functioning internally and in foreign relations as a trading bloc.

Undoubtedly, while New Delhi's external ties were politics and security driven at the cost of its vital economic relations, EU emphasized more on trade and economy ignoring its political objectives like promotion of democracy, protection of human rights, rule of law, etc. The EU's heavy trade relations with China at the cost of its international political objectives, is a case in point.

Alas, the Summit meetings and a plethora of bilateral meetings including the important strategic partnership have failed to correct this imbalance. Significantly, India is one among 10 select countries with whom

EU has strategic partnership, launched in 2004.

Tracing the relationship between the two, India was the first developing country to make diplomatic contact in 1962 with the EU, then known as the European Economic Community (EEC). Today they are celebrating 55 years of diplomatic contact, even as not much of this festivity is seen or felt in the public domain.

In fact, there is not much awareness of the role and functions of EU in India. In most Summit or bilateral meetings, there is repeated reference to the shared core values of democracy, pluralism, human rights, etc. Whereby the European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker wrote in the India press, "India and EU are natural partners, the bond is built on shared beliefs and the strength of law outweighs the law of the strong."

This is an oblique reference to China's belligerent territorial aggression in the South China Sea. Echoing this perspective, the European Council President Donald Tusk added, "EU wants to build with India a strong strategic partnership on the foundations of common values of freedom, democracy and credible rule based global order."

Prime Minister Modi was equally effusive about relations. Said he at the Summit, "India values her multifaceted partnership with EU and we attach high importance to our strategic partnership as the world's

largest democracies we are natural partners and our close relations are based on shared common values."

Undeniably, these statements are political rhetoric and diplomatic niceties. Actually, the strategic partnership is under-performing. An instance: The Free Trade Agreement, one of its kind supposedly to promote India's growth and development and for which negotiations started in 2007 is stuck.

Indian negotiators feel that the Europeans are less flexible and patronizing whereas Europeans think that India is not open to lifting trade barriers, giving market access, making geographical indications and straightening public procurement. In addition, there is concern about intellectual property rights (IPR). Whatever be the bottlenecks, the unending and stalled negotiations do not behave a strategic partnership.

Certainly, India and EU relations have a strong potential to prosper into a strong partnership as the EU is New Delhi's largest trading partner accounting for 13.7 per cent ahead of China's 11 per cent and US's 9 per cent. And EU is India's 9th largest trading partner with exports amounting to 37.8 billion euros in 2016 and the total value of trade was 77 billion euros in 2016.

Also, about 24 per cent of total FDI flows from EU to India and around six thousand European

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All India Socialist Women's Conference, Pune, 2017

Dear Friends,

The Modi Government ever since it came to power in 2014 is implementing the policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation at an accelerating pace. It has pushed the country into a deep external and internal crisis. Simultaneously, the BJP and its parent organisation, the RSS, are also implementing a very regressive fascist social agenda. They are attacking the fundamental pillars of the Indian Constitution—democracy, secularism and equality. They want to transform secular India into a Hindu Rashtra; they have also launched a vicious offensive to attack all ideologies and progressive forces that can challenge their fascist ideology, in the name of a false nationalism.

To build a political and economic alternative to this fascist threat hanging over the country, we, the democratic socialists, who are active in various fields, have come together and formed a platform named as “**We the Socialist Institutions**”, that has organised several successful programs over the past two years.

The ideology of the BJP-RSS is based on the Manusmriti, that sanctions oppression of the Dalits and women. Ever since BJP came to power, it has been seeking to roll-back all the rights won by women since independence. It wants them to go back to the four walls of the home, and confine themselves to looking after their families and doing housework. It wants to dictate what women should wear, what they should do, whom should they marry, how many children they should have, and so on. BJP workers have taken out rallies defending Sati; their Chief Ministers have lauded Khap Panchayats for doing good work, despite their lynching couples marrying outside their caste; their leaders have denied the existence of marital rape.

And therefore, at a meeting of “We the Socialist Institutions” held in March 2017, it was decided to host an **All-India Socialist Women's Conference in Pune on December 2 - 3, 2017 (Saturday-Sunday)**. Janata Trust, Yusuf Meherally Centre, SM Joshi Socialist Foundation and Socialist Mahila Sabha / Lokayat's women's wing, Abhivyakti, have been given the responsibility of organising this conference. The aim of this conference is:

- to give a boost to the all India women's movement;
- help various socialist and progressive groups build-up their women's wings;
- deepen the understanding of the various women activists associated with the socialist and progressive movement with regards to the issues facing the women's movement as well as the challenges facing the country due to the fascist onslaught;
- help build solidarity among the women activists and women's groups associated with the socialist and progressive movement in the country.

We invite democratic and socialist and left women organisations from across the country to send their representatives to attend this two-day conference. Individual women activists with an inclination towards socialism but who are not yet active with any group are also welcome to attend.

Do forward this invitation to other progressive women's groups or activists in your contact, and invite them to this conference on our behalf, and also kindly send us their emails to that we can directly send them this invitation.

This is only an initial mail, so that you can block your dates and book your tickets. The schedule of the conference and other details will be sent in due course.

Do reply back to this mail, confirming your willingness to attend this conference.

Please send your replies to:

Guddi (Janata Trust): 07738082170; email : kgaswadesi1947@gmail.com

Sayali S.P. (Abhivyakti): 09503489676; email : joshisayali48@gmail.com

Looking forward to having many of you for this two-day conference,
in solidarity

Guddi Janata Trust

Manisha Gupte SM Joshi Socialist Foundation

Vijaya Chauhan Yusuf Meherally Centre

Alka Joshi Socialist Mahila Sabha / Abhivyakti (Women's wing of Lokayat)

Growing up in

Sunil Tambe

“Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the Indian tricolour at this very spot, and within a few minutes she disappeared in the crowd,” my father told me while narrating the story of the Quit India resolution.

“Where were you?” I asked with excitement.

“I was just 15 years old then, and had come here to witness the historical moment,” he replied.

It was 9th August and we were on my father’s annual pilgrimage to Mumbai’s Gowalia Tank Maidan (now August Kranti Maidan. I don’t remember the year but it must be the late 60s, maybe 1968. The Socialist Party had organized a rally that followed by a *satyagraha* protest at Gowalia Tank playground, where the historic AICC session was held in 1942. V. N. Okey, a noted artist and close associate of socialist leader Yusuf Meherally, who had coined the slogans like “Go Back Simon”, “Quit India” had prepared a replica of the proposed August Kranti Memorial. A group of Socialist Party activists led by Nath Pai was to install it in a corner of the playground as a tribute to the martyrs of the August Revolution of 1942 and that was what the *satyagraha* was all about. But police arrested them and they were taken to the Gamdevi police station. I remember wondering what was wrong with the demand and why did the police arrest them. The Congress that had adopted the Quit India resolution was in power then. Except for the socialists and a few

Gandhians no political party or outfit was backing this demand.

Every year, on August 9, my father would visit the August Kranti Maidan to pay his tributes. This was his last year of annual pilgrimage as he passed away on September 24. For him August Kranti Din was some sort of a national festival. After paying tributes, his fellow socialists and other activists would come to our small home – a tiny one room-kitchen tenement dwelling – for tea and snacks. The number of old socialists was dwindling and, one day, veteran socialist leader Mrinal Gore suggested my parents to put a halt to this annual program as, she reasoned: “both of you have crossed 70s”. At the same time, the number of old Socialist comrades was also dwindling and by the first decade of the 21st century there were none but Dr. G. G. Parikh who had memories of 1942.

My father, Ram Tambe, was born in a poor Brahmin family in Ratnagiri district of Konkan on 11th December 1927. He had four brothers and a sister. He had his primary education in Konkan and later moved to what then was Bombay for higher education. He was living with his elder brothers in Girgaon. His eldest brother, Manohar, was working in a tailoring shop. Manohar was known as ‘Dada’ in the family. He was an avid reader and a regular at Mumbai Marathi Granth Sangrahalay. He was involved in several social activities as well. He used to organize study circles of Communist leaders. His fiancée, Mangala, was

a card holder of the Communist Party. Mukunda aka Anna, another elder brother, was active in Rashtra Seva Dal (RSD) and the Sarvodaya movement. At a very young age, Anna took up Khadi and never gave it up. His wife was also an active RSD worker. It was at his behest that the celebrated writer Sane Guruji once visited their cramped rented place in a Girgaon chawl.

Chandu Sathe, Ram Tambe’s classmate once told me that Ram was a leader in the school. “He was in RSD while we were in RSS, but even so we were close friends,” he said. This group of friends mainly comprised Brahmins while Ram Tambe’s Socialist circle was mostly non-Brahmin. Arjun Dalvi, Damu Patkar, Diwakar Parkar, Baburao Jadhav, Mohmmad Khadas, Shoshanna Mazgaonkar and others were as close as family. In those days, individuality had little scope in the family. The entire family – often extended joint families – used to live in a small room and therefore strong bonds were quite common, not just with relatives but also with neighbours and friends. It was all about sharing, not just space but also life.

Ram Tambe was active in organizing various socio-cultural and political activities in Thakurdwar-Girgaon, the hub of the Marathi lower middle class in the island city. The Socialist Party office and Mumbai Marathi Granth Sangrahalaya were located in the

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a Socialist Family

Sadhana Khavnekar

On 3rd October there was a condolence meeting on my Baba's, Ram Tambe's, demise at Tardeo's "Janata Kendra". We were driving with my Aai to the programme. On reaching the venue I remembered that Baba had once asked us to take the car in Yusuf Meherally Vidyalaya's compound near the gate to enter Janata Kendra. We parked the car accordingly and Aai could easily walk into Janata Kendra. At that moment I realized the significance of his absence in my life and also that from now on my journey in life will always be with such memories of Baba.

Baba, lived his life the way he wanted, independently and believing and following Socialist ideals. I was really lucky to have such an energetic, pleasant and positive father always around for such a long time in my life. All these thoughts help me to overcome sorrow of his loss.

My journey with Baba started from my birth. I can actually recollect loads of fond childhood memories but find it difficult to put in words. However what I remember vividly at the moment is my mother Sudha-Aai getting up early in the morning, preparing breakfast, tiffins for all of us and rushing to school for her job. Baba would iron all our clothes for the day (including my hair ribbon). He would then leave at 8 a.m for the party office at Thakurdwar or to help Dalvi kaka with his printing press before going to his own work place. Evenings he would drop in again at

the party office and then would return home. Dinner was always freshly cooked and by rule to be eaten together.

I also remember that during the Emergency when, he was in the jail at Yerwada-Pune, the things we used to carry for him on our visits always had more items for his jail friends as per his request. I also recollect when he travelled to Iraq for his job, he used to write letters to all the relatives and friends regularly, and had got small gifts for each and every one.

I honestly do not know how many children Aai-Baba helped in studies or were guardians for those who came to Mumbai. For us siblings anyone who came home was always family.

Reading through newspapers, social media or through others about Baba's demise lots of friends took time off from busy schedules to meet or call us. It was touching as people shared memories of Baba and wished us, specially my Aai, all the best to survive now only with Baba's memories.

Baba never believed in God or religion. As in case of most Samajwadi families, I and my two elder brothers, Sanjeev and Sunil, had registered marriages, without any grand function. Baba always avoided spending money on weddings or parties. He believed in spending money only on necessary things for ourselves and using available fund for others in need.

However, a few months back we celebrated Aai-Baba's 61 years of married life by inviting close relatives and friends. Our idea was to give Aai-Baba a chance to meet all their loved ones which otherwise has become really difficult these days. As expected all of us enjoyed, especially both of them were very happy. But we never thought this happiness will end so soon.

Looking back I feel happy for my fantastic journey with Baba. He showed us and helped us see the world around. He not only allowed us to travel as per our wishes, in fact also encouraged, supported and guided, when necessary.

In this journey through life, we as individuals and as family had our ups and downs, however, it was Aai-Baba's help that we all passed through bad patches, making our family larger and stronger. In this journey he inculcated love for travelling in me which later became my career too.

Baba loved reading books, magazines, newspapers and seeing places. His job and party work gave him opportunity to travel a lot. His great stock of information, travel memories and friends were always of help to us.

Kokan – Ratnagiri-Sindhudurga region - always had very special place in Baba's heart. He was born there and then he was closely associated with the work of Madhu Dandavate so love for Konkan continued. Later he also did lot of

work at “Matrumandir” in Deorukh as Secretary and Vice-chairman. Nowadays “Sane Guruji Rashtriya Smarak” at Mangaon was yet another place he loved. Whenever we used to talk about travelling in Konkan we used to bank on finding a dear friend/relative of Baba in each and every village of the region. Whenever we travelled to any place it was for sure he knew a social organization or person doing some noble work in the area. Our fun tours became always meaningful because of Baba’s vision. On many such tours we visited places like “Yusuf Meherally Centre” at Tara, “Matrumandir” of Dearukh, project at Oni in Sindhudurga, “Nath Pai Sevangan” at Malwan, Ashok Saswadkar’s “Nirmiti”, “Kustharog Nivaran Samiti” at Nere, “Sahaj Shikshan Parivar” at Maswan near Palghar and of course Baba Amte’s Anandvan. He took us around Dapoli’s agricultural college too. We came to know about Sagarputra at Dabhol, school at Naldurga and got to know many such organizations and people at and around Chiplun, Ratnagiri, Kelshi, Jawhar and so on because of Baba.

Baba was actively involved in Rashtra Seva Ddal, Socialist Party’s work. He had taken part in Samyukta Maharashtra movement and fight against Emergency. Later he supported and appreciated work done by Medha Patkar, Surekha Dalvi and other such activists and tried his best to help them as much as possible till the end.

Baba taught me to enjoy travelling. He taught us to plan tour by collecting information, maps and also things to carry including food to make the tour an enjoyable activity. I remember a very very old memory of one trip. We friends had planned

a Konkan trip. Baba had drawn a map from Mumbai to Rajapur marking places; with add on of where to take halts/breaks including special Konkan items to be enjoyed at the place. He had also given information on friends’ contact to be used in case of emergency. After that my friends visiting Konkan would always take his advice. He noticed and showed us cow eating fish on Harne beach near Dapoli and guided us finding “right” place to seat and enjoy on Marine Drive in Mumbai. I remember energetic Baba preparing tea, food for all at Seva Dal’s monsoon picnics when I was a kid. Also, preparing bhel for all at Maswan on our unplanned visit and getting emotional with warmth and respect given by girls of Maswan. My friends always recollect Mumbai’s special vada pav Baba prepared with everyone’s help and served by Baba to all with love is the best vada pav they ever had.

Many years back at around 26th January I and my husband had planned a trip to Tithal beach near Balsad in Gujarat. Promptly Baba contacted Dr. B. M. Dhabuwala who used to do lot of social work in the area. Dr. Dhabuwala immediately invited us for a school function and also informed that he had made arrangement for our stay at Dr. Amul Desai’s place. Baba enquired about number of students in school and gave us “Tilgul” for all as it was Sankranti festival time. During that trip we got a chance to meet Dr. Amul Desai. I still remember his saying “our country is surviving because of people like Medha Patkar who selflessly works for wellbeing of others and all and not because of the politicians.” I always experienced the truth of it every time I met such famous or many such people away from publicity. In our

house Nanasaheb Goray, S. M. Joshi, Madhu Dandawate, G. P. Pradhan, Kishore Pawar, Dr. G. G. Parikh are respected as elders of the family. Waman Bhide, Arjun Dalvi, Diwakar Parkar, Damu Patkar, Mohammed Khadas are our real uncles as are Baba’s brothers - Manohar, Mukund, Shripad and Waman - or my maternal uncles - Manohar and Suhas. Aai-Baba’s friends from Girgaon’s Samajwadi and Seva Dal group like Baburao Jadhav, Karalkar, Bane, Laxmibai Tambakhu, Shubhangi Joshi, Jawahar-Pushpa, Sudhakar-Smita became our friends too. Baba’s office friends Dharap, Doshi, Kumar are special for us too.

Baba’s skill of planning and organizing was excellent. He was very particular and disciplined in his thinking and working. Almost everyone he came in contact with has experienced his anger and scolding because his nature; however; each one also enjoyed Kadhi/Aamti made by him too. He loved reading and on reading something nice used to share and make others read it too. He always used to suggest his friends to help various organizations. He gifted subscription of “Sadhana” weekly to friends. In the memory of his elder brother he had started award for best reader in Mumbai Marathi Grnathsangrahalaya. He used to buy regularly old books and magazines and send to small village libraries. Baba and Aai always took active part in various projects like helping in flood/earthquake relief programmes and arranging tea or anything for any activity.

He was atheist yet he actively helped his son-in-law for “Pooja” at

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same building. Thanks to my uncles and aunts and, of course, the library, we had read not just Sane Guruji's books at an early age but also got exposure to Dr. Rammanohar Lohia's writings. Besides the progressive literature in Marathi, I remember titles such as *God That Failed*, *The New Class*, *Asian Drama*, and Sanskrit classics like *Shakuntal*, *Mudrarakshas*, etc., stashed in our book shelves.

The world was a tiny place then. Although we were living in a corner of India's financial capital, Girgaon resembled a village. All our relatives lived in the vicinity, in a one-kilometre radius. The anonymity of urban life was still to steal over us. In Girgaon, almost every shopkeeper knew one or the other Tambe as three of the five brothers were socially and politically active. While Ram Tambe was active in the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, he had also taken the initiative in organizing farewell programs for *satyagrahis* who were leaving to join the Goa liberation struggle. Organizing meals for hundreds of activists was an easy task for him. Each household or family would contribute in whatever way possible to the cause, be it money, *chappatis* or voluntary labour. He had amazing organizational skills and was meticulous in his planning. He was involved in Sarvajanic Ganeshotsav events and other cultural programmes like competitions for Rangoli, Diwali lamps (Aakashdive), etc. He had organized *kirtans* of Gadge Baba, a legendary rationalist reformer saint, who was illiterate and yet mesmerised the audience with his down-to-earth teachings that called for simple living and doing

away with caste barriers and untouchability. Ram Tambe was an avowed adherent and advocate of this kind of religiosity and hence was close to people from all walks of life.

Shoshanna Mazgaonkar (Padhye) used to leave her children in the care of my mother Sudha, and then would proceed to attend the rallies of the Socialist Party. Our small home used to be packed with relatives, activists and others all the time. Ram Tambe would be engaged in heated discussions with his party colleagues, Waman Bhide and others, till late in the evening while we (I, my elder brother and younger sister) would be dozing off in a corner of our cramped one-room home.

Those were the days of license-permit raj or mixed economy also known as the Nehruvian Model of Socialism. Every electric pole had posters of Hindi movies. Almost all outdoor advertisement space was captured by Hindi movie posters. Occasionally, one would spot hoardings promoting toothpastes or soaps. There were very few fine dining restaurants. I don't remember visiting any. Tea, breakfast, snacks, and meals were always home-cooked. Very few could afford even tea and snacks at restaurants. Hawkers too had very little business in those days. Early every morning, mother would prepare our lunch-boxes and then leave for work. Dinner though was sacred. Every evening, my parents would cook and we would eat together with family and friends. I learned early to clean and cut vegetables at home. Household chores were mandatory for all of us.

During summer vacations, our parents would take us to visit relatives in Konkan. Ram Tambe

was a keen student of the flora and fauna of Konkan and would enjoy showing us various plants and flowers. He was an ardent follower of Nath Pai and, later, Madhu Dandavate. Every Lok Sabha election, he would be in Rajapur Lok Sabha constituency. In Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, he would say with pride that he had friends and relatives in hundreds of villages. He never stayed in a hotel or circuit house in Konkan.

Every year, in the month of Shraavan (normally, August), there would be an all-night family function. One day, late in the evening, Vasant Helekar, a close associate of George Fernandes, showed up and sought a private meeting with Ram Tambe. In a few minutes, the two of them left for some unknown place. My father was missing for three days. We had no clue as to where he had gone. There was no message, postcard or phone call from him. George Fernandes was then president of Workers Union of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRT) and had given a strike call. As the union leaders were arrested, George requested Ram Tambe to undertake a tour of Konkan to boost the morale of the workers so that the strike would continue. Ram Tambe successfully carried out the operation in complete secrecy and later resumed his duties with Hindustan Construction.

During the Emergency unleashed by Indira Gandhi in 1975, Ram Tambe was a joint secretary of the Socialist Party, Mumbai. He and Mohammad Khadas would cyclostyle the anti-Emergency bulletins at the residence of my uncle, Manohar Tambe. Neither his neighbours nor even his children had the slightest idea that, after the family

had left for the day, their small house would turn into a revolutionary printing press. Sometime later, Ram Tambe was arrested under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and was jailed in Yeravada Central Prison. After the Emergency was over and he was released, he shared his jail diaries with all of us. Those diaries had notes of all the study circles that were held in jail. He also had come in contact with “hard-core” criminals – some of whom were serving life terms – in jail and counseled them. Later, after their release, many of them would come to meet him to seek his guidance and help.

After his retirement from Hindustan Construction, he took up the responsibility of Matru Mandir in Ratnagiri district. Matru Mandir was established by Waman Bhide, a socialist activist. As secretary of Matru Mandir, Ram Tambe not only raised funds but also undertook various initiatives like watershed development, orphanage and ladies hostel in the small town of Devrukh. He involved the National Union of Sea Farers of India and such other labour unions in the activities of Matru Mandir. At the age of 70, he used to travel from Mumbai to Konkan by state transport buses.

Our one room-kitchen home was barely 350 square feet but it always had room for our parents’ friends and relatives. Many came to Mumbai for major or minor surgeries or health problems. Some would bring their kids for some entrance exam or the other. Most of them could not afford to stay in hotels. My parents would not only welcome them but also take good care of them. Sometime after his 87th birthday, Ram Tambe started writing his will. This rented place should continue to be a home for

social activists, he decreed. He had also made a list of the institutions and organizations with various amounts to be donated after his passing.

On going through the list, I grinned: “But you don’t have this much money in your bank accounts.” “Then you (we three children) should pitch in,” he said, without batting an eyelid. “Is it your will or ours,” I asked with a chuckle. “It’s the same damn thing,” he said.

(Continued from Page 10)

home with just one feeling - respect and love for others..


Baba till the end believed in and lived with his Socialist principles. His wish to donate body could not be accomplished. However, after the condolence meeting my Aai said “Baba would have been moved to by hearing all that

This conversation flashed on my mind when my sister, Sadhana, called me from the ICCU of Karuna Hospital in Borivali a few days ago. “Baba’s condition has deteriorated,” was all she could say before handing over the phone to the doctor. “We tried our best, but his heart is not responding. Please rush to the hospital,” the doctor said. By the time we reached the hospital, he had breathed his last. Ram Tambe was 90 years young.

was said today”. However I feel he would have been more pleased if we, his three children, had arranged tea for all in the meeting.

As per his wish we will always keep his home “Open” for all family and friends and add to his work as per our ability.

**Acharya Javadekar
A Satyagrahi Socialist**



G. P. Pradhan

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Published by Rajkamal Prakashan, 2a Netaji Subhash Road, New Delhi 11002

3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.
4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyan:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

Published by Anamika Publishers and Distributors. Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

50th death anniversary

October 12, 2017

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

The dynamic socialist leader, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, was a brilliant and original thinker as well as a man of action. The Congress Socialist Party had been founded at Patna in May 1934 under the chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva, when Lohia returned to India with a doctorate on Salt Taxation in India from Frederick William University of Berlin (now known as Humboldt University). In 1936 the Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru appointed this young man of 26 years as Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Department of the AICC. That launched him not only in the national politics but also secured him a prominent place in the socialist movement. Soon he was recognised as a member of the Socialist Triumverate, the other two being Acharya Narendra Deva and JP.

The British imprisoned Lohia from June 1940 to the end of 1941. He became a hero of the Quit India movement, along with Usha Mehta ran the underground Azad Hind Radio and could be arrested only on April 11, 1944. He was a co-prisoner and tortured along with Jayaprakash Narayan in Lahore Central Jail. Both the heroes of the August Revolution were released on April 11, 1946. The charismatic personality of JP made him the darling of the masses as I witnessed at the Meerut session of the Congress in November 1946. Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali also became very popular.

The socialist rank and file were overawed by the deep learning and ideological clarity of the Acharya (Narendra Deva) and the lessons in socialism given by JP in the schoolmasterly fashion (I had the same feeling when I attended a two-hour political class by the great Indonesian socialist leader Soetan Sjahrir at Djakarta in 1956). But the youth and student leaders, specially in UP, found in Lohia a lovable senior dude. I recall being closeted with Dr. Lohia when I was just 16 plus at Royal Hotel in the Civil Lines, Allahabad, along with MA final students Dharmavir Bharati and Vijaydeo Narayan Sahi, listening in rapt attention to Lohia's tale of torture of himself and JP in Lahore Central Jail, the two budding writers enquiring about the secret of the socialist leader unearthing significant facts and making startling statements and the doctor advising them to study more and more.

I am personally grateful to Dr. Lohia for encouraging me in my formative years. I was President of Lucknow University Union in 1952-53 and as Chairman of the UP Students' Action Committee led a successful big student movement for the autonomy of student unions in a non-violent democratic manner. In an article captioned *The Lucknow Revolt* published in the National Herald in November 1953 he wrote a paragraph on me appreciating my role. As the General Secretary of the PSP he included me as the student and youth representative in a six-

member Sub-Committee of the National Executive of the PSP on Educational and Youth Affairs, in the august company of Acharya Narendra Deva, Acharya JB Kripalani, Prof. KK Bhattacharya, Dr. Atin Bose and Madhu Limaye. While I led an Indian student delegation to the Indo-Burmese Students' Cultural Festival at Rangoon in the summer of 1954 Dr. Lohia asked three of us to accompany him to the meeting of the Anti-Colonial Bureau of the Asian Socialist Conference at Imphakhon in the Eastern Shan States.

I left active politics and joined a research project in Jaunsar-Bawar in July 1955, but I continued to dabble in the affairs of the NUSI (I chaired the UP Branch of the national student organisation) and the Samajwadi Yuwak Sabha for three years until I was appointed Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Lucknow University. I had to join Government service on January 1, 1959. While I worked as Assistant Commissioner for SC&ST at Jaipur he visited Jaipur sometime in 1961, sent for me and told me: "Government service has already made you 'nikammaa' partially, there is still time to leave it and join me." At Chandigarh too he called me to the residence of Shri Rajinder Sachar, Secretary of his party at Chandigarh, in 1963.

I respected Dr. Lohia but was a bit disillusioned over his hobnobbing with the Jan Sangh and his sharing the election platform with Deen

Dayal Upadhyaya at Farrukhabad. His anti-Nehruism blinded him to the danger of embracing a rabid communal organisation. A similar, rather more dangerous event took place two decades later by JP embracing the Jan Sangh-RSS. Madhu Limaye's opposition to the RSS led to the break-up of the Janata Party but the damage had been done.

Possessing sparkling intellect and a down to earth leader, Lohia mixed with the youth, student leaders, women workers and illiterate peasants with equal felicity. This diminutive, brown, stocky, bespectacled bachelor with a charming and sometimes mischievous smile held a special fascination for women.

Dr. Lohia's contributions are rich and diverse. He astounded people by his deep thoughts on issues like caste, gender equality, culture, etc. Some found deficit of 'shaaleenataa' in his politics. Lohia was undoubtedly an acknowledged pan-India leader who was also popular among the socialist parties of Asia, Africa and Europe.

(Continued from Page 6)

companies are operating in India. Bilateral trade in commercial services has nearly tripled over the past decade increasing from 10.5 billion euros in 2005 to 28.4 billion euros in 2016.

The European Investment Bank has opened an office in New Delhi and has committed 1.5 billion euros for the current year. The Lucknow and Bengaluru metro projects and many solar ventures are supported by the Bank. Further, India, is the leading the International Solar mission.

True, investment would come. But is the Indian market ready to absorb such investment flow? The Alcatel chief profoundly remarked, "Indians are wonderful people, but India is a terrible market". How much has it changed?

On political front, EU has recognized India's regional role in international politics. It has taken serious note of SAARC as a regional body and jotted New Delhi's role and interest in Africa. Pertinently, it has invited her to participate as an observer at the next EU-African Union Summit.

Both held discussions on regional and international issues which included the Muslims Rohingya crisis,

their radicalization in particular, Iran's nuclear programme, North Korea's missile adventurism, civil war in Syria as also rebuilding of Afghanistan. Both "committed to a sustainable, democratic, prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan".

It also wanted the responsibility for abetting and aiding DPRK's nuclearisation to be fixed. Obviously fingers were pointed towards China wherein both EU and India sought to send a clear message that Beijing should follow the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for resolving all maritime territorial disputes.

Furthermore, the apprehension that India, following Britain's exit from EU, might lose interest in EU relations is misplaced, asserted the European Commission's Vice President and High Representative on EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. On the contrary, India's deep and growing relations with major countries like Germany and France are likely to deepen.

Recall, after the 1994 Cooperation and Development Agreement relations were expected to cover people-to-people contact and a multi-faceted collaboration. This was followed by the EU-India Strategic

Partnership in 2004 and a Joint-Action Plan in 2005 updated in 2008.

The Strategic Partnership Treaty recognized India as a "regional and global leader engaging increasingly on equal terms with other world powers. However, despite these institutional growths in India-EU bilateralism relations between Brussels and New Delhi have failed to live up to their potential, remarked German Ambassador to India, Martin Ney. He singled out the joint -failure on resumption of talks to FTA and investment.

Evidently, there has been progress by EU and India. From a common market, EU now has a common currency and has evolved from a Community to a Union. India has also progressed economically following the financial restructuring post-1990s.

There was change of guard in Indian leadership in April 2014 and in EU in November 2014. However, there has been no visible swift progress.

Clearly, India and EU have to do some serious re-thinking on their relations. They need to re-orient their respective bureaucracies to be more visionary, open and accommodative. Therein lies the future of the mutuality of India and the EU.

Memorandum

2 October 2017

His Excellency Shri Ramnath Kovind Ji

President

Republic of India

Most Respected Sir

Be it travel or freight transport, Indian Railways is the socio-economic lifeline of the country. Among the largest rail services in the world, Indian Railways is also the biggest public sector enterprise in the country. The British used the Railways very astutely to exploit the country in order to consolidate their empire. The railway services were built and expanded in free India with the view to strengthen communication/commutation networks, economy and defense networks. Invaluable resources and labour of crores of Indian people went into building the Indian Railways.

The total length of rail tracks is about 120,000 km. Out of this 28 thousand kilometers are used for the yards. On the remaining 92,000 kilometers tracks run trains. Total operational length of Indian Railways is 66,687 route kilometers. Out of this about 55,000 route kilometers was made by the British in pre-independence times. Thus, only 11,000 route kilometers has been expanded in 70 years of independence, which is negligible according to need. Out of 66 thousand route kilometers, 60 thousand route kilometers are broad-gauge lines. The remaining are narrow and meter-gauge lines. The task of changing narrow and broad-gauge lines into broad-gauge is not yet completed. Similarly, the work of doubling and tripling of tracks is also running very slow. However, the work of electrification of the railways has been relatively fast. In 1950-51, 7.5% of the total railway lines were electrified, which is now almost 36%.

So far the qualitative improvement of Indian Railways is concerned, the question of security comes to the fore. With every budget, the number of trains, freight and passenger traffic increases. Along with this there are decisions to increase the speed of trains. A decision to run bullet trains has also been taken by the government. But security, punctuality and facilities have not improved. The journey of trains has become a journey of accidents. Every year, on an average, 100 small and major accidents happen. In the year 2017, eight major rail accidents have occurred till date. Apart from train accidents, many people die in stampedes which happen on crowded platforms and bridges. The recent incident in Mumbai's Elphinstone railway station is a recent example. The government promptly passed the project of a bullet train costing 1.20 thousand crore for the distance of 550 kms., but did not provide money for the construction of a new bridge in place of the old one built by the British in 1911 citing the excuse of lack of funds.

A safe, convenient and time-bound rail service is the first condition for the progress of the country. This is the government's job to fill the lakhs of vacant positions, to lay new tracks as needed, to repair worn out tracks and to install proper technology in order to ensure safety, convenience and punctuality. But the government instead of fulfilling its responsibilities, is busy handing over the Railways to the capitalists. By the decision of merging the Railway Budget with the General Budget, and by the decision to sell railway stations/railway lines to private bidders in the garb of public-private partnership (PPP), the BJP has made a solid beginning of privatizing Railways.

The privatisation of Indian Railways is different from the privatisation of any other public sector undertaking. The Indian Railways is intrinsically connected with rural and urban economy, composite culture, education and internal security of the country. Therefore, any decision of privatization of Indian Railways in any form is anti-constitutional and anti-public. The Socialist Party has launched a nation-wide awareness campaign against the government's decision to privatise Indian Railways. This campaign was inaugurated by a 'Save Indian Railways' march from Mandi House to Jantar-Mantar in Delhi on 22 June 2017. In that series a 'Save Indian Railways Dharna' was held today (2 October 2017) at Jantar-Mantar. We submit this Memorandum to you at the end of the dharna.

Being the custodian of the Constitution, we request you to repeal the decision of privatization of Indian Railways in any form. We are hopeful that you will take prompt and decisive action on this subject.

With utmost regards

Yours faithfully

Dr. Prem Singh

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as Trump Flip-Flops**
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**Socio-Economic Status of
Marginalised Castes in Post –
Independence India**
K. S. Chalam

**Story of A Dalit
Microsoft Engineer**
Prashant Nema

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Election Commission-Is it Independent ?

Kuldip Nayar

THE Election Commission has never done it before and had developed an independent status since T.N. Seshan. He had given it a stature which was admired by the electorate. But the way in which the EC is dilly-dallying with the poll dates in Gujarat gives room to several conjectures. Some even see the hand of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who hails from Gujarat.

What it means is that the people have come to doubt the independence of the Commission. The Gujarat assembly's term ends on January 22, 2018 while that of the Himachal Pradesh on January 7. Last week, Chief Election Commissioner A.K. Joti announced the election date only for Himachal Pradesh and one doesn't know when the dates for Gujarat polls would be notified.

Understandably, this has created a controversy which could have been avoided with better management. Former CEC S.Y. Qureshi has rightly commented that the move to break from the EC's convention of announcing elections together in states where incumbent

governments are completing their terms within six months had raised "serious questions."

CEC Joti has cited relief and rehabilitation of the flood-affected in Gujarat as one of the reasons for the delay in poll announcement in the state. But nobody is buying this argument because, as former CEC T.S. Krishnamurthy said, "the emergency flood relief work is to be done by bureaucrats, not politicians. The Model Code of Conduct does not stand in the way of any emergency relief work. It does not prevent existing projects from continuing. Only new projects should not be announced during the MCC period."

The MCC is a common code that aims to provide a level-playing field to all contesting candidates during election season by guiding the conduct of the incumbent government, political parties and candidates.

"All this controversy could have been avoided with better management," Krishnamurthy said to a newspaper. "I suppose they

(EC) could have announced both (Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh polls) together, either one week before or one week after. I am not looking at whether the decision was influenced or not. I am concerned with whether, administratively, a solution could have been found. I think I would have found a solution.”

This observation by the former CEC has put a question mark against the EC. Once again, the doubts that have come to the fore are that the Election Commission is run by the bureaucrats under the guidance of the central government. The image and reputation of the Commission has been severely damaged.

Take for instance what the Gujarat government did anticipating the announcement of poll dates in the state. The officials of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation’s standing committee went into a huddle for one and a half hour to push ahead with a string of announcements. Chief Minister Vijay Rupani inaugurated several projects of development work worth Rs 780 crore besides extending free logistical services to Sri Sri Ravishankar’s Diwali event in the city.

Not only that the Ahmedabad Municipal Council which conducted the *Shahri Garib Kalyan Mela*, distributed 3,262 kits including cheques, funds and bonds under the *Manav Garima Yojana* with 4,103 getting the government largesse. The kits distributed included sewing machines, utensils, tri-cycles, dairy products, street-vending carts and other household items. The total sum of the kits and cheques distributed came to Rs. 165 crore. The cheques included a minimum of Rs 2,000 given to school girls as Vidyalakshmi bonds, Rs 5,000 to

parents with two girls and who have undergone sterilization, Rs 10,000 as a revolving fund by the AMC’s Urban Community Development department and the highest Rs 50,000 for inter-caste marriage.

The big-ticket schemes include Rs 165.75-crore project for providing drinking water to the city from Mahi River at a capacity of 150 million litres per day and beautification of the Sursagar Lake at a cost of Rs 38 crore. Incidentally, beautification of the iconic lake was also undertaken before the 2012 Assembly polls. Union ministers and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states made a beeline to Gujarat to extol the government schemes.

The Prime Minister, too, visited the state soon after and kick-started the poll campaign with his usual scathing attacks on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. He went on to say that the “family will destroy Gujarat because it dislikes Gujarat and Gujaratis” and called the coming assembly election in the state a fight between “development and dynasty.”

The old question comes to be raised yet again is whether the bureaucrats should at all be made members of the Commission? They are under the discipline of the Central Government and can be influenced. Although Seshan, a bureaucrat, disproved this thesis every bureaucrat cannot be a Sehsan. The government’s influence is inevitable.

We all remember the political storm created by former CEC N. Gopalaswami when he *suo motu* sent a recommendation to the President that Election Commissioner Navin Chawla should be removed from office on the

alleged ground of ‘partisanship.’ Gopalaswami’s action did raise several eyebrows within the government on account of its timing as well as its departure from well-settled readings of the relevant constitutional provisions. Subsequently, Chawla was elevated to CEC’s post on the advice of the government which had rejected Gopalaswami’s plea for his removal, saying there was no merit in the allegations against the Election Commissioner.

The noise raised over the appointment of an Election Commissioner makes little sense because it is a constitutional position. The government should itself be careful and not do anything which would cast a shadow on the independence or integrity of the Commission. The Commission itself should act in such a manner that there is no room for any controversy.

There is still time to retrieve the situation. The Election Commission should straightaway announce the dates of Gujarat poll to avoid any further challenge to its non-partisanship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can save the situation and see to it that the Commission announces the date immediately. He is unnecessarily getting mixed up with the dates of Gujarat POLL.

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India should engage Pakistan as Trump Flip-Flops

D. K. Giri

The US President Donald Trump's tweet on 14 October had the South Block (India's external affairs headquarters) worried. It got busy in interpreting the message. Donald Trump tweeted as the Pakistan Army rescued a US – Canadian family from the captivity of Haqqani terror group, "We are starting to develop a much better relationship with Pakistan and its leaders. I want to thank them for their cooperation on our fronts".

Donald Trump is known for his flip-flops on many policy issues. But this tweet should not be ignored as one of those. What he says, is in contrast to their Afghan and South Asia policy announced in August this year. Donald Trump had named Pakistan for supporting the terror groups and warned Islamabad of consequences. The policy added, "Pakistan had taken advantage of US support for years and had worked against US interests". India was encouraged and emboldened by US listing Hizbul Mujahidden, and Syed Salaluddin. They had anxiously expected that the US will keep the heat on, especially as Haqqani Group was accused of killing American soldiers in Afghanistan. The same terror group had bombed the Indian Mission in Kabul Killing 58 people.

However, the moot point is, should India be too wary of America's utterances and policy on Pakistan? Should India rely heavily and solely on America to deal with Pakistan, which is aiding and abetting cross-border terrorism that bleeds Kashmir? Why cannot India take

independent actions on Pakistan, seven times smaller demographically and eight times lesser in GDP than India?

In fact, India is all-talks and no-action on Pakistan. It does not back its rhetorics with action, to the detriment of its national interest. Axiomatically, a promise carried out is costly, and a threat, not carried out, is costly. Our posturing on Pakistan without action is proving costly for us. No action undermines India's deterrent position. Admittedly, it is in India's national interest that India deals with Pakistan directly, on its own. There are four ways of engaging with Pakistan. First, the hawkish approach; to cow down, Pakistan as it will not restrain otherwise. It can be diplomatically pegged with the 'carrot and stick' approach, but more stick than the carrot. To start with, India should begin to downsize the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi, which is infested with ISI elements. India should withdraw the MFN status to Pakistan, that was unilaterally given. It should leverage the Indus Water Treaty (IWT). Did not Prime Minister Modi say "Blood and Water cannot flow together?" Instead, India has backslided, renewed the IWT, and gave World Bank a mediating role. India should stop the barter trade across LoC. In PoK, India has made no claim, except objecting to OBOR on the question of sovereignty. In the 2016 speech, on the Independence day, Modi raised the issue of Baluchistan, the mayhem and murder committed by Pakistani Army, but since then, India has not followed it up. To counter terrorism, India is

fighting a proxy war in Kashmir. It carried out surgical strikes in retaliation of the cross-border fires following Modi's surprise visit to Lahore. But, to be sure, such one-off strike will not tame Pakistan. India has to maintain the momentum of heavy retaliation in order to frustrate Pakistan's strategy of "seeking to inflict death by thousand cuts".

India is yet to declare ISS, as a terrorist organisation. It has imposed no sanctions against Pakistan. How does India expect others like USA to take action on Pakistan, while she, herself is dithering to do so? Some hawkish experts would recommend that India should declare that "not an inch of Kashmir, either for independence, or to join Pakistan, will be ceded, in any event". Such clear stance will dissuade recruitment or support to terrorism in Kashmir.

The second approach to Pakistan is to treat Pakistan as a potential friend. We have missed more than one opportunity to solve Kashmir problem amicably. Yet, if we make a hard assessment, Pakistan could be India's friend, and be treated as such. Despite the nuclearisation in both countries, and China's meddling in Indo-Pak affairs, it is unwise to consider Pakistan an enemy. It may be recalled that during Indo-China war in 1962, Pakistan took a helpful stand. As Prof. Vivekanandan, author of India's Security Concerns, argued, India and Pakistan should 'pool their destinies together' to lend substance to their symbiotic existence. One has experienced the warmth and affection when the

people of India and Pakistan meet each other across their respective borders or in a third country. People-to-people bond is too strong to set aside in bilateralism.

From my own experience, I would like to share two heart-warming episodes. One, when I was studying in the United Kingdom, I ran into one Wasif Hussain who had come to my University for his post-doctoral research in Chemistry. I was there for my Ph.D. We began to discuss our homelands. That is usually the case when you meet another visitor in a foreign country, He told me he was born in Rohtak, Haryana, and when he was nine year old, migrated to Pakistan during the partition. So he had vivid memories of India. To my surprise, he revealed that his family still believed that they were Indians living in Pakistan. He invited me home and introduced me to his wife Maimuna as his brother from India. He had twin daughters of 7 years of age. From that day onwards, as long as we were in the university, I became a maternal uncle to the twins, and Maimunna tied *rakhi* on me every year. I cannot forget the love and warmth they showered on me.

Second incident was when I visited Islamabad on a project with other South Asians. Out of all the countries (about 80) I have visited, this was my best visit. One day, the security was restraining me to go outside the hotel. I wore the *pathani* suit presented by Maimunna in UK and wore a cap. I walked out of the hotel in everyone's notice, and no one including the security staff stopped me. I went out into the urban villages nearby and roamed around freely. I would greet the passersby in Urdu that I had learnt from my teaching days in Jamia Milia Islamia

University in Delhi, they would return the greetings and soon I became one of them.

As a part of our study, we were taken to a village (*pind*) some 70 kms away from Islamabad. We were having some tea in a courtyard of the village chief. I was lying on a cot on the ground to enjoy the weather and the gentle sun; I was perhaps sun-bathing. I was woken up by drops of water on my right palm. When I opened my eyes, I saw an old lady in Haryanvi attire holding my hand as tears fell from her eyes. I was stunned to see her like that. Our host saw my surprise as well as curiosity. He smilingly explained, "The lady was born in India and was looking for the Indian among the South Asians. When we pointed you to her, she came to you and became emotional." The clarification relaxed me. The lady asked me where I was from in India. When I said, I live in Gurgaon but worked in New Delhi, she became overjoyed as she was born in Gurgaon too. But she was too sad not to be able to revisit her birthplace. There are many such encounters by other Indians with second and even third generation Pakistanis.

Therefore, the inimical posturing by both countries notwithstanding, there is no serious long-term security threat to each other. It is China that India and Pakistan should worry about which has an unsatiated territorial appetite. It uses India's neighbours including Pakistan as pawns against India. It has grabbed thousands of kilometres from India and is plotting to have more.

The third approach is; India should follow the 'Gujral doctrine' to deal with its neighbours and keep China at bay. What is Gujral Doctrine? I.K.Gujral, as a Minister for External

Affairs articulated his policy towards our neighbours in September 1996. This policy was called Gujral Doctrine. I.K.Gujral then went on to become the 12th Prime Minister of India. The doctrine had five principles. One, India should show a big heart without reciprocity from smaller neighbours except Pakistan, as the latter was capable of reciprocating. Two, no South Asian country, would allow its territory to be used against the interest of another South Asian country. Three, no country should interfere in the internal affairs of others. Four, South Asian countries should respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Five, South Asian countries should settle their disputes through bilateral peaceful negotiations. Reviving and adhering to Gujral doctrine would ensure peace and security in South Asian region, and restore Indo-Pak normalcy.

The fourth is a long-term visionary approach which calls for high statesmanship to be initiated. If Berlin wall can be demolished, if European Union can be constituted on the ashes of two-world wars, and many small wars fought in Europe, a new South Asia can be created to stop the rivalries and bloodshed. I am suggesting the creation of a United Nations of South Asia (UNSA). Looking back, the religious basis of creating Pakistan did not hold. Culture became a stronger unit than religion. That is why Bangladesh separated from Pakistan although the former too is a Muslim country. So, the Indian sub-continent comprising three countries, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh should be reorganised into nation-states; Punjab will be reunited into one, Kashmir will be one consisting of Indian Kashmir and PoK, Bengal would be one again with

(Continued on Page 6)

Satyagraha for 0% GST on hand made sector seeks to realise a promise made in the Indian Constitution

With the assurance of the Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri Siddaramaiah that the Karnataka Government will support the Satyagraha's demand for 0% GST on hand made products, Shri Prasanna broke his indefinite fast in the presence of various elders and supporters by accepting coconut water from Shri Veerabhadra Chennamalla Swamiji of Nidumaamidi Mata. The Chief Minister in his 19th October letter to Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that "imposition of GST on (handmade) products has had an adverse effect on the livelihood of such artisans engaged in producing such products". He also said that the demands of the Satyagraha "require serious and urgent consideration and a positive resolution. This would not only benefit a large segment of our rural population but would also give a boost to rural employment and sustainability. I, therefore, urge you to take this issue on a priority basis in the next GST Council and decide favourably benefiting a large segment of rural artisans. I assure you of the Government of Karnataka's full support in this regard."

Noted theatre and social activist Prasanna of Gram Seva Sangh was on an indefinite fast – since 14th October 2017 demanding "Zero Tax" on handmade products. He took the decision of an indefinite fast as several nation-wide actions as part of the Satyagraha demanding "zero tax" were not responded to by the GST Council of India. There is a growing demand to ensure India's

governance keeps the promises made in the Constitution of India and the Freedom Movement that there is active and willing support to sustain crafts people and such others who depend on their hands and skills in building the nation.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar spoke extensively about the need for positive discrimination favouring handcrafting artisans and communities who are essentially rural, fisher folk, pastoral, artisanal, tribal and such other natural resource dependent communities. This was also in acknowledgment of the State's role in correcting a major historical wrong committed against craftspeople who had been violently suppressed during British regime.

Gandhiji promoted the Charkha as the praxis of producing one's own essentials as the most profound act of sovereign existence, and that without damaging the earth or causing injustices to others in one's life. The idea was to build a just economic system that was both ecologically sustainable and ethical. As a part of this movement for fundamental reform, the State was called upon to enable and empower communities who provided us with our daily needs with a wide range of hand made products. Positive discrimination favouring handmade products by not taxing them would be the most fundamental support the State can extend to provide these highly marginalised communities with a chance to secure a dignified existence.

In introducing GST on handmade products, the GST Council of India, which is a negotiated process of all States and the Union Government, has comprehensively ignored the critical importance of such positive discrimination favouring the handicraft sector. Instead, handmade products have been heavily taxed, ranging between 5% and 28% (the highest tax bracket). The result of this will be mass impoverishment of the rural and informal sectors that support millions of livelihoods by making handmade products. Further, it will result in hand made products having no chance whatsoever of competing with mass-produced consumer goods, which are supported with a whole range of sops: such as easy credit supply, handsome tax breaks, easy and cheap access to natural resources, infrastructure, and also cheap labour. This discrimination favouring the industrialised class is producing an economy that is highly divisive, where a miniscule percentage are hoarding all profits, while the costs are borne by the rest of us. Besides, the impacts are being passed on to future generations as well. Such an economy is unsustainable.

Shri Prasanna's Satyagraha is a reminder to the State and the public at large, that we must stop hurting the handcrafting sector any further. His indefinite fast is a protest against such deliberate negligence and injustice, a movement in civil disobedience against our own elected Government that has become insensitive to the very people that placed them in power. This is also a

call to refuse to pay unjust GST when buying handmade products and demand that the GST Council introduces 'zero tax' on all handmade products in keeping with our Constitutional promise, especially that which is enshrined in Article 39:

- “(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood;
- (b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;
- (c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;”

The Satyagraha has been endorsed by several mass organisations, federations, cooperatives, political movements, etc. They include Janapada Seva Trust, Karnataka, Komu Sovharda Vedhike, Karnataka Rajya Devanga Naukara Sangha, Lancha Mukta Karnataka, Dalit Student Federation, Karnataka Janashakthi, Karnataka Vidhyarthi Sangatane, National Hawkers Federation, National Fishworkers Federation, National Alliance of Peoples Movement, Grameena Cooli Karmikara sangatane, Samudaya, Janata Dal (U), Janata Dal (S), Samajvaadi Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress (I), Rashtriya Swabhimani Andolan, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Karnataka Jyana vijyana samiti, SUCI, Sampoorana Kranti, Corruption-free Karnataka, Gandhi Bhavan, Jana Vadhi Mahila Sangha, All India Trade Union Congress, National

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(Continued from Page 4)

West Bengal and Bangladesh joining. This will coincide with the 'Akhand Bharat' approach, albeit with a difference. What is more, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamils could be one nation. So, the culture based on language, the biggest connector, would constitute the rationale of nationhood (states). South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would be replaced by the United Nations of South Asia. UNSA will end the internecine conflict of Kashmir and other such problems of nation-building.

Arguably, UNSA is a long-term Vision, but not a Utopia. Moving in

Mukta Karnataka, Praja Science Vedhike, Ekta Parishad, Rashtriya Cheneta Jana Samakya, and several several more.

that direction will lessen a lot of tension in South Asia, Indo-Pak relations in particular. Such a vision, communicated and shared well, should encourage the countries in South Asia to work in unity and harmony.

To conclude, undoubtedly, a South Asian approach towards integration is much better than inviting other countries like USA or China to interfere or mediate. Their association may maintain a 'balance of terror' but will not ensure peace, security and prosperity, and certainly, it is the latter we must seek.

Acharya Javadekar
A Satyagrahi Socialist



G. P. Pradhan

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Socio-Economic Status of Marginalised Castes in Post – Independence India

K. S. Chalam

The marginalisation of Castes that are traditionally excluded from mainstream social and economic benefits are considered as SC, ST, OBC and minorities, the socio-economic status of these castes can be assessed in terms of the following concepts.

Marginalization has been defined as a complex process of relegating specific group of people to the lower edge of society. It effectively pushes these groups of people to the margin of society economically, politically, culturally and socially following the paradigm of exclusion.

Economic Deprivation is defined as the lack of sufficient income for people to play roles, participate in the relationships, and is a state of income inequality wherein income generated by one individual is not enough to cover his basic needs. It includes as per UK 6 parameters like income, education, employment, health, housing and crime

Social Exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack of or denial of resources rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society.

After independence the government has planned growth with justice and used strategies like SCP/ TSP and several subsidised schemes for the marginalised. Yet the situation has not improved as expected. The

Table on plan outlays show how little is given to them. It is estimated that around Rs 53 lakh crores were allocated during plan period 1951-2017 and supposed to have spent Rs 8.4 lakh crores on SC and half of the same on ST as per their population in terms of the so called Special Component Plan by the end of 2017. It seems the money spent on SCs is about Rs 1 lakh crores and may be half of it for STs so far. This rough estimate (guesstimate) is made to show how the nation owes to these communities just in terms of the public spending. In fact much of the resources of the state were available for development and other projects because the people belonging to these communities remained poor, illiterate, malnourished, suffered ill health etc without getting sufficient legitimate attention of the state and the resources thus saved diverted to others. Therefore, the first charge of the budgets should have been on the welfare of these communities. But, the situation has worsened after P.M Narasimha Rao and his team introduced privatisation as a panacea for development of the nation, perhaps the nation consisting of the creamy layer of India, the Varna castes must have been benefitted.

There is some improvement in SC literacy rates from less than 1.9 per cent in 1931 to 55 percent, enrolment in to higher education improved with state support. Yet, the per cent of graduates from SC constitute 2.7 and ST 2.2 and BC 4.2 of their respective populations in 2010. However, the enrolment in to higher education is

somehow managed to show the UNO that it has crossed 20 percent is a misnomer. Health care provided through public health establishments is very poor. Inequalities after 1991 have widened and 1 per cent of the population own 58 per cent of wealth and 8 persons own \$ 80 billion dollars property. As per Oxfam, 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 present status of poverty among SC ST OBC and minorities is estimated by Saxena to be around 50 percent and official figures place it around 30-35 per cent. The landlessness among these communities has increased and Land reforms, Urban Ceiling etc have been put to rest. The state has emerged as the biggest land dealer or real estate broker in recent times. Schemes like PPP and Infrastructure projects are being used as conduits to transfer poor people's land properties in the name of infrastructure projects first acquired by the state and later transferred. The recent land scam in Visakhapatnam to the extent of one lakh acres of government and D form pattas worth more than a lakh of crores is the biggest scam of the era is being investigated by SIT. The role of the judiciary is well known in the case of BALCO where it has clearly said that Judiciary has no role to interfere with state policy despite Art 39. Interestingly, the same apex court gives orders now and then on the basis of petitions made by upper castes on reservations despite of Art 15 and 16

of the Constitution. We cannot question them as they are svayambhus and are above Brahma. The so called implementation of Right to Education and Right to Food under Art 21 is the common knowledge of every one and the corporate media never bothers about such infringements.

Dalits and Artisan castes are displaced – they are not replaced and rehabilitated in the MSME. In the MSME sector SC enterprises constitutes 7.5 percent, ST 2.8%, BC 38% of the total units under Micro and under Medium category all the three put together constitute less than 0.1 percent. The corporate sector is totally under the grip of the private companies that constitutes 94 per cent of the total registered companies. Data shows that privatisation has increased- public sector jobs declined- privatisation of public sector initiated through PPP mode, casualisation, contracting etc have destroyed the family silver and they are for grabs by the powerful families who get the political bosses elected by investing in them wisely. Therefore, privatisation of public properties including enterprises is being done through the following methods.

1. Trade sale – selling an enterprise to the existing active firm in the industry

2. Public Offering - IPO, selling shares in the open to create diverse ownership

3. Management buyout- managers of the enterprise form a company and buy the unit

4. IPO plus scheme-pvt interests create funds to buy shares in the open and own it - BALCO

5. The debt for equity - creditors of the enterprise accept equity for debt and takeover it

6. PPP - some parts of the enterprise divert it for PPP mix and finally appropriate it

7. Management Contract, mostly in Saudi ports govt own, let on contract for management

8. Equalisation: Mixed ownership as in China no time limit fixed but pvt. allowed. India has innovative schemes like suit case companies and transfer properties as benami etc

The ONGC-HPCL buy out or takeover by putting a holding company to the shares seem to be dangerous- instead Govt. can own HPCL and give it to ONGC for managing to create behemoth may be alright- interest on Rs 25000 crores shares becomes a burden that make both ONGC and HPCL vulnerable for takeover by a giant like Reliance. The same is true in the case of Air India and other public sector enterprises. What has happened to the recent demonetisation episode and how - Paytm and other scams - share market scams taken place are little known to common man is process of transferring public properties to private individuals. It is strange to believe how such units are made efficient by Individuals with the same skills and markets is a great Brahmanda that needs a sage to explain and elucidate.

Slowly and steadily the public wealth and common properties are converted as private assets, help augment private wealth and not public. It has a social dimension in India as concentration of wealth is held in the hands of few varna castes-

crony capitalism. It is noted by Harish Damodaran - Chalam – Ravi Saxena and others that caste has played an important role in corporate governance as 46% vaisya, 45% Brahmin, 3% SC 3.8 BC are the board of directors in the Indian companies. The FDI story of using Singapore, Mauritius routes show that they are conduits of black money shifted from Swiss Banks and most of the investors are from upper castes.

Now Dropout rates at I-X for SC 68% ST 77%, higher education is less than 8% and no skill training in traditional occupations. The Average Value of Assets for SC is Rs 5.1 lakh ST Rs 5.5 lakh, others 16.6 lakhs urban 35 lakhs. Among all indebted households, SC households reported to be the highest “debt to asset ratio” (12.2% in rural and 18.5% in urban) followed by OBC (8.9% in rural and 15% in urban).

Displacement of Adivasis and Dalits in the project areas had affected the lives of around 4 crores in India. The situation in the subcontinent is the same. It has disturbed the equilibrium and peace in South Asia. The Chittgong Hill Track CHT – Kaptai Dam displaced in 1960s- Chakma Buddhists, Hajong Hindu-Tibeto-Burmese – The story of Bangladesh refugees- Silguri dalits- Cooch Bihar- Bengal Rohingya- mostly untouchables in the past got converted to Buddhism, Islam from animism is the greatest human tragedy worse than that of Jews, Palestine etc that are not documented and the Ex-untouchables of the sub continent remained outside public glare of civil society activism. They are Adi Hindus and we have problems on the border states including Pakistan, Bangla, Nepal, Sri Lanka etc untouchables who had contact

with mainland India – No problems with those who permanently migrated and remained as in South Africa, Myanmar, Mauritius, Caribbean and other places. Social identity of people of India is in crisis as none of the border countries in SAARC are in friendly terms- past history might throw light that they refused to accept the social division based on varna, descent or belief left Hindusthan- Now What do you do?

First strengthen your unity and

shock the nation as did Kanshiram in UP and ask for representative democracy by reducing the over representation of the Varna castes in all spheres of life in India. Find out an appropriate procedure to unite all Ex-untouchables-not just 20 dominant out of 1025 scheduled castes and 1200 backward castes to formulate a CMP-to demand representation in private sector or ask for shares in it as our ancestors and after independence our kith and kin have invested in Public sector

and in common property by remaining poor, ignorant and deprived by foregoing the minimum needs while they made Rs 91 lakh crores corrupt money as per social media postings before 2014 elections. Think it over and you need not rely on my words, search your hearts and be proactive.

(Summary of Speech delivered at ONGC SC ST OBC Officers annual conference held in Visakhapatnam, Sept 25-26, 2017)

Plan period	Plan outlay(Rs. in crores) SCP/TSP				
	Total	ST	Percentage	SC	Percentage
First Plan	1960	1993	1.00	6.13	0.35
Second Plan	4672	42.92	0.90	28.56	0.16
Third Plan	8577	50.53	0.60	40.82	0.48
Fourth Plan	1579	79.85	0.50	72.19	0.46
Fifth Plan	39426	1157.67	3.00	204.90	0.52
Sixth Plan	109292	3640.25	3.33	3722.97	3.14
Seventh Plan	180000	6744.85	3.75	7283.32	4.02
Eight Plan	181735	14873.43	8.18	22380.80	12.32
Eleventh Plan	118700	8141.00	3.7	96071.00	8.1

Growing Importance of Non-Government Companies

End March	No. of Companies			Paid-up Capital (Rs. in Cr.)			Share of Non-Govt. Cos. In PUC
	Govt.	Non-Govt.	Total	Govt.	Non-Govt.	Total	
1989-90	1,160	2,00,968	2,02,128	47,451	17,193	64,643	26.60
1994-95	1,199	3,52,093	3,53,292	73,300	62,719	1,36,019	46.11
1999-00	1,245	5,41,189	5,42,434	1,02,850	2,15,960	3,18,810	67.74
2004-05	1,328	6,78,321	6,79,649	1,55,814	4,98,208	6,54,022	76.18
2009-10	1,642	8,34,218	8,35,860	2,52,040	7,74,563	10,26,603	75.45
2015-16	65245	1023535	1088780	3287833	1674692	4962525	94.00

Story of A Dalit Microsoft Engineer

Prashant Nema*

One seldom hears any of the persons...saying, "Let us do something to change the Touchable Hindu."

—Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Tanmay commented, "Frankly Prashant, if I weren't an exceptional student, I would have committed suicide long ago." His statement chilled my bones; having known him for years, I knew he was not given to exaggeration or needless drama. He was serious. As I shivered, I realised two things - that I myself was unexceptional and that even in that state, I played a role in his immiseration. I had to know more.

Tanmay and I had been chatting over lunch and the words were flowing. I had asked him to tell me about his background; he obliged me with elegance and passion. No books, lectures, or documentaries could have prepared me to understand Tanmay and what he represented. For others, we were just two Indian immigrants chatting over lunch but our chat was a statistical and moral improbability – the differences in our background were deep, wide, and invidious. After all I am an upper caste Hindu and Tanmay is a Dalit. How we got to this point of convergence - as "successful" employees of Microsoft – is a tale of deep deprivation and extraordinary strength on Tanmay's side and privilege and mediocrity on mine, an object lesson in the inequality of

endowments and circumstances wrought by the Caste System.

How I got to be interested in Tanmay's story is a lesson in itself. The recent discourse in my adopted home about Race had me thinking of an analogy to my own upbringing in India. As I came to understand White Privilege, it became increasingly difficult to comment or act on issues of racial justice without first confessing my own version of privilege.

The privilege I was born into and facilitated who I am today came from the same system that hampered Tanmay at every stage from becoming who he is today. People have of course heard of the "Caste System"- a complex system of hereditary and occupation-based segregation that has been an organising principle of much of Indian society for millennia. While most people know of it, few understand both its persistence and its cruelty for the hundreds of millions of people it designates as undesirable. To understand this is to enter the Heart of Darkness.

A Personal Journey

I was lucky enough to be born into

a family in which almost all members graduated University. Though still beset with traditional gender-roles, our family had done well - the adult males found stable jobs that afforded us middle-class luxuries. In a country recovering from colonial destitution and characterised by great inequality, this achievement was rare and important. Though my ancestors were largely small businessmen and traders, both of my grandfathers found their path in education and assumed professional roles in the growing and newly independent country. By the time my generation came, the basic existential needs of life were taken care of; in that sense my childhood and adolescence were easy and filled with the joys of privilege.

Tanmay was not so fortunate. Caught in the punishing cycle of Caste, his birthright was not education and privilege but difficulty. While the working adults in my family were professionals, in his they were involved in the skinning of dead animals. For literally thousands of years, generations of his family were locked into this thankless, dangerous and "God-ordained" profession. Those who attempted to break out of this vicious cycle were dealt with harshly. By the time of Independence

(*Prashant Nema, a Savarna engineer with Microsoft at Seattle has written this touching article about his friend and Dalit colleague, Tanmay Waghmare, that appeared on COUNTERCURRENTS.ORG on October 4, 2017 under the caption [Upper Caste Privilege: From Catharsis To Change](#). It is hoped that this article will make the upper castes more sensitive towards their not-so-privileged colleagues and convince them to stop opposing the policy of reservation.)

– 1947 - both his grandfathers were skinning these animals in largely rural India; They were part of a large group – numbering **200 million** today- called Dalits (or “Untouchables” in the common English translation.)

This extreme lack of occupational diversity and related deprivation in his community was not simply a matter of happenstance - it was the determined product of a carefully planned and enforced system of slavery. Not only was this a synthetic or man-made system but it was “sold” to the Indian population as part and parcel of their religion.

I recall hearing first about Caste when I was eight. My mother told me in passing that our last name meant we were “Baniyas,” or members of a particular caste. Though I understood very little, I later learnt from Indian mythology that Baniyas were a sub-caste of “Vaishyas” which implied that we were tradesman by profession. I learned about the other “upper” castes at that time too - Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Taken as a group, these members of upper castes are called “Savarnas.”

For most of my childhood, I didn't think much of Caste; in some sense I was lucky - I grew up in a cosmopolitan neighborhood defined by diversity and what we thought at that time to be a “modern” outlook. As I grew up, I remember specifically thinking that we had transcended “isms” and had achieved a universal outlook. As I reflect now, I realise how wrong I was - I cannot recall a single Dalit friend or family associate from my childhood. While we felt that we had achieved universality, we lived in the

heart of segregation. But at that time, I reveled in our “modernity.”

With my idealistic naiveté, I thought that despite its power in history, the caste system had lost its strength. Sure, people married within their caste and faced social opprobrium if they sought a partner from outside, but for the most part, as I thought, the more damning parts of the caste system had dissipated. I thought of my own family in which my own father was no longer a petty trader but was, instead, a scientist working on innovative and new things. India was a modernizing country with a progressive constitution and a well-developed idea of citizenship, so even if there were remnants of the caste system, they were benign. Sure, there was the notion of “untouchability,” but that was an excrescence, not a persistent feature of society. Interestingly, many learned people shared this position. The past was the past; the present and the future were bright.

Tanmay's childhood perception was the polar opposite of mine; his own caste position – as a Dalit and not a Savarna - gave him a rude shock from the beginning. First, it was evident to him that everyone around him were engaged in professions that viscerally repulsed him. Second, he was victim to scores of incidents in which he was singled out due to his caste, including by a teacher who, when Tanmay was only eight years old, declared to the class that the child was “not even touchable not to mention teachable.”

A system I thought had largely disappeared was simultaneously destroying Tanmay's aspirations. For me, it was a theoretical construct, part of our past; for him, it was real,

present, and inescapable. As I learned later on– after decades of life – 75 per cent of Dalit students drop out before completing high school, unable to manage either economically or survive the harassment leveled by teachers, students, and public figures alike, this childhood was very different than mine, which was filled with clear encouragement from my teachers, peers and others in my social graph. In addition to this, if social networking is a thing (and it is a billion dollar industry) I had success written all over my forehead.

For Tanmay, the deprivations and insults continued. Not only his direct relations but also all the people who lived in his vicinity shared the fate of having filthy, menial jobs, scraping the very bottom of the economic barrel, and being treated by others as untouchable. Amongst them were manual scavengers, janitors, animal rearers, and corpse handlers. The perception of these jobs is best described by the fact that the titles of these occupations are actually slur words in the common lexicon. Not only did Tanmay have to bear such insults, he was not only bereft of any amenities but also was intimidated by the powerful castes around him. He grew up feeling dejected, helpless and looked down upon.

Book Knowledge Versus Reality

It's not that notions of untouchability were unknown to me growing up, just that they seemed to be things of the past. We knew that for thousands of years, Tanmay's ancestors were not even allowed in public spaces, in some places they were not only “untouchable” but also “unseeable.” If they tried to educate themselves even by listening, religious texts called for molten lead

to be poured into their eyes. In every corner of the country, Dalits were assaulted and subjugated. With unrelenting harshness and unrelenting predictability, these life-killing practices became part of culture and tradition, accepted by the Savarnas.

Though there were countless uprisings through history, when colonial India entered the 20th century, untouchability was alive and well. With the ferment of the Independence struggle and the leadership of Dr BR Ambedkar – Tanmay’s hero and prime architect of Free India’s constitution, Dalits did gain Civil Rights including the benefits of the world’s largest affirmative action programme - called Reservations. But as with so many such situations, these rights were de jure and less commonly de facto.

For a Savarna like me, busy with my own studies and obligations, I had little idea of the difference between my idealistic picture and Tanmay’s lived reality. For me, Dalits were abstractions, metaphors for India’s progress. Untouchability, in my experience, was only invoked in history exams or through people who did all the menial work that makes my life possible but who are “invisible” by the rest of society.

To illustrate how “legitimate” reasons are propounded in order to justify the divisions of society into “touchables” and “untouchables.” Take for instance the fact that the professions often occupied by Dalits are considered “unclean” (like those who deal with human excrement, corpses, slaughtered animals, etc.) People in my echelon of society were told not to play with their kids for reasons of hygiene. The label of

“impurity” given by religious sanction was converted into a “modern” and “scientific” epithet having to do with hygiene. Forget of course, the provision of proper sanitary services – rich society had other priorities.

My bookish and idealistic view of Caste belied the painful reality on the ground. This “blindness” stems from privilege, just as theoretical notions of Race and Racism in the US belie the lived reality of the minorities who suffer.

There is of course more to the system than “personal contempt,” which of course exists. Sure, Dalits are questioned all the time - for their intelligence, integrity, and even humanity. But there are also the structural impediments - having to do with economics and social currency – that hobble their lives at every turn.

I had the privilege of not knowing; Tanmay had the opposite - the burden of being oppressed at worst and condescended to at best. That he fought his way through is a testament to his strength of personality.

University

The particular situation with regard to higher studies further divides Savarnas and Dalits. I succumbed to the mainstream propaganda, but not for reasons of contempt or religious fundamentalism. No, the highly competitive nature of Indian University admissions - coupled with the unremitting narrative of the powerful classes and castes - create a propagandistic environment in which the systems of Affirmative Action create even more hatred and divisiveness. While this is true in the US University and even in the

workplace (via Affirmative Action and Diversity programmes), the scale in India dwarfs what is seen in the US.

Admissions, especially to the few prestigious institutions in India, are highly competitive. With the system of Reservations, the “scores” required for Dalit students to get in are less than for Savarnas. This is exactly how Affirmative Action should work- it factors in the variety of obstacles that Dalits and others face along the way and attempts to counter this with slightly loosened standards for admission. Even with these programmes, the Dalit representation in these institutions is tiny; after all with economic deprivation, unrelenting humiliation, and other societal obstacles, very few Dalits make it this far in the first place.

But for a hard-working young person like myself, with only a bookish understanding of Caste, the idea of reservations seemed to be a blow against equality. If we want equality, shouldn’t all standards be equal? This narrative of conservatism afflicted me - it seemed fair and logical. It’s an indication of great privilege to invoke equality only when it serves oneself and to be blind to struggles for fairness and justice - equality itself - and to maintain silence when it serves others.

With these perceptions of unfairness and with the social baggage we grew up with, University life was characterised by a clear boundary between Savarnas and Dalits. I remember with great regret referring to Dalit students with derogatory terms because of the perceived injustice that my own friends were unable to get into the

university while less qualified Dalits were given “an easy route in. “No doubt there were Dalits from well-to-do families who were able to avail of the Reservation system to get in, but what large social system doesn’t have such cases? The rich and privileged use “the system” to their advantage every day but when someone else uses the very system in the very same way, we blanch and invoke morality! In a curious inversion, we declared ourselves victims!

The bias and animus against Dalits was not limited to fellow students but also characterised those with power—the faculty and administration. When these people spread ideas of Dalits being like Reagan’s “Welfare Queen,” they unleashed a terrible reality on Dalits - segregation, unfair insults, unfair grading, harassment, and a variety of other tortures.

Dalit students, who have fought tooth and nail, to get a glimpse of the decent life via education, often are broken; many commit suicide. The media often relate these suicides to the lack of ability to cope with the academic pressure, but all data suggests that the vast majority of these suicides are connected to mistreatment and harassment. In fact, this is a known phenomenon called “Death of Merit”. The more talented ones, the ones who dreamt of being able to breakthrough, cannot bear with the harassments and constant pressure and turn to suicide.

Tanmay

After understanding this, Tanmay’s invocation of suicide made sense to me; that he marched through all the difficulties and is now a celebrated Engineer in Seattle

is amazing and rare. He credits his mother a great deal. She was adamant about educating herself and her children. He found his courage through her and through the fact that he was an exceptional student. The system of Reservation gave him the confidence that if he excelled, he would be able to get into a good institution.

Despite his success, his struggle did not end there. Even in studies beyond his Bachelor’s Degree, he faced enormous discrimination. Via the serendipity of a benefactor, he was able to afford a Master’s Degree and to find the inner strength to endure the continued humiliations.

He finally made it to the US and to a fantastic job at a dynamic company. He points out that for many, these great jobs are a ticket to riches but to him they were a path out of a shackled life.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that I too worked hard and faced some challenges to get where I got but for the most part, my life has been one of privilege. Talking to Tanmay made me understand just how true this is and how many others suffer to enjoy even basic privileges. There are of course many Savarnas who have to overcome obstacles to succeed but for Dalits, the effects of multiple oppressions are that much harder to overcome.

The analogy in my adopted home is clear, especially in an era of open Racism. The Caste division in India is like the Race division in the US, even without adding in the effects of misogyny, bias against people’s sexual choices, and other prejudices. In fact, I was able to

learn about myself - and Savarna privilege - by understanding White Privilege.

In the end, the difficulty of life as a Dalit is palpable and real. Humiliations are common. Lives are destroyed. And most of us are either ignorant or callous. Even a cursory search for information yields a vast reservoir of knowledge and documentation indicating just how bad it is for Dalits; ignorance is therefore a privilege.

Tanmay taught me about myself and about the society I thought I understood. He and I are now connected; I wish I had recognized a Tanmay in my life when I was younger. I hope this story helps more Prashants and more Tanmays to find each other and through empathy, listening, and action reduce Caste oppression to a thing of the Past. It is my hope that listening will turn to acknowledgment, which then will turn into partnership and eventually a solution!

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Story of Struggle of An Anthropologist Born as A Brahman for Justice to Dalits and Tribals

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Prashant Nema's matter of fact article captioned STORY OF A DALIT MICROSOFT ENGINEER published elsewhere in this issue of the Janata has once again highlighted the irrational anti-reservation attitude of pro-Hindutva elements in India and abroad. It has also prompted me to narrate the story of my own struggle for securing justice to Dalits and tribals of my country. I beg to be pardoned for writing this personal narrative on the subject, having been a part of the Constitutional organisation for SC&ST for 37 years (1959-95).

When I was about five (1935-36) I did not understand why my childhood friend Puddan, son of Ayodhya Chamar, the *harwaah* of my family in the village in Basti District, did not come to Basti town in July 1936 to study with me in the Primary School. As I grew up I started understanding the realities. My revered mother, Smt. Durgawati Tripathi, the eldest daughter of the socially conservative great Hindi litterateur Acharya Ram Chandra Shukla, proved to be my first mentor in shaping my social and political ideas. **She was a devotee of Buddha and Gandhi.** She was not like fashionable social workers of later years, specially of post-Independence era. I wish to narrate an incident that happened around 1943 when our family Mehtar (Bhangi) Gokul, without a family and living alone in Basti town two miles away from our home on Minson Road (renamed Madan Mohan Malviya Road due to the effort of my revered

father) fell seriously sick. My mother used to carry some cooked food and medicines for Gokul from our home to his *jhopri* daily on foot until he recovered. I used to accompany her in this mission. Gokul was said to be a religious man and even built a small temple at Ayodhya (obviously used by the Bhangi community, not even other Dalit castes, as inter-caste untouchability amongst various Scheduled Castes was and is still prevalent widely). This incident and an earlier incident in which my mother nursed a very sick Maulavi Sahab of village Nandaaur close to our ancestral village, at our home in Basti town to the extent of serving him food in the same utensils used by our family and even removing his excreta left an everlasting impression on my young mind. These were revolutionary actions in the social milieu of backward eastern UP eight decades ago. In 1948, when I was barely 18, I took a delegation of landless Chamar labourers of my village, to the District Magistrate, Shri SG Bose-Mullick, for allotment of land to them.

With reference to the above mentioned story of my mother nursing Gokul Bhangi I can recall only one parallel of the unique story of Pandit Kripasindhu Hota, one of the Panchsakhas of the grand old man of Orissa's national movement, Gopabhandhu Das. He brought up a Bhangi boy, Mohan Nayak, who joined Arya Samaj, became a disciple of Swami Sivananda at Rishikesh, back in Orissa became an MLA and MP and established the Thakkar Bapa Ashram at Nimkhandi on the

outskirts of Berhampur city. As Director for SC&ST, Bhubaneswar, under the Commission for SC&ST I visited this institution run by the Harijan Sewak Sangh many a time in early 1980s. There the inmates of the residential school offer prayers every morning before a statue (bust) of Pandit Kripasindhu Hota who had adopted Mohan Nayak as his son and declared that this former Bhangi son of his would give him *mukhaagni* (perform the last rites as son). By the way Pandit Kripasindhu Hota's grandson is Shri Purna Chandra Hota, IAS (1962: Orissa), former Chairman, UPSC.

One of my first assignments in the Office of Commissioner for SC&ST in 1959 was a survey of practices of untouchability in 13 districts of the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh selected in different cultural-cum-dialectal regions of the State. The findings of the survey were an eye-opener for me. The Commissioner, Shri LM Shrikant, was a bit reluctant to present that 300-page report to the then Home Minister, Pt. GB Pant, who had been the Chief Minister of the State. I politely said that if he wished he might not present the report to the Home Minister, but as an anthropological field researcher I was not prepared to fudge a single line of my report presenting a dismal picture of the State. That survey incidentally exposed me for the first time to the unfortunate fact of the acute practice of untouchability by one 'higher' Scheduled Caste against another 'lower' Scheduled Caste. Susequently during my postings

almost all over India I found that it was a universal phenomenon. In Andhra Pradesh it was more marked between Malas and Madigas.

My posting at Jaipur as Asstt. Commissioner for SC&ST for Rajasthan (October 1960- February 1963) was a boon as it gave me an opportunity to fight against the atrocities committed on SC and Denotified Communities in the erstwhile feudal society. I came in conflict with several Collectors and Superintendents of Police in the districts in this context and with a veteran MP from Udaipur known as the king-maker of Rajasthan who was responsible for corruption in implementation of tribal development schemes. The then Chief Secretary, Padmashri B. Mehta, sent for me and said to me: "Do you think you are the only person in the State who feels for SC&ST? You have been harassing my Collectors and SPs. It is my job to protect them and let the Government of India protect you." It transpired that the Collector of Sikar, with whom I had a tiff over the issue of a poor SC person having been blinded with a 'Jelly' (trishul like instrument) by his Jat neighbour for the 'crime' of stepping on the latter's land that was unavoidable in the given situation, had complained against me to the Chief Secretary to whom he was said to be related. The Chief Secretary complained against me to the Union Special Home Secretary, LP Singh, ICS, belonging to an aristocratic family of Bihar. Very soon I received orders transferring me to Chandigarh office which looked after the work of SC&ST in Punjab (it included Haryana then), J&K and the UT of Himachal Pradesh. There were protests by NGOs and SC/ST social workers from all over the State demanding that I should be kept in Rajasthan to look after the interests

of poor and exploited SC&ST. I went to pay a courtesy call on the Governor, Dr. Sampurnanand, whom I had known rather well in UP. He told me: "I can speak to Sukhadia ji (Chief Minister) and get your transfer cancelled. But your continuing in this State will no more help the SC&ST as the State officers will not cooperate with you. But I am quite happy with the way you have been working here and I wish you continue to work with the same spirit and enthusiasm elsewhere". These words from a senior and intellectual leader were enough of blessings for a youngman of 32. It was a coincidence that fifteen years later the Ministry of Home Affairs entrusted me with the job of setting up a new All India office of Commission for SC&ST in 1978 and I was initially looking after the administrative as well as technical aspects of the new set-up. All the files including personal files were handed over to me by the Ministry. During that period I happened to see my own personal file and it gave me ample satisfaction that the Deputy Home Minister, Smt. M. Chandrasekhar, and the Home Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri had recorded their appreciation of my performance in Rajasthan but honoured the recommendation of the Special Home Secretary to transfer me from Jaipur to Chandigarh. The kinship of bureaucrats!

A few months before his demise Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was in tears at a public meeting of manual scavengers of Delhi at Ramlila Maidan and lamented that in the whirlwind of national and international issues he did not find time to know about the living and working conditions of scavengers. This was one of the points I made at a national seminar in 1989 at Shillong

to celebrate the birth centenary of Panditji. I presented a paper on the subject of Pandit Nehru and the SC & ST. I did not mind ruffling some feathers.

I am grateful for an opportunity given to me in 1965-66 as Secretary to the Committee on Customary Rights to Scavenging headed by Prof. NR Malkani and comprising seven Members of Parliament. This Committee was set up by the then Union Department of Social Welfare. In the company of the great social worker Prof. Malkani, who had first met Gandhiji in 1917 at Muzaffarpur before he proceeded to Champaran (both he and Acharya JB Kripalani were teachers in the Govt. College there) and who later devoted his whole life for the amelioration of the conditions of scavengers, I could see the inhuman conditions of scavengers in all those States where scavenging had not been municipalised and scavengers were working under the Jajmani system. I do not wish to write more about this issue here but I would urge upon compatriots including the SC friends belonging to other castes to spare some thoughts for this most deprived and disadvantaged section of the whole Indian population.

I thought of recording some of my personal administrative experiences, never done before, to tell my friend Tanmay Waghmare of Seattle that I can empathise with him and remind him that innumerable generations of the deprived and the disadvantaged have suffered and sacrificed, that we all should pay tribute to them and honour the sacred memory of Mahatma Gandhi, Thakkar Bapa and Babasaheb Dr. BR Ambedkar and that we all have to fight for their rights and human dignity unitedly, non-violently and democratically.

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A New Interlocutor

Kuldip Nayar

The Government of India has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, former Intelligence Bureau Chief as interlocutor to find a solution to Kashmir's problems. This is not the first time that such an exercise is being conducted. New Delhi has had interlocutors in the past. Then instead of officials, ministers were appointed so that issue could get urgency as well as an immediate attention. But nothing came out of these exercises.

The Kashmiri leaders wanting more than what New Delhi would offer, there was no meeting point. Talks covered the gamut of problems. But two sides were so distant from each other that the dialogue would not go very far. The Kashmiris want the Valley to be converted into sovereign Islamic republic. This is something which India cannot give because it does not think that Kashmir is a disputed territory. It is considered part of Indian union. I have visited Srinagar as an interlocutor many a times but I could not offer anything near what they wanted.

What has disappointed me is that the disappearance of grey area,

which was visible till a couple of years ago. The stances have hardened so much so that even social contacts between Muslims and Hindus have got snapped. I am sorry to bring in personal example. In the past, Yasin Malik would invite me to his house for dinner and conduct me to his house through the labyrinth of lanes.

True, he has turned what is called a 'separatist'. But I vainly waited for a word from him. I do not believe that he did not know about my presence in Srinagar. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front he heads has posted his men at the airport to know who comes to the valley. Yasin Malik gets the "separatists" feedback.

I had Yasin's fast unto death broken on the condition that I would personally conduct a probe into human rights violations by the Indian security forces. He agreed to my supervision instead of the Amnesty International probe and broke the fast. We produced a report and found Yasin's allegations mostly correct. The report was quoted widely by Pakistan to the

embarrassment of Indian government. But this does not make it any less significant.

True, Yasin says that he is not an Indian. But our relationship was not on the basis of nationality. Can bitterness snap even personal bonds? Should I presume that I wrongly assumed certain things and that personal relations have no meaning in the face of political exigencies.

To cite another example of how personal relationships are pushed into the background for political purposes, another Kashmiri leader Shabir Shah is a changed person today. He was like my chela (disciple). He was then pro-India. He has changed into a staunch opponent. Yet, I do not know why personal relations should die. Is it the price that I have to pay for a change in Shabir's ideas?

Kashmir, no doubt, requires attention, especially for those who believe in a secular and democratic India. No amount of opposition should swerve them from their commitment. If they change, it means that their earlier stance was only a façade.

This holds good for the entire India. We are in the midst of challenges to the very idea, propounded by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who won us freedom. It pains me to see that some voices have begun to appreciate the ideas of Nathuram Godse, who killed the Mahatma. Were India to question its ethos, the Muslim-dominated Kashmir would feel insecure. A Kashmiri Muslim engineer, who dropped me at the airport, told how he was suspect even at a liberal place like Bangalore and harassed by the police.

Parties have reduced politics to the identification on the basis of caste and religion. People should assert themselves through liberal organizations or leaders and ensure that the poison of religion and caste does not spread. If the nation fails, Kashmir and many other parts of India may flounder in the muddy waters of religion.

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 has aggravated the matter further.

It must be said to the credit of Atal Behari 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 span the distance between them.

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What It Means To Be Religious

Sandeep Pandey

While there seemed nobody except the Bangladeshi government which was willing to let in the close to four lakh Rohingyas being driven out of Myanmar as a result of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine which had the tacit support of the government there including the famed Aung San Suu Kyi, now thoroughly discredited, an international Sikh charity organisation Khalsa Aid moved in swiftly to set up 'langars' or community kitchens which are traditionally offered in Gurudwaras. Even India, which otherwise has a historic reputation of responding sympathetically to any humanitarian crisis and accommodating all hues of people seeking refuge, due to a right wing government in power turned the extremely impoverished community away on the excuse that they could be a potential threat because of their religion. While the Indian National Human Rights Commission has highlighted the Article 21 of the Constitution upholding Right to Life and Personal Liberty even for the Rohingyas and opposed plans for the deportation of about 40,000 of them living in India, the government is planning to keep them in 'detention centres'.

The Prime Minister celebrated Diwali with soldiers on border, as has become the wont, and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh lit 1,87,213 diyas or earthen lamps, one in the name of every citizen in Ayodhya at government's expense. PM Narendra Modi must be asked why does he have to rush to the border on every occasion of religious and national importance? Lal Bahadur

Shashtri, a PM his Bhartiya Janata Party holds in higher regard than the members of Nehru-Gandhi family, had given the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan.' Should he also not be visiting some families of farmers whose members have committed suicide or parents of children who died in Baba Raghav Das Hospital, Gorakhpur, which could have been avoided with better health care facilities, instead of demonstrating his militaristic mindset every time.

CM Yogi Adityanath announced a package of Rs 133 crores following up on Rs 350 crores plan declared earlier in June for Ayodhya's development. This colossal waste of public funds on purely religious events violates the secular principle incorporated in the Indian Constitution. More than constitutional, it is morally unacceptable when half the children are malnourished and people can be found begging on every major street crossing of major cities, including the 'smart' ones, and outside temples, mosques and shrines. The left over of the 25,000 litres oil burnt in earthen lamps was being collected by people after the event, possibly to be used for cooking. The oil used was that of mustard and sesame and maybe soyabean too.

Models especially invited from Mumbai dressed up as Ram, Sita and Laxman arrived in a UP government helicopter to create an impression, according to mythology, of Ram arriving after 14 years of exile from Lanka in Pushpak Viman. This use of a state helicopter by artists was

in violation of governmental protocol. It needs to be investigated who authorised its use for this event. The Governor Ram Naik, whose job it is to see that Constitutional propriety is maintained was part of the event, almost hand in glove with the UP government. Very quick to point out any irregularity in the last government he seems to be overlooking some discrepancies in the present one. His Rashtriya Swayamsewak background, which is the ideological parent of BJP, prevents him from being unbiased.

While the Khalsa Aid is winning global accolades, what the UP government has done is only advancing the political agenda of BJP which relies on religious polarisation. Whereas people belonging to Sikh religion are using their private resources for a noble cause, the people engaging in politics as torch bearers of Hindu religion are taking the public resources down the drain. They have brought disgrace to their religion by indulging in pomp and show. It would have been so much better if Yogi had fed 1,87,213 people of Ayodhya a wholesome meal. But there is no concept of feeding people respectfully in Hindu religion like in Sikh religion. The only way somebody is fed is by treating him/her as a beggar. That is why Hindu and other religions have failed to get rid of the practice of begging whereas Sikh beggars are non-existent.

The core universal religious values

(Continued on Page 12)

The Dragon Blinks Pragmatic Engagement

D. K. Giri

The Chinese President Xi Jinping, expectedly, emerged stronger after the quinquennial Communist Party Congress last week. The 19th Congress since the Party was founded in 1921 Xi has the prerogative of nominating 70 per cent of the Party's Central Committee, its most powerful apex organ, and would stay in office for a third or even fourth term beyond 2022. This is contrary to Party tradition whereby a successor to the incumbent President is chosen five years before he or she takes office. At this Congress, no such thing happened.

Obviously, India and the world would have to deal with Xi for another decade as he is popular and occupies the exalted position by successfully fighting corruption and consolidating the development plank. In his marathon speech lasting over three and a half hours he adumbrated Chinese agenda in all its dimensions. He talked of the 'Chinese dream' which is interpreted as an ambition of being a world power and building Chinese military as the world's largest one.

Should India be wary of the Chinese 'dream'? True, New Delhi is in an adversarial position with its neighbour as it shares 4,000 kms of borders. Further, China's geo-political approach in the region coupled with its expansionist tendency should bother India.

But let us understand Chinese ideology shaped afresh by Xi who is now mentioned in the Chinese Constitution amended by Congress.

This rare honour was given only to two other leaders: Mao Zedong and Den Xiaoping. Xi's ideology consists of two major objectives: nationalism and capitalism.

How do both affect India? As China's current standing in the world rests on its economic might, capitalism carefully crafted and built by the Communist Party, in its quest for continued growth based on exports, Beijing would look for markets. As European markets are saturated and experiencing slump, India becomes the ultimate market for it.

Having realized this, Xi while visiting India in 2014, had suggested closer relationship with New Delhi. Asserting, "we should aim for expansion of strategic communication among leaders, maintaining border stability, enhancing economic cooperation and people-to-people contact".

No wonder, China has decided to invest US \$85 billion in India and despite popular angst against Beijing's aggressive posturing against its neighbor, Chinese goods continue to flood Indian markets. Will China stake its huge economic benefit from India by engaging in a military confrontation?

The Chinese understand that the success of a country's foreign policy is determined by its economic strengths. Successful economies have greater latitude in shaping an independent foreign policy in an interdependent world, than the weaker economies. As the

economies of China and India become more interdependent, there is correspondingly greater scope for dialogue and cooperation. That is why China adjusted the wide diversities it has with India and adapted its policies at enhancing economic and commercial ties with India.

A charitable as well as progressive view of China's South Asia policy flows from its relations with India in spite of the wars between two countries in the past. China wants to have development of each South Asian country, not only of its own restive areas. It feels development will prevent people from crossing over to other countries and foment trouble. China's investment in Pakistan is based on such an assumption, that Pakistan might go the Afghanistan way, which might exacerbate the unrest in Xinjiang province and Tibet. China-Pakistan economic corridor should cater to the poor and difficult Baluchistan demanding separation. Many Chinese engineers engaged in projects in Baluchistan have been killed as the locals know that development will ironically weaken the will of the people to fight for separation.

The other pillar of ideology is 'nationalism' or 'Chinese Core'. A nationalistic agenda generates anti-India rhetoric in the Chinese Establishment whereby its nationalism has led Chinese forces and border guards to nibble away undefined borders, claiming vast swathes of territory in South China Sea and Japan-claimed Senkaku islands.

In the same vein, Beijing rivals New Delhi's status on Asia's stage. China has made several incursions on the Indo-China borders, Depsang plains in April-May 2013, Chumar in the Western sector in 2014-15, Barahoti area of the middle sector in mid-2016, Doklam face-off in 2017 that lasted for 73 days.

In addition, China has consistently blocked India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which controls global atomic commerce, vetoed the UN declaring Jaishe-e-Mohammad Chief Masood Azar a terrorist and runs its China-Pakistan economic corridor projects through Gilgit-Baltistan which affects India's sovereignty.

More serious, China has encircled India with its 'string of pearls' whereby Beijing will endeavor to expand its naval presence by building civilian maritime infrastructure along the Indian Ocean periphery. Simplistically, it implies access to ports and airfields, expansion and modernization of military forces and fostering diplomatic relations with trading partners.

Importantly, 'string of pearls' in geo-strategic terms refers to the Malacca Strait, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Strait of Hormuz and Somalia. It also includes Bangladesh and Myanmar. Pertinently, the Malacca Strait, not far from Nicobar Islands, connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, Malaysia, and Singapore on one side and Indonesia on the other.

Besides, about 80% of Chinese fuel from the Middle East passes through this. From Myanmar, 2,400 kms of gas pipeline has been built by China which also has a military base in Myanmar's Coco Island. Beijing

has invested US \$46 billion in Pakistan's Gwadar port as a part of their joint economic corridor. The Gwadar port is 240 miles away from the Strait of Hormuz which gives an opening to Central Asia.

This port also connects to the Karakoram highway linking it with the Arabian Sea, which is of concern to India. Moreover, China has invested in building Sri Lanka's Hambantota port on its Southeast part. Similarly, it has built a container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh. It has a military base in Maldives's Masao Atoll.

Undeniably, China's capitalist economy depends on foreign sources for its energy security. It is the largest importer of oil. The sea lines of communication that link the Chinese mainland with ports throughout the Middle East and Africa coasts have become a major source of conflict for China with other countries. True, the 'string of pearls' might be economic in nature but, admittedly, it creates a security dilemma for China and India in the Indian Ocean.

How should India respond to this? One optimistic scenario for India to operate is China's economic growth and development agenda for itself and its neighbors. At any rate, China always had a complex political regime. It cannot be judged in a uni-dimensional way. India should invest a lot more in studying and dealing with China. India has heavily erred in the past. So, going by historical experience, New Delhi cannot be complacent and ignore Beijing's moves. In fact, it should play the Chinese game: Deepen trade and economic links which will deter Beijing from any military adventurism.

Two, India should encircle China with allies that are affected by Beijing and are opposed to its aggressive actions. New Delhi has already invested heavily in diplomacy with countries around China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia. It should consolidate its relations with traditional friends like Japan, South Korea and Russia. In South-East Asia new potential allies are Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam who are wary of China.

Undoubtedly, Chinese nationalism and capitalism would lead to neo-imperialism through domination in trade, military bullying and wherever it can, through territorial expansion. Beijing would not want to jeopardize its economic interest, but the military angle might be used precisely for protecting its economic gains.

Notably, India has moved closer to China's archrival Japan and US. Beijing will be wary of New Delhi's increasing nearness to these countries. It might seek to disengage India from Japan and US and allies of America. India, on its part, is unlikely to do so, given Chinese proximity with Pakistan which aids and abets terrorism against India.

Will China follow the proverbial strategy, "if you cannot beat them, join them"? That is a probable, given Chinese proclivity for guarding its self-interest in lieu of principles and trust. But New Delhi cannot count on this. It has to engage with China pragmatically. We should learn from past mistakes *vis-à-vis* China. Hence, New Delhi should deeply study Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War', the oldest military treaties in the world, in order to deal with China. This calls for a combination of economic might, diplomatic skill and military strategy. Is New Delhi up to it? It better be.

The Unemployment Demon

Neeraj Jain

India is in the grip of a severe unemployment crisis. Its severity can be understood from just a few random statistics from a few recent newsreports:

- *The Hindu*, September 17, 2015: The Uttar Pradesh Government advertised to fill up 368 posts of peon in the State Secretariat. More than 23 lakh applications were received. Among those who applied were 255 Ph.D. holders and 2.22 lakh engineers; thousands of candidates with Masters degree in Commerce, Humanities and Sciences were also among the applicants. The minimum qualifications for the post were education up to 5th standard, and ability to ride a bicycle. The job had a monthly salary of about Rs 16,000.
- *Indian Express*, June 27, 2016: More than 9 lakh candidates applied for 14,000 constable posts in Madhya Pradesh. The applicants included 14,562 post graduates, 9,629 engineers and 12 with a PhD degree.
- *India Today*, January 31, 2017: The West Bengal Group-D Recruitment Board invited applications on-line for recruitment of 6,000 Group D personnel in various categories. More than 25 lakh candidates applied for these posts, including graduates, postgraduates and even PhDs. The job required an educational qualification of Class 7, and

carried a salary of about Rs 16,000.

- *NDTV*, February 10, 2017: More than 92 lakh candidates appeared for the on-line examination conducted by the Railway Recruitment Board to fill up 18,000 vacancies in various categories in the Indian Railways.

Manipulating Data

And yet the Government of India claims that the unemployment rate in the country is very low. According to *Economic Survey 2015–16*, the all-India unemployment rate was only 2.7 percent as per the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) estimates, and 4.9 percent according to the Labour Bureau. This rate is comparable to, and in fact lower than, unemployment rates in the developed countries.

The total labour force in the country (this is the number of people who are employed plus those actively looking for work) was roughly 490 million in 2013.¹ Of this, the Labour Bureau estimates that around 24 million are unemployed (while the NSS estimates unemployment to be only 13.23 million). This is obviously a huge underestimate; the actual unemployment rate in the country is going to be many times more than this figure, because as many as 25 lakh young people are applying for a peon job

in just a single state in the country!

One simple tactic used by the official statisticians to play down the unemployment levels in the country is by reducing the labour force. Note that the number of unemployed is the difference between the labour force and the number of people employed, also called the work force. Now, one simple way of reducing unemployment figures without increasing the number of employed is by reducing the labour force. This is precisely what India's official statisticians have done. Over the period 1983 to 1993–94, India's labour force grew at 2.05 percent per annum, but during the period 1993–94 to 2009–10, it fell to 1.30 percent (Table 1). What can account for the sharp drop in the growth rate of those looking for work? Higher enrolment of children in school would no doubt reduce the size of the labour force, but it would account for only a small fraction of the missing workers. The main reason for this drop is that many workers gave up looking for work because no jobs were available for a long time. They joined the pool of what are called "discouraged workers". The discouraged workers are not included in the unemployed, nor are they included in the labour force, whereas actually they should be included in both.

Let us estimate the labour force in 2009–10 if it had continued to

Table 1: India: Labour Force, Work Force and Unemployment Rate² (in million)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Labour force</i>	<i>Work force</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Growth Rate</i>
1983	308.6	302.8	5.8%		
1993–94	381.9	374.5	7.4%	1983 to 1993–94	2.05%
2009–10	469.9	460.2	9.7%	1993–94 to 2009–10	1.30%

grow at the same rate as in 1983 to 1993–94, that is, at 2.05 percent instead of 1.3 percent (that is, let us include the discouraged workers in our calculation). In that case, the labour force would have been 528 million instead of 469.9 million, and the total number of people unemployed would have gone up to 67.8 million instead of 9.7 million!

Even if we exclude the discouraged workers from our calculations, employment statistics of the Government of India have little meaning. Official statistics

consider any person employed if he/she is engaged in ‘gainful activities’ during the period under study, even if he/she is selling peanuts and does not earn enough to eat two full meals a day. This leads to strange results. Commonsensically, having a job means that a person should be earning enough to be above the poverty line, especially in a country like India where the poverty line is so low that it is a measure of destitution. Now, the Planning Commission estimates that the incidence of poverty in India (even with India’s ridiculously low poverty

line) was 21.9 percent in 2011–12.³ One would therefore expect at least a similar percentage of the labour force to be unemployed. But as mentioned above, *Economic Survey 2015–16* estimates the all-India unemployment rate to be a mere 4.9 percent (Labour Bureau estimate)! Evidently, going by the Government of India’s criteria, one may be earning so little that he/she is considered below the official poverty line, and yet be considered employed. Such is the worth of the government definition of ‘employment’.

Table 2: Formal and Informal Employment in Economy⁴ (in million)

	2009–10
Total Labour Force	460.3
Organised Sector Employment	72.9
of which:	
<i>Formal Employment (1)</i>	30.7
<i>Informal Employment (2)</i>	42.1
Unorganised Sector Employment (3)	387.4
of which:	
<i>Formal Employment (3)</i>	2.3
<i>Informal Employment (4)</i>	385.1
Total Formal Employment (1+3)	33.0
Formal Employment (1+3) as % of Total Employment	7.2%
Total Informal Employment (2+3)	427.2
Total Informal Employment as % of Total Employment	92.9%

Estimating Unemployment Levels in India

The only meaningful jobs in the country are what are called organised sector jobs. This sector includes all units with 10 or more workers if using power and 20 or more workers if not using power. The organised sector accounts for only a small share—15.8 percent—of the total employment in the country (Table 2).

The actual situation of organised sector employment is actually far worse than that suggested by this figure. Indian organised sector firms have adopted a systematic policy of replacing permanent staff with contract or temporary workers, and are also subcontracting out work to smaller units in the informal sector who are able to produce goods at much cheaper rates due to low wage costs. Consequently, the Planning Commission admits that informal employment within the organised sector has been increasing, and today more than 50 percent of the organised sector jobs are informal jobs.⁵

Therefore, actual number of organised workers in the country, what the *Economic Survey 2015–16* calls ‘good jobs’ or formal sector jobs,⁶ where the workers have at least some legal rights such as security of employment, minimum wages, sick leave, compensation for work-related injuries, right to organise, etc., is a very small percentage of the total number of jobs in the economy—they constitute just 7.2 percent of the total employment. The remaining 92.9 percent are informal jobs.

These are jobs with very low wages/earnings. Many of these people do not earn even the minimum daily wage, which itself is barely subsistence wage. In 2004, the Indian Government constituted the National

Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) under Prof. Arjun Sengupta, to advise on issues related to the country’s unorganised workforce. In its study, NCEUS set an overall minimum of Rs 20 per day per person in 2004–05 as its cut-off for defining the “poor and vulnerable”, and calculated that 77 percent of Indians fell below this cut-off!⁷ That’s a mind-boggling figure.

Most of the people doing these informal jobs—such as fruit sellers selling a few dozen bananas on hand carts, peanut sellers hawking peanuts and other such snacks on bicycles, roadside hawkers selling clothes or other sundry items, scrap collectors collecting old newspapers and scrap from homes, graduates who for want of a job hire autorickshaws for 12 hours every day and join the long queues of autorickshaws at railway stations, sales boys and girls going from house to house selling cosmetics / sarees / books / etc., unorganised sector construction workers working in dangerous conditions at construction sites, farmers toiling day and night in an attempt to extract the maximum possible from their tiny holdings—should actually all be considered as unemployed. The harsh truth is that in India, people take whatever work they can get, regardless of how low the wages/earnings are, for there is no alternative: there is no unemployment allowance for those without jobs. In other words, most of the people in informal employment in the country should actually be considered underemployed, and they should be included in the unemployed.

This means that of the 460 million workforce in the country in 2009–10, at least 40 or 50 percent or even 77 percent—the NCEUS estimate for the poor and vulnerable—should be

considered to be underemployed (that is, unemployed). Add to this the number of people officially unemployed, plus the large number of discouraged workers, and unemployment in the country would reach stratospheric levels.

Article 39 of the Directive Principles of the Constitution directs the Government of India to ensure that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 41, titled Right to Work, calls upon the government to make effective provision for securing the right to work. And Article 43 directs the State to endeavour to ensure by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. So many provisions in the Directive Principles regarding implementing the Right to Work. Even though these provisions are not judiciable, Dr. Ambedkar had made it clear before the Constituent Assembly that the Directive Principles are ‘fundamental to governance’, and all future governments must ‘strive’ to ensure their implementation. It is clear that the extremely high levels of informal employment in the country, and the terrible conditions and low pay in which these informal workers work, are a violation of the Directive Principles, they are a violation of the dreams of the founding fathers of our nation. They would have been aghast to find that on the one hand, so much wealth generation is taking place in the country that it now boasts of the fourth largest number of billionaires in the world, and on the other hand, there is such a huge number of

(Continued on Page 12)

When Hate Comes Calling: Fighting Back in India

Duncan Green

Fake news, populism and ethnic and religious hate crimes are not just a US problem. Indian activist and writer Mari Marcel Thekaekara laments the wave of hate engulfing her country, and celebrates some of those who are fighting back

A peace movement? The mere suggestion evokes pitying looks, even from friends. Been there, done that. In the seventies, actually. More accurately, I'm obsessed with an *anti-hate* movement. Because I receive regular reports of lynchings and gruesome murders from friends working on minority rights. Along with complaints that many major Indian newspapers are currently treading carefully when it comes to reporting hate crimes, primarily against Muslims, Christians and Dalits. Perhaps they are doing so because thugs claiming allegiance to the party in power can, and frequently do, come down violently on critics. Last month, Bangalore journalist Gauri Lankesh was gunned down for speaking unpleasant truth to power. She was the latest in a series of such murders.

Journalists publishing stories of hate crimes, are dubbed 'presstitutes' by the Hindutva lobby. Hindus protesting at the subversion of Hinduism are derided as 'sickulars'. They have an army of trolls paid to rave, rant and abuse any writer who dares to criticise the current regime.

But it's not only journalists and intellectuals challenging the ideology of the larger family of hate spewing organisations, called the Sangh Parivar, who are at risk. Muslims, Dalits, Christians and

protesting Hindus are also targeted thanks to a growing climate of hate and the warped, alarming belief that if you are not Hindu, you are not Indian. Dalits who, though classified as Hindus, have been brutally murdered by mobs known as "cow vigilantes" – a euphemism for thugs and criminals strutting across India with impunity because they claim to be protecting the cow, sacred to many Hindus. These Dalit victims are condemned by the accident of their birth into a particular caste to remove all dead animals, from cats to cows. There is no choice, it's a caste-designated job. They are paid to dispose of the animals. They skin the carcasses to sell to the leather industry. This is the "crime" for which many young dalit men have been brutalised and murdered.

But for the most part, Hindus and Muslims learnt the art of peaceful co-existence. Communities mostly live separate social lives, but their livelihoods are often dependent on each other. People send each other sweets at festivals, work together amicably. Muslims fought fiercely for freedom in the Independence movement. They are Indians. They opted to remain in India during partition, because it's where they were born and where their ancestors lived for centuries.

In the last two decades however, we've witnessed manufactured hate being spread around India, in a

chillingly, systematic, venal process. There's been a sustained slow release of poisonous lies, a disinformation campaign to win majority minds and hearts by instilling fear, fiddling with facts. Christians are converting illiterate, poor Hindus, they say. Fact? The Christian population has remained static at 2%. Neither two hundred years and the might of the British Empire, nor hordes of evangelising missionaries succeeded in seriously converting India.

Muslims have a dozen children each, funded by Saudi Arabia to change the demographics and make Hindus a minority in their own country is another claim. Fact? The decadal rate of population growth for Muslims is the lowest it has ever been in India's history.

Sadly facts have little or no role to play when it comes to hate mongering. The shrillness has reached deafening decibels. But finally, more and more people are speaking out against this manufactured hate.

Harsh Mander, a former civil servant resigned in protest after the 2002 killing of over 2000 Muslims in Gujarat. Last month he led a pilgrimage to atone for the crimes against minorities. His 'caravan' travelled across India to visit families who'd had their loved ones brutally tortured, mutilated, then

murdered. Of the 78 bovine-related (cows and buffalos) hate crimes since 2010, 97% occurred after Prime Minister Modi's government came to power in 2014. In 46% of the cases, the police filed charges against the victims/survivors.

Hope comes too, when prominent author Nayantara Sahgal writes, 'it is unbearable to watch my religion being

transformed into what it was never meant to be by people who call themselves Hindus, but practice a brutal, militant creed of their own that drives them to lynch defenceless innocent Indians, pump bullets into those who question their creed, and enter a train armed with knives to stab to death a fifteen-year-old boy who is returning to his village after his Eid shopping in Delhi''.

Then there is Siddharth Varadarajan, the Founding Editor of India's fast growing online newspaper The Wire. His paper has consistently spoken out against the hate campaign and against corruption in high places. His latest target, Jay Shah, the son of powerful politician Amit Shah, seen as many to be the force behind Modi's throne, has earned him a £1.5million lawsuit for defamation.

I salute Harsh Mander, Nayantara Sahgal and Siddharth Varadarajan, who put their lives on the line to stand up for justice, for the idea of India.

Mander's group seeks to begin a healing process. To form peace and reconciliation committees all over India so locals can intervene *before* violence starts. We need innovative, effective solutions to stop the hate campaign

to prevent the disintegration of India. And we need all Indians to muster the kind of passion that emerges at an India-Pakistan cricket match, to stop the lies and the divisive disinformation that is tearing the country apart. Mander's pilgrimage ended symbolically, in Porbandar,

Gandhi's birthplace. It was an immensely moving moment. As people sprinkled petals in the room Gandhi was born in, they said, 'We are all Gandhi'. That, surely, is a good place to start reclaiming the idea of India, for which Gandhi lived and died.

Disturbing Questions About Pesticide Poisoning

Bharat Dogra

The Times of India reported on October 4 from Yavatmal district of Maharashtra that eighteen farmers were killed due to inhalation of profefonos, a pesticide used on cotton, while 467 other persons affected by pesticide poisoning were admitted in government hospitals in recent weeks. This is very disturbing news, a very big tragedy, and yet this has not received the importance it clearly deserves so that important lessons can be drawn from this.

One question that has been raised is that while pesticide poisoning cases were taking place in such large numbers why adequate attention was not drawn at an early stage so that preventive action could be taken in time to avoid many cases of poisoning. As it is this district is already on the radar of the government as a particularly sensitive district due to the large number of farmers' suicides taking place in this district, perhaps the highest among all the districts of India.

In such a sensitive district surely administrative mechanisms should have been well in place to take strong preventive action as soon as a disturbing trend regarding pesticide

poisoning emerged. However it is clear that no such adequate preventive action was taken by the administration till the poisoning cases had increased beyond about 400 cases or so which is a very high number.

Another disturbing question is regarding the changes that have been taking place particularly after the spread of genetically modified cotton or Bt cotton, which has made farming more risky and hazardous. The use of dangerous agri-chemicals has been increasing instead of decreasing as was promised at the time of the promotion of GM crops initially.

If conditions have already become so hazardous one shudders to think of what will happen once GM food crops are also introduced and as is well-known already very high power efforts are being by made by very resourceful and persistent lobbyists to achieve this in the form of obtaining approval for cultivation of GM Mustard.

These are very dangerous times for our agriculture and we need to very alert to protect our farmers and farming from huge and irreversible hazards.

High Hazards and Eco-Costs of Red Wine

One of the most widely spread myths in recent years has been that wine and particularly red wine can have some important health benefits. This myth helped to keep high the revenues of the liquor industry at a time when growing consciousness about the adverse impacts of hard liquor was leading to a reduction in their consumption among some sections. But the reality of the high hazards and eco-costs of wine including red wine is now coming out from several sources.

We may start with the simple fact that the alcohol content in wine including red wine is two to six times higher than in beer, more generally it is about three times higher. The alcohol content of red wine ranges from 8 to 18 per cent. The alcohol content of beer ranges generally from 2 to 9 per cent, it is more commonly 4 to 5 per cent. To make a further distinction, the alcohol content of wines ranges from 8 to 14 per cent while the alcohol content of fortified wines ranges from 16 to 22 per cent. When the alcohol content of wines is so much higher than beer (and of course it is the same ethyl alcohol) then of course it follows that people can get more easily drunk on wine and also that this can be more addictive. In fact the chances of people getting addicted on wine, particularly red wine, are higher as their health benefits have been widely propagated and so many people including youths believe that taking a little extra red wine will not harm them. I have myself seen very well progressing individuals getting ruined when

their starting with a little red wine eventually turned into addiction.

The *Telegraph* (UK) reported on 1 December 2014 in a news item titled "Drinking a glass of wine is the same as downing three shots of Vodka," "Enjoying a glass of wine after work does the same harm as drowning three shots of vodka, the head of Public Health England has warned as he said alcohol was becoming the silent killer of working class Britons. Duncan Selbie said that deaths from liver disease of working age people have increased by 500 per cent since the 1970s - many arrive home, pour a glass (of wine) and have no idea how much wine they are drinking.

Later Nicola Harley reported in the *Telegraph* (UK) dated 7.1.2016, "A landmark report by Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies due to be published on Friday will destroy the long-held belief that red wine can cut the risk of cancer, heart disease and memory loss when drunk in moderation. In the first overhaul of alcohol guidelines for two decades, doctors will reportedly warn that there is no 'safe level' of alcohol consumption and drinking just a small amount may in fact increase the risk of some cancers."

The *Independent* (UK) reported on the same day, "Red wine's supposed health benefits are set to be rubbished by government experts, according to reports. The first alcohol guidelines shaking since 1995 will reportedly say that even a glass of red wine a day could increase the risk of breast cancer by 13 per cent."

Ella Pickover reported in the *Independent* in a news item titled 'Red wine increases cancer risks, but 9 out of 10 persons are not aware of the dangers, "Nine out of ten people are not aware that drinking can increase a person's chances of getting cancer, a poll suggests. The latest evidence suggests that the claimed benefits of drinking red wine for heart health are less than previously thought and are outweighed by the harmful effects alcohol has on cancer risks."

Even some of those who claimed some health benefits for red wine had to admit that same benefits can be derived by eating grapes and berries, while others said that the benefits can be derived from better exercise, while at the same avoiding the several hazards of red wine.

A report by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence advised middle-aged people "there is no safe limit of alcohol consumption."

Earlier a study published in *Alcohol and Alcoholism* found that drinking wine could increase the risk of breast cancer.

Moderate consumption can also disrupt sleeping patterns and pose serious dangers when taken alongside certain medications.

Red wine is made by crushing and fermenting dark coloured whole grapes. The process by which red wine is made also allows for lectins to possibly remain in the drink.

Lectins are being probed for their association with several serious health problems.

Apart from serious health hazards various aspects of making wine are associated with heavy eco-costs. The *Economist* reported some time back that it takes 960 liters of water to make a single liter of wine (based on data from Water Footprints Network). Decanter magazine pointed out in a review of the eco-costs of the wine industry, "Synthetic fungicides, herbicides and fertilizers, non-degradable materials and environmentally harmful have been integral to the cultivation, packaging and transportation of our beloved nectar!" The San Joaquin Valley in California known for its 109 vineries is also known for its heavy load of smog-forming gases. Community Research and Development Information Service reported - Europe's vineries are heavy polluters. The EU wine industry releases considerable amounts of polluted wastewater into the river systems, in addition to producing solid organic waste that is often mishandled similarly.

The world vineyard area is spread over 18.5 million acres. The produce here is used in highly concentrated form to produce wine. This takes away a lot of land and water which is increasingly very much needed for producing staple food. Migrant workers in many vineyards are exploited badly. As much as 274 million hectoliters of wine is being produced in a year and consumed too, but its implications for health, environment, food security and overall well-being need to be understood clearly, overcoming the myths spread by vested interests.

– **Bharat Dogra**

(Continued from Page 3)

are compassion, large heartedness, tolerance and empathy. While the Khalsa Aid has amply demonstrated these, their Hindutva counterparts have displayed their sectarian tendencies. The Sikhs associated with Khalsa Aid are definitely religious who also don't discriminate on the basis of religion, race, caste, etc. They have provided succor in 2005 earthquake, including to Hindus, 2009 in Swat crisis and after terror attack in Manchester earlier this year. Even though Yogi has pompously declared that now there is Ram Rajya established in UP, only the second time in history, in which there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, etc. but it is no secret that RSS-BJP thrives on anti-Muslim propaganda and misadventure. They cannot be called religious even though Yogi Adityanath, being the Mahant of Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur wears religious outfit. Performing rituals in not being religious, but living the universal values is. The RSS-BJP is merely interested in politics of symbolism. People indulging in politics in the name of religion can at best be described as pseudo-religious.

With the emergence of RSS and coming to power of BJP in various states and at the centre we've witnessed more hate crimes, targetting of Muslims and dalits and subjecting them to lynching, curb on freedom of expression and in general creation of an atmosphere of religious intolerance. Actually this is acting against the spirit of religious values and RSS-BJP are doing serious damage to the fabric and image of Hindu religion in the world. From that perspective they are, in reality, anti-religion.

(Continued from Page 8)

underemployed and unemployed in the country.

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Killer Aadhar Card

I begin this note using the word “killer” for Aadhar Card as millions of people are being prevented from getting pensions, including senior citizens from the age of 60 to 90-95 years, and also food grains under National Food Security Act of the government, due to the decision of the government linking the Aadhar Card with everything like bank account, pensions, cheap rations from ration shops, and so on. Old aged people in urban areas are one of the biggest sufferers as they are finding it difficult to draw their pension from banks. Earlier, pension to old, poor, disabled and to BPL families was being released by the government in cash but now it is being released through banks to avoid duplication and fake beneficiaries. Bank accounts have been linked with Aadhar Card. Poor people who do hard work with their hands and senior citizens in the age group of 60 to 90-95 years are suffering because of this, as after standing in long queues in the banks, they come back empty handed as their thumb impressions does not match.

Under the National Food Security Act, rations were earlier being supplied to the beneficiaries without Aadhar Card, but now the government has linked it to Aadhar Card. The government linked the Aadhar Card of the head of the beneficiary family with their ration card. But when the beneficiary goes now for getting rations, the dealer is insisting for Aadhar Card of each beneficiary in the family and therefore denying rations to them. As a result of this, poor people are being denied of cheap rations

and are consequently dying of hunger. Such deaths due to denial of foodgrains by dealers in absence of Aadhar Card have been reported in States such as Bihar, Odhisa and West Bengal. Recently, a girl died in Jharkhand due to starvation as her family was denied ration as her ration card was not linked with Aadhar card.

I do not understand what is the benefit of this Aadhar Card to this government. It has made the life of every citizen in the country troublesome and miserable. The biggest impact is on 70 percent of our population which relies on food subsidies and other benefits that the government provides to them. One major point of contention over making Aadhar Card compulsory for providing benefits and subsidies to people is that it contradicts the Supreme Court’s ruling in 2015 which stated that Aadhar can only be a voluntary decision of the individual, and that as long as a person is eligible to avail of these benefits and subsidies, the government cannot deny him/her those benefits. A survey conducted by Andhra Pradesh Government found that 50 percent of respondents cited Aadhar as a reason for missing out subsidies and benefits. Yet the Government has forced Aadhar cards on every citizen. Further, the manner in which the Aadhar Act was passed in Parliament by introducing it as a money bill in Lok Sabha so that the Rajya Sabha would not be able to vote on it, also exhibited the intention of the Government, which the entire country must have judged.

– **Sharad Yadav**

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‘Vanishing’ Tribes of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Recently I noticed a post by Sarah Burrows of Survival International written some months ago that said: **“Jarawa Hunter-Gatherers Say They Don’t Want to Be Part of Our World.** Jarawa are being forced into civilisation and treated like animals in a zoo. Like the Hadza of East Africa, the Jarawa hunter-gatherers of the Andaman Islands also face extinction, thanks to the ever-expanding nature of agriculture and civilisation. To add insult to injury, a highway has been built ...”

I wonder how these seemingly professional documentary makers have been permitted to make documentaries on the tribes that were earlier known as ‘primitive’ and now described as the ‘particularly vulnerable tribal groups’. In the past some foreigners visited the interior tribal areas and made films with a commercial motive. When I visited A&N islands for the first time in April 1978 with Shri Bhola Paswan Shastri, the first Chairman of the Commission for SC & ST, we could visit only two ‘primitive’ groups, viz., the Great Andamanese on the Strait Island and the Onges on the Little Andaman Island. Due to turbulence of waves our motorboat (the Chief Commissioner’s motorboat) could not land on the Jarawa territory. Later we flew to Car Nicobar and visited the sturdy Mongoloid Nicobarese people who had all been converted to Christianity. There had been no contact with the Negrito group of the two Sentinel Islands. Another ‘primitive’ group, the Mongoloid Shompens, lived far away in the farthest island of the Nicobar

group of islands which was only 70 miles away from the tip of Sumatra island of Indonesia.

We are lucky that the famous British social anthropologist AR Radcliffe-Brown went to the Andaman Islands in 1906–08. His study The Andaman Islanders (1922) provides valuable benchmark information about the Great Andamanese people who were at that time divided into 12 tribes with each of them having a distinct dialect and the total population of 600 (if I remember correctly). During our visit in April 1978 only one out of 29 Great Andamanese people was left with Negrito characters due to very high degree of miscegenation, particularly during the Japanese occupation. There were only 102 Onges left on the Little Andaman Island and the population of the Jarawas spread into two adjoining islands of Middle Andaman was estimated to be about 500 on the basis of the sustaining capacity of the forests within which they wandered.

The Jarawas were in the stage of food gathering and hunting and were highly suspicious of any outsiders. As soon as they would notice a boat coming towards their island they would come out with poison-tipped arrows and shoot. The first contact was made by a team of the Port Blair station of Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) led by its Superintending Anthropologist, Dr. TN Pandit, who was treated almost like an untouchable by the local bureaucrats led by ex-Army Chief

Commissioner (now the head of the Union Territory is designated as Lt. Governor) and an IAS Chief Secretary. Anthropologists have always been in conflict with the generalist administrator there. The credit for contacting the Jarawas goes to a Sikh Dy. SP Bakhtawar Singh who had joined the local police service as a Head Constable long ago. He possessed tremendous commonsense and waved white handkerchiefs to indicate friendship. The team left some cooked food like rice and banana on the shore. The Jarawas did not show up but the next morning it was found that the food had been picked up. The story is authentically narrated in a documentary captioned ‘Man in Search of Man’ produced by AnSI in 1974. It was shown to us.

During our first visit in 1978 we had heard of the plan of a Grand Trunk Road through the Jarawa territory and were dismayed by it. In the report of the Chairman’s visit, drafted by me, we opposed it and indicated the proper policies for dealing with the ‘primitive’ tribes of the Union Territory. We also discussed the wrong policies being pursued by the local administration in dealing with these ‘primitive’ groups. The Onges had already been spoiled by the administration and the wrong policy of settling Bangladeshi Hindu refugees in a part of Little Andaman island leading to constant friction between them and the Onges. It was funny that the local authorities thought it fit to dress up Onge women in imported skirts with English inscriptions on sex and the

like. The reason for draping the Onge women in skirts was the imminent visit of the then stern Prime Minister Morarji Desai who the authorities thought would be very angry if he found this tribal group in a naked condition. In an egalitarian society the administration had introduced the concept of Raja and hierarchy completely alien to them and the henchmen of the administration, dressed in pants and shirts, were brought to Delhi for the Republic Day parade as 'museum specimens'. The Commission's report containing policy suggestions was sent to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. I don't know about the fate of that document.

I got two more opportunities to visit A&N islands in 1982 and 1984 with the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. I understand that subsequently some young anthropologists have been able to establish greater rapport with these 'primitive' tribal groups and even learnt their language/dialect. I wonder how this lady (Sara Burrows) was talking with the Jarawas and if she had been able to establish enough rapport with them as to learn their language. I do, however, appreciate her concern for the Jarawas.

It is interesting and worthwhile narrating some of my experiences with Jarawas in 1984. After my work with the Parliamentary Committee was over I accompanied Prof. LP Vidyarthi of Ranchi University and Dr TN Pandit to the Jarawa territory. The Administration had launched a programme of visiting the Jarawas on every full moon day, leaving cooked rice and banana on the shore. Out of excitement these naked people

would jump into the boat to grab the food, allow the visitors to stay on the shore for about 15 minutes, they were not allowed to transgress into their territory further in the interior and were supposed to go back to their boat soon. We were warned not to wear any clothes except underwear, no vest (baniyan) else they would tear the clothes off out of excitement. One could not wear spectacles due to fear of their being broken. The Jarawas who have supple hairless bodies would pluck the hairs on the bodies of the 'civilised' people, wondering what objects these were. Due to false propaganda by colonialists and administrators these children of nature were dubbed as 'ferocious' only because they would come out with bows and arrows if they found outsiders trying to poach their limited natural resource of livelihood. Personally I found the Jarawas to be extremely friendly people. For two decades I had been suffering from lumbosacral spondylitis and had started developing a stooping posture. Suddenly I felt a painful jerk as a Jarawa adult had jumped onto my back and was holding me tightly. Another Jarawa man came and sat on my lap. Being Negrito they are a shorter version of the typical blacks. An extreme case of friendliness was evinced when a woman, with marked steatopygia like the Bushmen and the Hottentot, put her infant in my hands and wanted me to fondle it. In the modern Indian society women would never do that faced with a stranger and would rather apply a black kohl to the infant to protect it from the evil eye. When I returned to Port Blair my story was an absolutely new and incredible one for the bureaucrats and the local Station Director of All India Radio requested me to broadcast a talk on my experiences with the Jarawas.

I regret that in 1997 I could not avail of the offer of National Geographic when I visited them in Washington DC and they wanted me to take up a project with an initial grant of USD 20,000. I was already 67 with commitments to family and it was not feasible for me to go and live in the jungles with these 'primitive' tribal groups to do authentic anthropological field work. Had it come a few decades earlier I would have jumped at it. But serving in the Government, though in the Constitutional organisation for the SC&ST for 37 years, had already made me useless (to quote, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, 'nikamma' when I had spent only three years in government service). I also did not believe in 'cut and paste' research or depending on unemployed young field staff of dubious credentials. Let us hope that in our misguided notion of 'civilizing' the particularly vulnerable tribal groups of these verdant islands we don't prove to be the cause of their disappearance from the earth in not a too distant future.

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Acharya Narendra Deva: Life and Politics

Prem Singh

Acharya Narendra Deva, known as the patriarch and doyen of Indian socialism, was born on October 31, 1889 in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh. His ancestors had come to UP from Sialkot. His schooling took place in Faizabad and higher education in Allahabad and Banaras. He obtained his law degree from Allahabad University and practiced law for some time. But his scholastic mind did not find satisfaction and he became a history teacher at Kashi Vidyapeeth in 1921. He had a good knowledge of Hindi, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, German, French and English languages, and was a serious scholar of history, archaeology, religion, philosophy and culture. Despite having such a wide range of study, his mode of teaching was simple.

It is said that Acharya was born to be a teacher. A politician's ambition and strategic skills were not in him, nor did he push his talent and energy in that direction. The role and reputation of Acharya in Indian politics was of a political philosopher at the national level. Simultaneously, he was an international scholar of socialist theory and ideology. However, he confined his academic

and political activism to Uttar Pradesh. After teaching at Kashi Vidyapeeth, he became the Vice Chancellor of Lucknow University from 1947 to 1951 and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) from 1951 to 1953. His own life was very austere and he used to help poor students financially. His relationship with the students was cordial and inspirational. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the second Prime Minister of India, Kamalapati Tripathi, senior Congress leader and Chandrashekhar, socialist leader, were some prominent names from among his students. Chandrasekhar joined politics with the inspiration of Acharya and continued to honour him as his guru.

Acharya was politically active in Congress, Congress Socialist Party and Socialist Party-Praja Socialist Party after Independence. He presided over the formation conference of the Congress Socialist Party held in Anjuman Ismailia Hall of Patna on May 17, 1934 and was also elected the first president of the new organisation. Acharya's 'Gaya Thesis' is considered to be a masterpiece in the socialist movement in India. Acharya was inclined to follow Marxism as a

contemplative line of thought and method. On one occasion he said that he can leave the party but not Marxism. But he was not a stereotypical or orthodox communist. To his democratic mind, a dictatorial attitude of a person or a group within the communist party in the name of the proletariat was unacceptable. Acharya was a critic of the undemocratic character of the administration of Soviet Russia and the lack of political freedoms there. But he was not a supporter of American capitalist imperialism in any way. He did not see any contradiction between Marxism and the national independence movement of India and movement in the rest of the world against colonial rule. In the same way, he saw mutual supplementation between farmers and workers' revolutionary power. He favoured connecting the agricultural revolution and the socialist revolution. That is why he gave more time to farmer politics. However, he understood the dangers of organising farmers on the basis of caste and religion. Acharya saw the revolutionary movement of India not in terms of divergent viewpoints, but as a part of the various streams of the freedom struggle.

Acharya was a serious student of the ancient culture of India. He made a serious study of Buddhism and its philosophy. He wrote the Sahitya Akademi award-winning book 'Bodhdh Dharma-Darshan' in Hindi. One excerpt from his 1936 speech is: "Our work is not only to end exploitation by imperialism but to end exploitation by all those classes of society which are exploiting the people today. We want to create a new civilization which will be rooted in ancient civilisation, which will have the colours of the country, which will keep the excellent

elements of the ancient civilisation safe, and, simultaneously, which will include new progressive elements of the contemporary world, and, thus would like to present a new ideal before the world." (*Acharya Narendra Deva Vangamay*, Volume 1.)

Like all the important leaders of freedom movement, Acharya was often sentenced to jail. During World War II and Quit India Movement, he remained in jail from 1940 to 1945. In September 1939, when the Second World War broke out, the Congress strongly opposed the unilateral declaration of British government to involve India in the war and resigned from the cabinets. In 1940, when Gandhi launched satyagraha, Acharya, despite his poor health, came forward and went to jail. When he was released in September 1941, Gandhi took care of his health by staying with him in Sevagram Ashram. Acharya was arrested along with other leaders on the call of Quit India Movement. He was released on June 15, 1945.

On one hand, prison greatly damaged his health due to his asthmatic condition, but on the other hand, it also gave him much time for reading and writing. For instance, he started translation of Vashubandhu's 'Abhi-Dhamm Kosh' from French to Hindi in Banaras jail in 1932 and completed it in Ahmednagar jail in 1945, where he was held captive with many leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru. In the preface of his book 'Discovery of India', Nehru has expressed his debt to his colleagues including Acharya Narendra Deva for their scholarship.

Acharya, like Gandhi, considered ethics as the criterion for both life and politics. The greatest

significance of Acharya Narendra Deva's ideas is to combine the moral values of a person with the revolutionary process of social change. He was therefore opposed to the ethics-neutral tendency developed in the Bolshevik stream of Marxism.

When the socialists came out of Congress and formed the independent Socialist Party in 1948, he, along with his colleagues, resigned from the UP Legislative Assembly seat that he had won on Congress ticket, even though it was not needed then and no one had demanded it. But Acharya believed that to remain a member of the Assembly after forming a separate party different from the Congress would not be morally justified. He lost in the by-polls. Congress leaders, intoxicated by power, campaigned against him in an undignified manner in the election. Nevertheless, Nehru himself was surprised with his election defeat.

Acharya died in Madras on February 19, 1956 at the age of 67 years. He had made an outstanding contribution to the Independence struggle and later to nation-building as a teacher, thinker and socialist leader. Nehru in his obituary in Parliament said, "The death of Acharya Narendra Deva means something much bigger for many of us and, I think, for the country than just the passing away of an important person. He was a man of rare distinction—distinction in many fields—rare in spirit, rare in mind and intellect, rare in integrity of mind and otherwise too. Only his body failed him. I do not know if there is any person present here in this House who was associated with him for a longer period than I was. Over 40

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Myths About Unemployment

Neeraj Jain

Discuss with any group of young people, whether educated or uneducated, and they come up with the same 2 or 3 or 4 explanations for the prevalence of unemployment in the country. These commonly held beliefs are all actually false. Nevertheless, most people have come to believe them, because our policy makers and intellectuals have been deliberately propagating them. These commonly believed myths put the blame of unemployment on the youth themselves, or on society—in other words, the policy makers are not to blame for the scarcity of jobs in the country.

Myth One: India’s population is so large that it is not possible to provide everyone jobs.

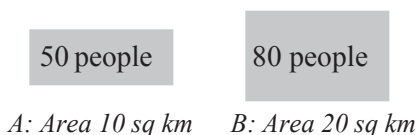
Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda minister, is reported to have said: ‘If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it.’ Following in his footsteps, our country’s establishment intellectuals have been propagating this myth about India’s population being too large to explain the huge unemployment crisis facing the country. They have been so successful in their propaganda, that probably 90 percent people of the country have come to believe it.

Once you come to believe in this argument, the policy makers are no longer to blame for the unemployment crisis. They can then claim—we are trying so hard to create jobs, but all our efforts are in vain, as our country’s population is so huge. The blame then falls on us; we are unemployed, because there

are so many of us.

In fact, people give this same argument about there being too many of us to explain our country’s huge poverty and malnutrition levels too!

This myth can be debunked by a simple argument. Suppose there are two areas, A and B. A has an area of 10 sq km, and B has an area of 20 sq km. A has a population of 50, and B has a population of 80. Which is the area that has more population?



Most readers will immediately answer: A has more population. Why is that so, when the number of people living in B are more than in A? That is because the population density of A is more than of B. So, obviously, what matters is population density, and not population.

Let us now compare the population density of India with some other countries (Table 1).

Table 1: Population Density of India and Other Countries¹ (per sq km)

Country	Population Density
Belgium	372
India	401
Israel	395
Japan	335
Netherlands	413
South Korea	513
Taiwan	651

Except for India, all the other countries in Table 1 are high income countries. India is classified as a lower middle income country (World Bank classification). Even though the population densities of these high income countries are more than or comparable to India, yet, their unemployment / underemployment levels and poverty levels are much less than India.

Let us take a different example. In 2016, Brazil had population of 207.7 million and an overall population density of 25 inhabitants per square kilometre (in 2015). This figure is way below the population densities of all the high income countries mentioned in Table 1. And yet, Brazil has a per capita income much below these high income countries, and is facing double digit unemployment²—when actually it should have had no unemployment if population or population density was responsible for unemployment.

Obviously then, it is not population or population density that is responsible for India’s unemployment crisis. Actually, if we examine this issue more closely, we will find that population growth and employment generation are not adversely related, but complement each other. Greater the population, more is the production required—of food, soap, oil, clothing, housing, etc.—and so more will be the jobs generated for producing all these goods; society will also need more schools, hospitals, buses, etc.—all this means more jobs in all these areas too. Therefore, it is not India’s large population or population density

that is responsible for the huge level of unemployment in the country; the reasons lie elsewhere.

But the myth about overpopulation being the reason for our country's ills is so deep-rooted that many of our readers will still be finding it difficult to accept the above logic. Let us therefore take a look at another set of statistics. The argument about overpopulation comes across most strongly for resources—that our resources are limited, and obviously cannot sustain such a large population. This is used to justify the huge hunger levels in the country—the argument given is that we do not have enough arable land to produce enough to feed such a large population. Now, if we compare Indian and Chinese agriculture, we find that though India has one-third the land area of China, our arable land is marginally bigger than China's. Yet, China produces 40 percent more wheat and rice than India; while China's fruit production is three times India's production!³ Despite this, our godowns are overflowing with foodgrains, and we have become the world's largest exporter of rice! So obviously, Indian agriculture is in crisis not because of our large population, but because of our agricultural policies. And we have the largest number of hungry people in the world, not because of our large population, but because our people are too poor to buy foodgrains, and the government is not willing to distribute foodgrains to them at cheap rates and is more interested in exporting them.⁴

Myth 2: We are unemployed, because we are not capable enough.

This is another common answer given by unemployed/

underemployed young people, that they do not have a decent job because they are not capable enough. Most believe that this is why they have not been able to succeed in competitive examinations.

Ask them why are they doing a BA or a BCom or a BSc degree, which today is not going to fetch them a job, and why did they not take admission in an engineering / management / medicine degree, and they will reply that it is because they are poor, and they did not have enough money for paying the college fee.

Ask them why are they poor, and they will answer that it is because their parents are not capable enough. And why are their parents not capable? Because they did not have money for a decent education. And why is that so? Because their grandparents were not capable . . .

Isn't this argument—that we / our parents / our grandparents etc. are responsible for our present fate—very similar to the 'karma' philosophy propagated in ancient times by wily Brahmins to justify the caste system! We do not ask why has engineering / management / medical education become so costly? Why has higher education, and even good quality school education, become reserved for the children of the rich? Why is the government not spending enough on education, and instead is privatising education, because of which education has become a profit-making business? Instead of raising these questions, we blame ourselves / our fate for our inability to take admission in a good professional course that can get us a decent job.

In fact, even in our country, till the

1980s, higher education was almost entirely in the public sector, and it was possible for children from the poorest sections to get educated in the best engineering or medical colleges in the country. The economic reforms that began in 1991 as a part of globalisation have resulted in gradual privatisation of higher education in the country.⁵

It is another matter that even if one is somehow able to get admission to an engineering or management college, the chances of landing a good job are not very high. According to the All India Council for Technical Education, out of the 8 lakh graduate engineers who pass out from technical institutions in the country every year, more than 60 percent remain unemployed!⁶ And many of those who do get a job get low-paid jobs. Similarly, for those who are somehow able to shell out the Rs 1 lakh or so needed per year to get admission to an MBA degree course, an ASSOCHAM study finds that only 7 percent of the graduates from the 5,500 Business schools in the country (excepting the IIMs and a few other B-schools) are employable; if at all they are able to get jobs, they earn less than Rs 10,000 a month.⁷

Myth 3: There are many jobs, but people don't want to work. They only want cushy arm-chair jobs.

Even if this is true, it is so only for the upper classes who are ashamed of getting their hands dirty doing manual labour.

On the other hand, the millions who migrate from villages to cities in search of work live in horrible conditions in the slums, and are willing to take up the the hardest and

the riskiest jobs. They work at construction sites, or in roadside eateries, or as loaders in market places, or as private drivers, and so on. Tens of thousands of graduates break their backs working night and day as autorickshaw drivers, or stress themselves out working 12 hours a day as contract labourers in factories at barely subsistence wages, or work long hours as waiters in McDonald’s and Cafe Coffee Day restaurants

The upper classes, who believe that ordinary people in our country don’t want to do hard work and so there is unemployment, forget that their luxurious houses have been built by the hard labour of these very ordinary people working long hours in the blazing sun, the highways on which their SUVs run have been built by ordinary people working under the open skies in hazardous conditions, the food on their dining tables comes from the backbreaking toil of farmers working night and day on their fields . . .

Myth 4: Reservations for Dalits, Women entering the Workforce, Migrants Taking Over Jobs for Locals – are responsible for the Unemployment Crisis

Many upper caste youth believe that they are not able to get jobs because of reservations for Dalits. While many men believe that they are not able to get jobs because women have started taking up jobs. Many others believe that they are unemployed because migrants have taken over the jobs in their region / State, and therefore they are attacking migrants.

Reservations

Any democratic and just society that believes in providing equal opportunities to all its members

provides special facilities and opportunities for educational, economic and cultural growth to those sections of society who have suffered social and economic discrimination/ oppression for centuries. The USA implements such policies, which are called affirmative action policies, to address long histories of discrimination faced by minorities (such as Afro-Americans) and women. In India, this took the form of providing reservations to seats in the various legislatures, government jobs and higher educational institutions for the historically deprived castes and tribes. Of course, providing reservations will not by itself end caste discrimination and bring into being a casteless society. But at least this much needs to be done to provide social and economic justice to those who were deliberately denied this in the past.

The belief among upper caste youth that the unemployment crisis is partly because of reservations is fundamentally misplaced. Eliminating reservations is not going to result in an increase in the total number of jobs available; at the most, what will happen is that some jobs that are today going to Dalits will be taken up by upper caste youth. But the total number of unemployed will remain the same.

Today, this opposition to reservations among the upper caste youth has taken a strange turn. The dominant castes in several states, such as Marathas in Maharashtra, Jats in Haryana, Patels or Patidars in Gujarat, Gujjars in Rajasthan and Kapus in Andhra Pradesh are themselves agitating for reservations. They are demanding that their castes be included in the list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), so that they too can take

advantage of reservations in public sector employment.

Table 2: Total Government Employment (Centre+State+Local Govt.+Quasi Govt.) (in lakh)

Year	Total Employment
1991	190.6
2012	176.1

While all these dominant castes are today demanding a share of the ‘reservation pie’, the fact of the matter is, there is no ‘pie’ on the table. The total number of government jobs has decreased in absolute terms over the last two decades! As it is, total public employment in the country is a small percentage of total employment in the country (just 4 percent in 2010, according to the *Economic Survey 2009–10*); even that has fallen by 7.6 percent over the two decades 1991–2012 (see Table 2).⁸ So, the various caste groups are demanding a share of the jobs reserved for the historically backward castes, when in reality, there are hardly any new government jobs, as public sector recruitment has reduced to a trickle. The government, instead of increasing public sector employment, is reducing public employment—fresh posts are not being created, the vacancies arising out of retirement are not being filled, employment is being forcibly reduced by ‘Voluntary Retirement Schemes’, and several jobs are being contractualised.

Then why are these castes demanding reservation in government jobs? The reason is: on the one hand, agriculture is in crisis, because of which the youth are seeking jobs outside the agricultural sector; and on the other hand, there are very few

jobs available in the other private sectors too—and the few jobs available are contractual jobs that are insecure jobs offering very low salaries. Overall job growth in the economy has drastically fallen. The *Economic Survey 2014–15* admits that employment growth in the economy [compound annual growth rate (CAGR)] decelerated from 2.8 percent during period 1999–2000 to 2004–05, to just 0.5 percent during 2004–05 to 2011–12!⁹ Crafty politicians have taken advantage of this disenchantment among the youth to mobilise them along caste lines for demanding reservation for their respective castes in government jobs.

To give a recent example of this massive rush for government jobs: in UP in September 2015, when the State Government advertised to fill up 368 posts of peons in the State Secretariat, 23 lakh people applied for these posts. Now, whether these jobs are given to locals, or Dalits, or Jats, or women, or men, 22 lakh, 99 thousand and 632 people are still going to be unemployed; an overwhelming majority of the locals, a majority of the Dalits, a majority of the Jats and Yadavs, and a majority of the men and women who have applied for these posts are still going to be unemployed. So what difference does it make to the overall unemployment situation for any of these categories, even if these jobs are reserved for locals, or for Dalits, or for the Other Backward castes, or for women?

Jobs for Women

Many men even today oppose women going out of their homes for jobs, and becoming economically independent. They argue that it reduces job opportunities for men; they also raise the issue that if

women take up jobs outside their homes, who will look after their children and housework?

This is a typical patriarchal view, which considers a woman's independence to be immoral, and believes that ideally her role should be confined to within the four walls of the house. It is only when a woman takes part in social production that she develops an independent identity in society, one that is different from her being someone's mother, sister, wife or daughter. It is only when a woman steps out of her home, and becomes economically independent, that her personality develops, she gains the freedom to develop her inherent potential, and she develops the confidence to face the challenges of the outside world.

This tragic reality, that a majority of women in our society even today are still trapped within their family cages and do not go to work outside their homes, has actually affected society's development. Society has not been able to utilise their inherent brilliance and enormous capabilities for its growth. We need to support women in their struggle to step outside their homes and take up jobs and become economically independent. We need to raise the demand that the economic policies of our country should be such that all men and women desirous of jobs should be able to get decent, secure and well-paid jobs, rather than fighting each other for a share of the limited jobs presently available.

Invasion by Migrants

Movements against migrants have taken place in several states, including Karnataka, Punjab and Rajasthan, and several North

Eastern states, demanding reservation of jobs for the local population and that migrants return to their native states. In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena have periodically organised agitations against migrants, especially from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, because of which migrant workers in the state have been victims of xenophobia, prejudice and violence.

What most people do not know is that most of the migrants to the big cities of these states are not 'outsiders', but people from other regions from within the same state. This fact comes out from the data on migration available from the Census of India. The Census collects migration data of two types—migration by birth place and migration by place of last residence. The Census 2001 data shows that total number of migrants by place of last residence in the country as a whole was 314 million (30.6 percent of the population). Out of these migrants by last residence, 268 million (85 percent) were intra-state migrants (those who migrated from one area of the state to another), 41 million (13 percent) were inter-state migrants and 5.1 million (1.6 percent) migrated from outside the country. So far as migration by place of birth is concerned, Census 2001 data shows that there were about 307 million migrants (29.9 percent of the population) under this category, of which about 259 million (84.2 percent), migrated from one part of the state to another, 42 million (13.8 percent) were migrants from outside the state while 6.1 million migrated from outside the country.¹⁰ For the state of Maharashtra, a study based on NSSO data found that over 70 percent of migrants to the city of Mumbai come from rural or urban

areas within Maharashtra itself.¹¹

According to the 2011 Census, migrant population in India has been growing faster than the population growth in the country, because of which migrants constitute 37.8 per cent of India's 121.03 crore population.¹² In other words, every third Indian is a migrant. The reason why migration takes place is because of unequal development. In the development model being implemented in the country today, known as capitalism, the more developed parts tend to develop faster than the more backward parts, because industrialists and investors prefer to invest in the more developed areas as costs are lower and markets here are more developed. This results in more jobs being created in the more developed areas. Tragically, some of the most backward regions of India are also the most resource-rich regions of our country, such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand—yet these regions are backward because investors prefer to invest in the more developed areas of the country. If, therefore, more jobs are available in the more developed cities of the country such as Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, or the southern states and Punjab, it is not because those living in these areas are more capable or hardworking as compared to those living in the more backward areas, but is a result of the development model being implemented in the country. Therefore, the benefits of these jobs (in the more developed areas) should go not just to those living in these areas, those living in the more backward areas should also have an equal right to them.

False Propaganda

The real reason why dominant castes are fighting for reservations

in government jobs, or why men feel that women have taken over their jobs, or why people are demanding reservations for locals, is that while on the one hand, agriculture is in crisis and employment growth in agriculture has virtually slowed down to zero, and the youth are migrating to cities in search of jobs, on the other hand, there is an acute shortage of jobs in other sectors such as manufacturing and services sectors.

Roughly 13 million young people enter the Indian job market every year.¹³ During the decade 1999–2000 to 2009–10, a total of 130 million entered the job market. Of these, according to government data, only 63.5 million got any kind of jobs, of which only 14.4 million got formal sector jobs, that is, jobs with some kind of job security, minimum wages, and other legal rights.¹⁴ In other words, only 11 percent of those who joined the workforce during this decade got decent jobs; a majority of the others are all unemployed or underemployed, somehow eking out a living in the informal sector. Not realising that there are no jobs, they believe, or are made to believe, by duplicitous politicians that the 'others' have taken away their jobs, and so they attack migrants, or mobilise in lakhs demanding 'reservations'.

Rather than fight the 'others', we need to all unite and demand more jobs!

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Hindutva and History

Irfan Engineer

The controversial statement of the BJP legislator of UP State Sangeet Som denigrating Taj Mahal should not surprise us. 'History' propounded by the Hindu supremacists is stranger than fiction. It is a tool in the hands Hindutva to justify their ideology which considers Muslims and Christians, whose holy lands are outside India as foreign religions. Indian Constitution may consider Muslims and Christians as Indian citizens, but Hindutva political ideology (HPI) views them as foreigners to be gotten rid off or subdued to the status of non-citizens or second class citizens. Hindutva calls upon all Hindus to wage war on what they consider foreign religions.

Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar called upon Hindus to "Hinduisé all politics and militarise Hindudom". Hinduising politics meant to establish political and cultural hegemony of upper-caste Hindus. For building militarised Hindudom, demonisation of Muslims and Christians was crucial. One of the instruments used to demonise Muslims and Christians was history. The political ideologues of Hindutva fictionalised history and historicised fiction without having any intention to respect the science of history.

It is because it is fictionalised history that different Hindutva ideologues take different stances on the Taj Mahal. Yogi Adityanath once said Taj Mahal had no connection with India's culture or heritage (Manish and Sanyal 2017) and

omitted it from the booklet of tourism department of UP. Sangeet Som, BJP MLA called it a cultural blot on India and which was built by traitors (Sharma 2017). BJP MP Vinay Katiyar opined that Taj Mahal was originally a Shiv Temple (PTI 2017). Following a big furore in the media, Adityanath later called it pride of India and stated that sweat and toil of Indian people had built it, and even visited the Taj Mahal.

'History' propounded by HPI has basically borrowed from the colonial historiography of James Stuart Mill and his book *History of British India*. Henry Miers Elliot and John Dowson, both British civil servants, also wrote 8 volumes on history of India and published it as *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians*. James Mill, Elliot and Dowson periodised Indian past according to the religion of the rulers, and labelled these as Hindu period and Muslim period. Though Eliot and Dowson periodised pre-Islamic history as Hindu period supposedly on the basis of religion of the rulers, the then rulers did not see themselves as followers of Hindu religion. The word 'Hindu' was used more to denote inhabitants of the geographical region on the Eastern bank of river Sindhu. The Persians pronounced Sindhu as 'Hindu'. "*Our word 'Hindu' originates in the geographical feature of the Indus River. It comes from a word for 'river' (Sindhu) that Herodotus (in the fifth century BCE), the Persians (in the fourth century BCE), and the Arabs (after the*

eight century CE) used to refer to everyone who lived beyond the great river of the northwest of the subcontinent, still known locally as the Sindhu and in Europe as the Indus." (Doniger 2013, 6-7)

It is thus the outsiders who referred to all the inhabitants of this region as Hindus; the rulers of this region before the so-called Muslim rule did not identify their religion as Hinduism. It is the British colonial masters who used the geographical term 'Hindu' to mean religion. Besides the fact that many historians would question periodisation of history on the basis of religion of the ruler, Elliot and Dowson called 'pre-Muslim period' as Hindu period, even though the different rulers followed diverse religious faith including Jainism and Buddhism. The Britishers in their census enumeration used Hinduism to denote religion of those who were neither Muslims, Christians or other known religions.

Without critiquing the colonial historiography of Eliot and Dowson, HPI endorsed it and built upon it. HPI glorifies the Hindu period as being the golden period of Indian history, and considers the Muslim period as a period during which there was a decline. Communal Muslims or Muslim nationalists glorify the Muslim period. Both view history from their respective ideological perspective to determine their future. Romila Thapar writes that historical interpretation can become a two-way process, where the needs of the

present are read into the past, and where the image of the past is sought to be imposed upon the present; and the image of the past is the historian's contribution to the future (1993; pp. 1). E H Carr reaches same conclusion and writes, "*When we attempt to answer the question 'What is history?' our answer, consciously or unconsciously, reflects our own position in time, and forms part of our answer to the broader question what view we take of the society in which we live.*" (Carr 1987).

The HPI view of history is that the golden period of 'Hindu' history was over after invasion by the Muslim aggressors from the Northwest. Thereafter the social structure crumbled and 'Hindus' and 'Hindu' culture were suppressed which caused their economic decline. The Muslim aggressors were despotic and their religious fanaticism required them to destroy every symbol of 'Hindu' culture and forcibly impose 'Islamic' culture and convert all 'Hindus' to Islam. 'Hindus' resisted the aggression which led to permanent war between the two communities or two nations – Muslim and 'Hindu'. The Muslim community through their Emperors enslaved and humiliated the Hindus with the intention of completely destroying their culture. Muslims demolished their temples and constructed their mosques over it. The HPI claims that there were 3,000 such temples which were destroyed by Muslim rulers and mosques built over them, including the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and the mosques in Mathura and Varanasi. However, it has never presented a full list of all these 3,000 temples which they claim were destroyed and mosques constructed in their place.

The objective of writing such a history is primarily to stigmatise the entire Muslim community and represent them as oppressors against whom all Hindus should unite and wage a war to seek revenge of historical wrongs done to them. The Hindus being a caste based hierarchically structured society, uniting them implies that those on the lower rungs of the structure accept the birth based social privileges of those on upper rungs, despite having suffered inhuman oppression from the upper castes since centuries. Therefore, uniting the Hindus is not easy. One of the strategies used by HPI to achieve unity of Hindus is to demonise other communities, historicise conflicts with them, present these threats as continuing till today, and call upon all Hindus to unite against them.

The second objective of distorting history is to reclaim, own and control the land, institutions and structures owned by the 'enemy' communities. If you can't build it, grab it from others. The third objective is to create a case for expansionism. HPI calls for Akhand Bharat, which means capturing not only Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also South China in the North, Myanmar in the East and Sri Lanka in the South. The fourth objective is to construct an image of a glorious past in which all technological and scientific achievements that we see today had already been achieved by the 'Hindus' thousands of years ago, during the Vedic period. These include the aircraft (pushpak viman), plastic surgery (implanting Elephant head on to a human body), advanced nuclear tipped missiles that were used during the Mahabharat war, genetic engineering, etc. The aim of creating such a false pride in the past is not only to unite the Hindu

community but also claim it to be superior to all other communities, which therefore gives it the right to rule the world and creates justification for building a militarised and authoritarian state to achieve that objective.

Purushottam Nagesh Oak was a prominent HP Ideologue who established the 'Institute for Rewriting Indian History' and wrote several books. The historical wisdom of HPI is largely informed by Oak's writing. Broadly and briefly, Oak's claims are as under:

1. Islam and Christianity derived from Vedic Religion. Christianity was Krishna nitee. Vatican is corruption of 'Vatika Nagri' and Papacy was originally Vedic priesthood. 'Abraham' comes from Brahma; 'church' is corruption of Sanskrit word 'vichar-vimarsh'; Jesus or Yahveh was a Rig Vedic God. The word disciple is derived from Sanskrit word 'dikshapal'. Krishna puja was prevalent in the whole world.
2. Arabia had a Vedic past and Kabaa was a Hindu Temple – a Shiv Ling based on an inscription mentioning Indian King Vikramaditya is in a dish found inside the Kabaa. Mohammad was Hindu and Arabs worshiped Mahadev and performed their pilgrimage to Kashi and Haridwar. Allah was a Hindu God.
3. The foreign Muslims have been wrongly given the credit for constructing Indian monuments. Muslims were destroyers of Indian monuments and not constructors. Amongst the monuments wrongly attributed to 'foreign' Muslims include the Red

Fort, Qutub Minar, Humayun Ka Maqbara, Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and many others. These were all 'Hindu' structures misappropriated by the then Muslim rulers. The evidence for such a claim can be so flimsy as some carving on a wall which was not of Muslim origin, or some similar sounding Sanskrit name. For example, according to Oak, Taj Mahal was an ancient Shiva Temple Tejo Mahalaya which was commandeered by Emperor Shajahan from the Maharaja of Jaipur. Oak argues that the words 'Taj' and 'Mahal' are both of Sanskrit origin. Mahal means mansion and Taj is corruption of the word 'Tej' which means splendour. Oak gives such facile explanations for all his claims.

4. His other sweeping claims include that one should not believe in medieval records; Mughal arts and art of Mughal gardens is a myth; development of Indian music during Mughal period is a myth; all the monuments built by Mughals (which Oak describes as 'jihadi') and the narratives behind the monuments are false; the narrative that the Medieval period (when 'foreigners' ruled) was a golden age is a myth; Indian king Porus did not lose to Alexander in the battle of Hydaspes fought in 326 BC; Indian borders extended from Bali to Baltic Sea and from Kerala to Kaba; Sanskrit was the world language in ancient times; etc.

These assertions would be and should be normally questioned by not only students of history but also people with ordinary intelligence. Hindutva's historical wisdoms are doled out to their cadres and followers who have been mobilised

and recruited by touching their religious sentiments and made amenable to the building of a strong unitary collective that would act as their support network and give them a sense of belonging. The strong unitary collective is built around a shared common objective and common hatred of those whom they call foreigners. Hindutva 'history' is an ideological tool to deepen the conviction of the mobilised cadres and imagine a past where the enemy 'foreigners' were oppressors even in the past. It fills them with hatred of the 'foreigner' and motivates them to exorcise the agony of having suffered atrocities in the past by inflicting the worst crimes on the 'foreigners' around them.

The cadre convinced of such an imagined past is rarely able to stand up to rational scrutiny of his/her belief. They keep repeating their belief. They follow their leader who too keeps repeating his/her belief of what the past was and hopes that it would be accepted as unassailable truth if enough number of people repeat it enough number of times. It is through this prism that Tipu Sultan is also looked from. Notwithstanding the fact that Tipu Sultan died fighting the Britishers, Tipu being a 'foreigner' should necessarily mean he was oppressor of 'Hindus'.

Mobilized cadres of HPI need empathy and help to restore their rationality and humanity. However, they have demonstrated their destructive potential once by demolishing Babri Masjid. Other historical heritage of the country needs to be protected. Our education system should be strengthened to inculcate human values and equip students to explore the past in order to understand it and learn lessons of history to shape our future.

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Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration for 2015-16:

T.M. Krishna's Speech

I stand before you to accept an award for having contributed to national integration. But before I bask in its glory, I need to place on record the unevenness or shall I say the un-integratedness of my own citizenship. I would like to believe that I am just another ordinary Indian. But I am not, certainly not. I am born into a privileged caste and class. I am English speaking and a culturally empowered citizen of this country. Whether I realise it or not and even if I am unable to accept its realness, this is a fact. And being a singer, in a tradition that is steeped in all these qualifications I become an emblem of what is being touted today as 'Indian Culture'. I am a preferred-citizen. I may try to understand but will never, in my within, experience what it means to be a Dalit, Muslim or a tribal and will never be just another person on the street.

But my art, Carnatik music, has given me a gift. A gift of experience, a gift of empathy, a gift to sense life beyond my limitations. This experience made me realise that my art, my way of life, my beliefs, religion, practices, rituals and everything else that makes me who I am is just one dot in the grand universe of India.

It is art's generosity that brings me here today.

The human being is a complex creature, one part of which is designed to own, control, subjugate, discipline and dictate. But there is another beautiful side to us, the sensitive, empathetic and

compassionate one. Right through our lives we vacillate between the two, with each side winning a few bouts. But at a much deeper level, the environment we have created for ourselves moulds our intrinsic humanness. And it is in this context that democracy becomes a vital, non-negotiable instrument—the instrument of humanity. Democracy lives in its spirit of intention—which is to make us all better human beings. It demands humanity from every citizen, community and government, and hence has not been and will never be easy. We have gone through times when we placed democracy under siege. Born in January 1976, I am a child of one of those difficult times.

But we did move ahead and beyond.

The goal of national integration

As I grew up in the 1980s and early '90s, national integration was a significant part of my vocabulary. Leaders from across the political spectrum spoke about this with great vigour re-enforcing its centrality to India. In spite of the terrible violence that erupted at various times in different parts of the country, we seemed to recover and an inner consciousness in our civil society kept reiterating our togetherness. And in this context I must mention Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's apology for the 1984 riots. This was a reflective and essential statement. Some detractors may say 'it does not change anything'. It cannot change the past but definitely changes the future.

A leader who does not have the humility to apologise for genocide under his watch does not integrate.

But I say with regret that as we entered a new millennium this idea of national integration lost its sheen, it did not attract anyone's attention, it did not matter anymore. It is also possible that we became over-confident, arrogant about the unpenetrability of our syncretic culture. We spoke much about development and soon national-integration became passé. In spite of socially equalising legislations such as the Right for Information Act of 2005 and NREGA, we somehow forgot that if we do not remain caring of our people and vigilant of the dangers that lurked behind the scenes, we will enter times when who we are as a nation will be under serious threat.

And here we are today.

Ugly jingoism

We live in times when national integration has been replaced by an ugly form of nationalism—jingoism. We are being told what to eat, wear, say, think and be. One monolithic order is being forced on us as Indian culture. As a person of and in culture let me say this unequivocally, there is no one Indian culture—there are Indian cultures—the plurality is the signifier of integration. Uniformity breeds homogeneity, unity through national integration cradles respect.

We are facing one of the greatest challenges posed to our democracy, constitution, plurality, citizenship and socialism. These cornerstones of India are being subverted,

dismantled, maligned and morphed right before our eyes. The methods being used are not secretive anymore, dissenters have been killed and all of us who resist are being warned of what is coming.

If there is anytime that national integration needs to be brought back into public thought, it is today and there is no time to waste. And this integration is not just about religious minorities; it is as much about Dalits, tribals, ethnic and linguistic minorities. The basic fabric of India is its cultures and if we allow that to be poisoned, we would have placed on the sacrificial altar our entire civilisational consciousness. The battle will be lost and we just cannot let that happen.

Questioning, resisting, learning and discovering

I will continue this journey of questioning, resisting, learning and discovering. And in accepting this award, I am just a conduit to creating more discourses on who we are as a country and where we want to be. I thank all those who have travelled this path and continue to inspire and mentor me in my seekings. In essence I am merely continuing in the tradition of India's democratic thinkers, who believed in our goodness.

Before I end I would like to render a few verses from a hymn that is part of Gandhiji's Ashram songs. I hope we can keep these words in our hearts and expand its horizons.

Om tat sat, Shri Narayana tu
Siddhabuddhi tu,
Skanda vinayaka savita pavaka tu
Brahma mazda tu, Yahva shakti tu
Ishu pita prabhu tu, Rudra vishnu tu
Ramakrishna tu, Raheem ta O tu
Vishvarupa tu, Advitiya tu
Akala nirbhaya atma linga tu,
Om tat sat.

The Growing Burden of Inequalities

Bharat Dogra

Economic inequalities are not only a big hindrance in the path of justice and meeting basic needs of all people, in addition they are also a threat to long-term broad-based economic progress as well as to democracy. It is therefore highly unfortunate that considerations relating to promotion of economic equality and checking economic inequalities have been increasingly neglected in India in recent decades, particularly from the 1980s and even more so from the 1990s.

Several aspects of accentuating inequalities have been becoming increasingly clear in recent years, but if any further proof of the worsening trends was needed, we can refer to the recent widely discussed working paper titled *Indian Income Inequality 1922-24: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj*, written by Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel.

This paper presents strong statistical evidence of the rapidly increasing income inequality in India. The share of the top 1 percent part of the population in national income increased from 6.2 percent in 1982-83 to 21.7 percent in 2013-14 (the highest ever recorded share of the top 1 percent in India). Income of the top 0.01 percent of the country's population during the period 1980-2014 grew by 1,834 percent, and the income of the top 0.001 percent grew by 2,726 percent. In sharp contrast, the income of the bottom 50 percent of the population grew by only 89 percent (containing all adults above

20 years of age) during this period.

During 1980-2014, the top 10 percent of the population was able to capture about two-thirds of the total increase of income during this period, while the bottom 90 percent of the population had to be content with only one-third of it.

Thus, it is clear that income inequalities have been increasing at unacceptably high rates in recent years. This, moreover, is only one aspect of increasing economic inequalities. In rural areas land redistribution progress has been almost entirely given up during the last 35 years; on the other hand, land has been taken from farmers for private industrialists, miners and real estate developers on a more massive scale than ever before. In urban areas increasing inequalities are even more visible than in rural areas. Huge loans taken by some of the richest persons or business concerns related to them have not been paid back to such a massive extent that it has created a big crisis—the crisis of NPAs in the country's banking system.

These trends of increasing inequalities lead to denial of resources for the most important tasks of fighting poverty and hunger while also retarding broad-based, sustainable economic progress in various ways. Hence one of our most important priorities is to check this increasing drift towards higher economic inequalities with a firm hand.

Press Release

Kisan Mukti Yatra Gets Rousing Reception in Bengal

- Accuses Prime Minister and Bengal Chief Minister of Betraying Farmers
- Demands that TMC Govt Procure Paddy at Rs 2,300/quintal like under Kerala LDF Govt
- Demands Liberation from Debt for all Kisans in Bengal

The Eastern leg of the Kisan Mukti Yatra began from Bhargor in Bengal on October 28, 2017 by paying tributes to martyrs Mofizul Khan and Alamgir Mollah, killed in police firing while protesting against forcible land acquisition for power grid. The Yatra reached Jhargram District (part of erstwhile Paschim Midnapore District) on October 29, 2017 to a massive reception by peasants, agricultural workers, Adivasis and Dalits with different organisations representing them present in solidarity. Hundreds of representatives of the Bengal Platform of Mass Organisations, a platform that includes 118 organisations and which is on a State-wide Padayatra covering more than 40,000 villages in the State against communal BJP-RSS as well as the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government, corrupt and anti-people TMC and against neo-liberal economic policies, were also present in a show of solidarity. The public meeting at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Chowk saw enthusiastic participation and began with cultural programmes and revolutionary songs.

Addressing the meeting, Vijoo

Krishnan, Joint Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, paid tributes to the hundreds of martyrs in the district killed by TMC-Maoist goons and said that the struggle of the people of Jhargram despite extreme repression is an inspiration for all. He attacked the corrupt TMC Government citing how even mythological figures Narada and Sarada in Bengal have become synonymous with corruption. Abhishek Banerji is competing with Jay Shah for unprecedented increase in wealth, which needs to be investigated. He pointed out that while the MSP of paddy was Rs 1,550/quintal, in Bengal farmers were not getting even Rs 900/quintal and there was no government procurement. In contrast to this, the Left Democratic Front Government in Kerala was procuring paddy for a record Rs 2,300/quintal. The Tripura Left Front Government is providing up to 92 days of work under MGNREGA, but the BJP Government is not allocating funds. In Bengal, MGNREGA is functioning dismally under the TMC Government. Even the Adivasis in Bengal have not got Forest Rights despite more than a decade after the Forest rights Act. Food security has been compromised and for the first time farmers in Bengal were forced to commit suicide as they are not getting proper price for paddy, jute, potato and other crops. After coming to power in the name of Maa, Maati and Maanush, TMC was looting resources and unleashing untold repression on the people. He pointed to the victories of the peasantry in Rajasthan and Maharashtra and also

the resistance built against land acquisition under the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan banner, and expressed confidence that the united resistance built will defeat the conspiracy of BJP and TMC to divide the people and finally emerge victorious.

Dr Sunilam of NAPM explained the formation of the AIKSCC after the killing of 6 farmers in Mandsaur and how more than 180 organisations across the country had come together to demand liberation from debts and remunerative MSP according to the Swaminathan Commission recommendations i.e. at least 50 percent above the cost of production. He congratulated the people for defying the atmosphere of terror in the region under TMC rule and attending the programme in large numbers. Lambasting the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government, he said that it was the most anti-farmer government ever in India and the Prime Minister had betrayed the farmers by making fake promises. He also criticised the untold suffering imposed on the people in the name of demonetisation and GST, while the corporates were being given huge concessions.

Amiya Patra, Secretary, Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Union (AIAWU), Pulin Behari Baskey (Ex-MP and Secretary of Adivasi Adhikar Rashtriya Manch), Tapan Batabyal (All India Kisan Maha Sabha), Santosh Rana (AIKS), Dhenga Hansda (All India Samyukt Kisan Sabha), Bablu Banerji (Paschim Banga Khet Majur

Sanghati Samiti), Sukhchand Soren (All India Krantikari Kisan Sabha), Ashok Rana (Sramik Krishak Union), Panchanan Pradhan (All India Kisan Khet Mazdoor

Sanghatan) and Ashok Banerji (All India Agravami Kisan Sabha) also addressed the meeting. Dibakar Hansda, District Secretary of AIKS, presided over the meeting.

The Kisan Mukti Yatra will leave tomorrow to Bhubaneswar and proceed from there to Jharkhand and Bihar.

Kisan Mukti Yatra Enters Jharkhand

- Accuses PM & Jharkhand CM of Promoting Corporate Interests & Land Grab
- Will Defeat Land Acquisition Act, 2017 and Efforts to Tamper with Land & Forest Rights
- Condemns Move to Amend CNT & SPT Acts
- Demands Liberation from Debt for all Kisans in Jharkhand and MSP at 50% above Cost of Production

The eastern leg of the Kisan Mukti Yatra entered Jharkhand on October 31, 2017 after passing through Bengal and Odisha. It was received at Ranchi by several organisations representing hundreds of peasants, agricultural workers, Adivasis and Dalits. A public meeting was held opposite the Raj Bhavan in Ranchi.

Addressing the meeting Hannan Mollah, General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, attacked the Narendra Modi led BJP Government for betraying farmers and imposing burdens on them. He accused the government of facilitating loot of land, forest and mineral resources, and pointed out that the united struggle of people had defeated the move to amend the CNT Act and SPT Act. He said that the unity built in the form of the AIKSCC was unprecedented and will defeat the anti-people economic policies and divisive politics of the BJP-led

Central Government.

Dr. Sunilam of NAPM said that more than 180 organisations had come together to demand liberation from debts and remunerative MSP according to the Swaminathan Commission recommendations i.e. at least 50 percent above the cost of production. He said the Raghubar Das led BJP Government in the State was working in favour of the land mafia and the move to pass Land Acquisition Act of 2017 was a step in that direction. The BJP Government has allowed corporates to loot Jal, Jungle and Zameen, as well as mineral resources and encouraged land grab. He further said that the programme 'Mining Momentum of Jharkhand' is a license to loot.

Rajaram Singh of AIKMS called upon people to unite against the communal forces and neo-liberal economic policies. He said farmers' suicides and hunger deaths were increasing in Jharkhand under BJP rule. He called upon all sections to take part in the Kisan Sansad at Delhi from November 20, 2017 in large numbers.

Avik Saha, Jai Kisan Andolan, said that the promises of the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government like better prices and doubling of farm incomes were fake. He specifically pointed out that the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana had transferred thousands of crores to private

insurance companies while the farmers had not got any compensation for their losses.

Social activist Dayamani Barla said people of Jharkhand are united to defeat corporate loot and defend their rights. She warned that the government will face the wrath of the people.

AIKS Joint Secretary Vijoo Krishnan, Prem Singh Gehlawat and Purushottam Sharma of AIKMS, Prahlad Ingole of Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatan, AIKMS leader from Telangana Chandrasekhar, Kamalendra Pratap of Jai Kisan Andolan, Surjit Sinha, Secretary, Jharkhand Kisan Sabha, Shyam Sundar Mahto (Joint Secretary) and Puran Mahto (General Secretary) of AIKMS, Mahendra Pathak, General Secretary, AIKS (Ajoy Bhavan), Jharkhand, Suresh Munda, President, DYFI, Jharkhand, Rangowati Devi, Joint Secretary, AIDWA, Parasuram Mahto, Jharkhand Kisan Sabha, Ramlal Mahto, President, Jharkhand AIKMS and several others also spoke at the well attended public meeting. Rajendra Singh Munda, President of Jharkhand Kisan Sabha, presided over the meeting.

The Kisan Mukti Yatra will leave travel Jharkhand tomorrow and travel in Bihar till November 5.

Released By Dr Sunilam on behalf of AIKSCC

Sufi Amba Prasad

Sufi Amba Prasad (1858-1917) was one of our greatest freedom fighters and editors. His inspiring role was not confined to India alone but also spilled over to Iran. This year his 100th death anniversary is being observed in both these countries.

What we really need to learn from the very inspiring life of Sufi Amba Prasad is that courage and determination can help to overcome all obstacles if there is clarity about aims and strong will-power to pursue these aims in our life. Sufi Ji was born with only one arm. At a relatively early age for his work relating to journalism he was jailed twice, tortured, denied medicare and

his ancestral property was confiscated. Yet he did not budge even once from the path of fighting for the freedom of his country, turning away with great contempt all offers to compromise his position by offering him a good salary or a palatial house.

Secondly what we need to learn from him in the present day troubled times is his great commitment to the harmony and unity of all religions. Although Sufi Ji was respected as a Muslim scholar he worked in the closest collaboration with friends from other religions to such an extent that any religious differences were not even visible. His closest

collaborator and friend was Sardar Ajit Singh, the elder uncle of Shahid Bhagat Singh and they together escaped to Iran when their arrest appeared to be on cards.

Sufi Ji continued his valiant efforts even from Iran. He even managed to start a newspaper there. However the British were on the lookout for him and finally found and arrested but not before he offered very valiant resistance, fighting with a revolver in his left hand. He was imprisoned in Sheeraj and died in his prison cell there.

Bharat Dogra

(Continued from Page 2)

years ago we came together and we shared innumerable experiences together in the dust and heat of the struggle for independence and in the long silence of prison life where we spent—I forget now—four or five years together at various places, and inevitably got to know each other intimately; and so, for many of us, it is a grievous loss and a grievous blow, even as it is a grievous loss for our country. There is the public sense of loss and there is the private sense of loss and a feeling that somebody of rare distinction has gone and it will be very difficult to find his like again.”

Remembering Acharya on his 127th birth anniversary, one regrets the state of political-intellectual scenario of today’s India. Our leaders, who were engaged in the freedom struggle were in comparison incomparably inspirational, and so insightful

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Rohingyas in Bangladesh**
Sandeep Pandey

Nehru for Our Time
Rajmohan Gandhi

Containing China?
D. K. Giri

**Demonetisation:
One Year Later**
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Supreme Court reopens Gandhi's Case

Kuldip Nayar

I think the Supreme Court's order to appoint an amicus curie in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is important. More about how it happened and why, are two points which needs pursued. The plea filed by Dr. Pankaj Phadnis, a trustee of Abhinav Bharat, however, suggests a foreign hand. But that remains to be proven.

I recall that the assassination was the biggest security lapse. I was working at the news desk of *Anjam*, an Urdu daily, when PTI teleprinter rang the bell which a news agency does only in rare cases. I jumped from the desk to see the story. It said, 'Mahatma Gandhi shot.' There was no other detail. I asked my colleague, who had a motorbike, to drop me at the Birla House where there was practically no security. One person manned an apology for the door.

Today, when Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is recalled with a sense of loss and sorrow, the point forgotten is that it was the biggest lapse of security. The government had ample evidence to infer that a radical Hindu group was out to kill the Mahatma. Yet very little security

was provided to counter the plot.

Only 48 hours earlier, Madan Lal of this radical group had placed a bomb at the back wall of Gandhiji's prayer meeting platform. I used to attend the prayer meeting. I was there on the day the blast took place. The Mahatma showed no concern and conducted prayers as if nothing had happened. I too thought that it must be a cracker. Only when I read the next day's newspapers did I realise how close was Gandhiji to death.

Sardar Patel was the Home Minister then. Following Gandhiji's murder, he submitted his resignation to admit his failure. But Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru told him that the Mahatma wanted both of them to build modern India. Later, even the ban on the RSS was lifted.

The Home Ministry at that time should have probed more to understand how deep the Hindu right had spread. Even Sardar Patel had remarked at that time that the RSS had created an 'atmosphere' where something like this could happen. When I joined the ministry in 1955

as Information Officer and served there for nearly 10 years, I tried to find some leads. There was not a shred of evidence to make me infer that the case was thoroughly probed. Or, maybe, there is something incriminating involving some persons in the government that the government does not want to disclose. The Archives of India has not yet got from the Home Ministry even the papers on 'Transfer of Power', which is also the title of the three-volume book brought out by the British within two or three years of their departure to tell their side of the story.

Soon after the Mahatma's assassination, when I reached the Birla House, I did not see anybody guarding the place where Gandhiji fell after having been shot. Some blood was on the path leading to the prayer platform. There was no policeman around to ensure the preservation of blood, important evidence.

Why has no government has gone back to those days to reconstruct events? I can understand the BJP's diffidence because its mentor, the RSS, did not want any probe even to begin with. But the Congress governments should have perhaps dug deeper.

The only piece of information is the trial and the judgment delivered by the then Punjab High Court at Simla. It is an open secret that some ladies of civil society knitted pullovers for Godse. The government, for reasons best known to it, has been reticent on these things.

The 132-year history of the Congress hardly brings out what the followers of Gandhiji went through after his assassination and what they

are going through today. The government looks at them with suspicion as if they are trying to oust the government. The power which the BJP wields is unchecked. In a democratic set up, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cornered all the power and rules the country by himself. The party pays lip sympathy to Gandhiji and puts up his photo at meetings and that too because it attracts votes. Even otherwise, the Mahatma hardly fits into the free market economy and the inequitable growth of today.

No doubt, the law and order machinery at that time bungled. But it is strange that no police officer of that time has left a plausible account of the events leading to the

assassination. It is true that a few Hindu extremists were arrested. Yet I believe that the plot was larger, involving scores of people in high places. The confession of Swami Aseemanand, connected with the Malegaon bomb blasts, has shown that the network of Hindu ultras was quite wide. So must have been the case when Gandhiji was shot dead.

Tushar Gandhi, who moved for the first time in the Apex Court, said he can explain his locus in the case and opposed the plea, saying there was no point in reopening of the case. The apex court, which has appointed a senior advocate as an amicus curiae in the matter, said it would wait for his report before going ahead with the case.

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Bangladeshis in India and Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Sandeep Pandey

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh says that Rohingyas in India are illegal immigrants not refugees. To justify his argument he says Rohingyas have not come to India by following proper procedure and making a formal application for seeking asylum. Now the entire world knows that Rohingyas had to flee Myanmar when they faced persecution there. Does Rajnath Singh expect them to go to the Indian Embassy in Myanmar or in Dhaka to make a formal application for seeking asylum when their priority is to keep their families together and somehow survive as they run away from the security of a home in Rakhine to an uncertain future. The Indian government wants to deport all of the 40,000 Rohingyas who're in India. However, it would be a violation of the principle of non-refoulement, i.e., not sending back refugees where they are unwelcome. But Rajnath Singh says that India not being a signatory to the UN Refugees Convention it would not violate any international law if it chose to deport Rohingyas to Myanmar. The Home Minister is trying to hide behind the veil of technicalities but is this response expected of a regional power aspiring to be a world leader? This is probably the first time in its long history when India is trying to shut its doors to a refugee or a visitor from abroad.

Irrespective of all evidence that they are extremely impoverished community the Indian government sees them as potential security threat. Earlier a similar apprehension

was expressed for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. Bangladeshis are also very poor. They come to seek jobs in India. Most Bangladeshis in north India are garbage collectors. Some of them sell black masala tea on court campuses. The people who used to traditionally do the garbage collection work are in better jobs or doing sanitation work in better paid jobs like regular government service. Hence Bangladeshis are not taking away the jobs of any Indians. They are doing work which no Indians want to do.

There are Indians migrating to Gulf and other countries of the world including the United States illegally in search of job. There are 5 lakh illegal Indian immigrants living in US alone. Indians have been migrating since ages. Initially when the system of passports and visas was not there it was not considered illegal to move from one part of the world to another. But slowly restrictions began to be placed on such movements. Suddenly some people found that they were illegal. For people who cannot get a passport made or obtain a visa from the country they wish to travel to, like in all other government departments there are middlemen, who can get the work done for a hefty fee. For example, if somebody from Gujarat wanted to go to US, the asking rate for preparing the required travel documents is about Rs. 20 lakhs.

Indians are settled in various corners of the world for several generations now. More enterprising

among them have ventured to assimilate themselves in local politics, have contested elections and even held high offices. Mahendra Chaudhry became Prime Minister of Fiji, Mauritius has had several Indian Presidents and PMs including the present one, Anerood Jugnauth, Trinidad and Tobago had Basdeo Pandey as its PM and former Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley is current US Ambassador to United Nations, to just name a few.

Question is how is an Indian illegally going to Gulf different from a Bangladeshi illegally coming to find work in India? Just because s(he) or the Rohingyas are Muslims is it correct to brand all of them as potential threats to India's security? There are more people living in India, some very influential, who pose greater threat to national security than these poor immigrants.

There is movement of workers within the country too. Workers from poorer states like UP, Bihar, Odisha, Chattisgarh migrate to better off states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab to find work. For Shiv Sena there is no difference between a Bangladeshi or a person from UP or Bihar who is seen as competitor with locals for odd jobs. Hence the issue is not that of nationality or religion alone.

The Bhartiya Janata Party Member of Parliament Varun Gandhi has rightly called for display of empathy towards Rohingya immigrants with a willingness to

grant them asylum after examining them case by case satisfying ourselves on security concerns. However, the rational suggestion of Varun Gandhi was countered with a question on his commitment to national interest by his own party's Minister. The atmosphere of nationalist jingoism created by the Hindutva brigade precludes the possibility of any meaningful discussion on any issue. The BJP sticks to its pre-decided stance on every matter with no scope for course correction. The arrogance of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh does not let them examine any alternative point of view.

The Indian government should try to convince government of Myanmar to accept the Rohingyas back. But unless Myanmar is ready for this it would be improper to push the Rohingyas back into their territory. As a regional leader India is expected to help Bangladesh deal with the current refugee crisis created there because of entry of over six lakh Rohingyas from Myanmar. It cannot simply wash its hands off any responsibility by merely sending some relief material there. Narendra Modi has the ambition of being remembered as a good PM. But he does not possess the statesman like quality which any great leader must exhibit. He visited Myanmar during the middle of crisis but didn't mention the issue of Rohingya is his interaction with Aung San Suu Kyi, who has now fallen from grace in the eyes of the world.

The Bangladeshis in India must be given a work permit without the citizenship status and Rohingyas must be given refugee status if India is to be seen as country with large heart.

Nehru for Our Time

Rajmohan Gandhi

The 17-year span, from 1947 to 1964, of Jawaharlal Nehru's premiership, took this writer from being an 11-year-old schoolboy to age 28. That youngster was cheeky enough, in his twenties, to find fault with some policies of "Panditji", which is how almost everyone then addressed a much-loved prime minister who had spent his life toiling for India's freedom.

In the late 1950s, I found it hard to understand how a lover of individual liberty like Nehru could overlook the Soviet state's oppressions. And although socialism, which Nehru was advocating, held an appeal for me, so did Rajaji's critique of the emerging licence-permit-quota raj over which, it seemed, Nehru was presiding.

However, an instinctive adulation dwarfed these critical reactions, and I was quite touched by the first serious conversation I had with Nehru. This took place in the late summer of 1963, in what everyone now knows as Teen Murti Bhavan, but what many then thought of, remembering pre-1947 times, as the British commander-in-chief's house.

Before this meeting, I had seen Panditji. But, to use the modern phrase, I had not met him one-on-one.

Here is why I had to meet him. Some of us planning an international Moral Re-Armament (MRA) event in Delhi tried to book Vigyan Bhavan for half a day in November 1963, but no one in any government office was

willing to say how we could go about it. Told eventually that only the prime minister could decide whether the prestigious venue could be rented by non-governmental persons, I sought an appointment and was lucky enough to get it.

Vimla Sindhi, remembered by many as the cheerful person receiving visitors at Teen Murti, greeted me. I was ushered into Panditji's presence. He was seated on a sofa in a ground floor room. I was offered a seat opposite his. Nehru was not only close to his 74th birthday but also unwell, impacted by the war the previous year with China. "Kahiye," he said to 28-year-old me.

I informed him of the reason for troubling him. He showed little surprise that India's Prime Minister had to decide whether the Vigyan Bhavan auditorium could be made available for a non-official event, asked me the date, wrote it down, said it was OK, and told me whom to contact.

The meeting lasted only a few minutes but I felt stirred as I left, struck by his state of health and his helpful response, about which I had not been confident for I was aware Nehru entertained reservations about MRA. Yet, I found him willing for the MRA event to be held in what perhaps was the capital's finest venue then.

When the event took place, attended by many (including Rajaji, a sharp Nehru critic then), Panditji

acceded to another request from me. This was for an appointment for Peter Howard, the British writer heading MRA.

When, accompanied by me, Howard called on him in his South Block office, Nehru seemed frail. He had to swallow a couple of pills while talking to us but seemed quite interested in what Howard had to say and also in photographs I showed of young Indians interested in a bid for, “a clean, strong and united India”.

Six months later, on May 27 1964, I was at a camp in the Nilgiris with numerous young Indians when word arrived of Nehru’s death. While conveying the news, I choked. Everyone felt bereaved.

More than 52 years later, persons like me are hurt by the false stories disseminated about that astonishing, if also human and flawed, figure whom millions loved and were proud of.

Crucially, Nehru’s ceaseless concern for the mind of India is missed. He wanted that mind to be innovative, rational and free. When a coercive call was made anywhere in the land, Nehru rose at once to denounce it. More than his 14 years in prison, his 55 years of tireless service, his accomplishments as prime minister for 17 years, it was his love of personal liberty that India needs to recall today.

And also his flair with words. Not many books stimulated a couple of Indian generations the way Nehru’s Autobiography and Discovery of India did. Few speeches were more affecting than “A tryst with destiny” or “The light has gone out”. Both were connected to a passion for personal liberty.

The world knows a state can coerce. Or elements in society can. A government may allow non-state intimidators to lead the way until the time is ripe for the government to coerce directly — or for the bullies to take over the government.

Today, we hear calls for silencing brave human rights activists, threats to ruin those who make films that include Pakistanis. Humiliating promises have been extracted. Policemen are glorified when they act against “bad” extremists but may

be prosecuted if they confront “good” extremists. Calls for transparency on alleged encounter killings are shouted down.

We are becoming a mirror image of our neighbour and can expect to see demands for newspapers, TV channels, films, schools and universities to exclude material unwelcome to vigilante groups.

Lovers of liberty should prepare themselves.

A Beloved Freedom Fighter, then a Reviled Nation-Builder: The Pain of being Nehru

Apoorvanand

Bhagat Singh, a 21-year-old revolutionary, writing in 1928 makes an interesting comparison between Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru. Describing Bose as a narrow, emotional nationalist, he advises the youth of Punjab to follow Nehru, a rational internationalist, as he alone could give them the right kind of intellectual nutrition. Nearly 90 years later, he would be censored by his followers for such retrograde views.

Bhagat Singh became a martyr symbolising eternal youth, Bose remains the ever-living guerrilla fighter and Gandhi, Nehru’s mentor, was killed by an independent India and elevated to sainthood. Nehru would outlive them all, moving past the romantic phase of nationalism to perform the prosaic task of state-making. His once-lovable face, which had attracted Amrita Sher-Gil for its sensitivity, was to suffer the blemishes of age. Disappointments and failures as an administrator were to further dent his image.

It is amusing that Nehru is singled out for every perceived abomination; Partition, Kashmir, illiteracy, the Hindu rate of growth, non-arrival of socialism, communalism, and, of course, dynastic succession. He is seen as an ambitious man who, by cunningly winning the Mahatma’s trust, deprived worthier leaders like Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad and J.P. Narayan of their due. They are, in popular imagination, the wronged.

H.Y. Sharda Prasad felt Nehru to be the most loved figure after Krishna in this land. The affair was not to last long. Once a heart-throb of the masses, prime minister Nehru created unease, especially in educated Indians. His insistence on not using force as a first resort to resolve conflict was seen as a sign of weakness. Hindus have not been able to forgive him for his idea of secularism and insisting on treating Muslims as equal citizens.

Nehru presided over the business of lawmaking, seeking to replace the communitarian conventions governing the lives of the people. It was bound to challenge their belief system and hurt them. There was no Gandhi to support him. The Congress, a party of Hindu patriarchs, wasn't convinced of his scientific-rationalist outlook and refused to play the role of social educator. He had little help from the Communists, who faulted him for not being revolutionary enough. JP, who held a special place in the hearts of the masses, refused his invitation to play a role in this transformatory, post-romantic nation-building process. Ram Manohar Lohia, once his favourite, turned into an eternal rebel. Ambedkar did work with him for a while but, in the face of stiff resistance from Parliament on the Hindu Code Bill, gave up. Faced with the prospect of a long-drawn battle with a conservative Hindu society, Ambedkar took his followers to Buddhism, a religion, and turned into a god himself. Nehru's scientific-rationalist views and training didn't permit such easy ways out.

Rajni Kothari, writing in 1964, recognised the enormity and complexity of the task history had bequeathed to Nehru. Nehru, wrote Kothari, "taught leaders the art of managing men and institutions and based political solidarity on the complex mechanics of secular relationships rather than on neat notation of sacrifices and transcendental nationalism".

It required patience, perseverance and hope in the human capacity to communicate and reform, to be able to survive the tardiness of this process. There was also a need to overcome the neat divide of Left

and Right and create an ideological consensus in society to enlarge the spaces of shared life. The educated classes of India, who benefited most from his institution-building process, did not subscribe to the scientific and rationalist philosophy behind it. They insulated their lives from his cries. He was seen as someone who wanted, using his unassailable authority, to deprive them of sacredness and sever their ties with the religious past which gave them security.

In an era of identity politics and militant nationalism, only those who

fit into the neat categories of predefined identities can aspire to be icons. Only natural that Nehru, an ambiguous figure, homesick in the West but alien and lonely in his own land, born a Brahmin but seen as half-Christian, half-Muslim, a warrior against colonialism but no English-hater, a leader of the nationalist movement but no nationalist, is now nobody's child.

Nehru warned Richard Attenborough not to deify Gandhi in his film. He paid heed. We didn't. We judge Nehru as a fallible being. Would he hold a grudge ?

SM Joshi Socialist Foundation and Lokayat in association with other Progressive Groups of Pune Launch Campaign to Raise People's Understanding About the Indian Constitution October 28 to November 26 (Samvidhaan Divas)

At the initiative of SM Joshi Socialist Foundation and Lokayat, a meeting of some progressive groups of Pune was organised on October 11, 2017 wherein it was decided to launch a campaign to raise the awareness of people, especially the youth and students, on the Indian Constitution. This is to debunk the false nationalism being propagated by the BJP-RSS, which have reduced nationalism to shouting slogans like 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and putting up large size national flags in Universities and calling all critics of the government as anti-nationals. The various groups decided to form a forum called Samvidhaan Jagar Abhiyaan Samiti and campaign amongst people that true nationalism, love for the nation, means loving the people of the country and upholding the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

In this context, they decided to focus on two issues:

- 1) Making people aware of what the Constitution expects from the people, which is outlined in Article 51A that talks of Constitutional duties—including rising above religion, caste and region and loving all the people of the country, cherishing the syncretic culture of the country, upholding the spirit of the freedom struggle, renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women, and so on.
- 2) Making people aware of the desire of the founding fathers of the nation regarding the orientation of economic policies that future governments should pursue. This is outlined in the

Directive Principles of the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar made it very clear in his speeches on the floor of the Constitutional Assembly that the Directive Principles are to be fundamental to governance for all future governments, and that they must strive to implement their spirit. This includes striving to make available education, healthcare, nutrition and decent employment to all people of the country.

Loving the nation essentially means striving to fulfill these desires of the nation's founding fathers, and upholding the values propounded in the Constitutional duties section of the Constitution.

The meeting was attended by representatives of several groups. The attendees included Subhash Ware, Haji Nadaf, Vithal Gaekwad, Milind Deshmukh, Nandini Jadhav, Ibrahim Khan, Shamsuddin Tamboli, Adv. Santosh Mhaske, Neeraj Jain, and several student representatives of different groups.

The campaign will include rallies in different parts of the city, programs in various slums to educate people about the Constitution, campaigns, distribution of pamphlets and booklets, street play and songs, etc.

The inaugural rally was organised on October 28 in Tadiwala road area. It was a huge success, with more than 300 people participating in the rally. The next rally was organised in Gokhale Nagar – Wadarwadi area bastis on November 4, in the form of a Samvidhaan Dindi. Rallies will also be organised in Hadapsar area

(Continued on Page 11)

Press Release

Chandrasekhar should be released: Socialist Party (India)

The Socialist Party (India) [SPI(I)] demands immediate release of Chandrasekhar Azad 'Ravan', Bhim Army chief, from prison and removal of National Security Act (NSA) imposed on him. Chandrasekhar is lodged in Saharanpur jail from 9 June 2017. He is an accused in four cases of inciting violence and property damage during the incident at Saharanpur Dehat Kotwali on 9 May 2017. The Allahabad High Court ordered his release on bail on 2 November 2017 in all the four cases. But the next day after the bail orders of the Allahabad High Court, the Uttar Pradesh Government imposed NSA on him. While ordering Chandrasekhar to be released on bail, the High Court has admitted that the cases filed against him are politically motivated. But the Uttar Pradesh government has imposed NSA on Chandrasekhar, ignoring the remarks of the court. According to this draconian law, he cannot come out of jail for a year. The government has decided to slap NSA on Chandrasekhar to keep him in detention. This shows that the present Uttar Pradesh government has no faith in the justice system and citizen rights.

SP(I) believes that the decision to impose the NSA on Chandrasekhar is entirely motivated by political reasons. Since Chandrasekhar has been granted bail by the High Court, he should be released from jail immediately, and the NSA imposed on him should be removed.

The National Security Act, enacted in 1980, is a gross violation of the civil rights granted by the Constitution. Governments have repeatedly abused this law. It has now also been misused in the case of Chandrasekhar. Socialist Party (India) urges the central government to repeal the NSA.

SP(I) is ready to extend legal help to Chandrasekhar in this matter. If the activists of Bhim Army wish so, then a senior member of SP(I), Justice Rajindar Sachar, will fight his case in the Allahabad High Court with the support of Senior Advocate Ravikiran Jain.

Janki Prasad Gaur

President

Socialist Party (India) Uttar Pradesh

Containing China?

D. K. Giri

“China rises to Conquer” was the catchphrase that echoed around the world, mainly in Asia, after Xi Jinping became the exalted leader of the Communist Party of China at the 19th Congress last month. Buoyed by nationalism and capitalism, twin pillars of Xi’s ideology, China aspires for a world role. It seeks to fill the spot vacated by the US that looks more inward, and withdraws from positions of influence. Beijing’s strategic thinking is, in the absence of US backing, its neighbours would take an accommodative stance. China is putting this thinking into test by means of both inducements and pressure.

As the investments from Japan and the western countries dwindle, China is stepping into extending loan or investment to the developing countries, mainly in the Asia. Nepalese Ambassador to India Deep Upadhyay said in a seminar: “we have kith-and-kin relation with India, but we would like tap the surplus money that China has.”

India faces the brunt of Chinese world ambition, and its jealousy as a competitor in Asia. Beijing wants to scuttle India’s regional and global rise. For the fourth time, it has blocked India, the US and other countries’ bid to list the mastermind of Pathankot terror attack Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. It plans to build Pakistan at par with India. The China-Pakistan axis is precisely meant to stem India, in Asia’s new geo-politics. Some observers in both these countries would say that their friendship is “deeper than the ocean,

and taller than the mountains”. These are, of course, political hyperboles, there are no permanent friends or foes in international politics, it is the national interest that guides relations.

On the other hand, China is abrasive in diplomacy, not making any sacrifices to install itself in the leadership position. It should open its markets, take a magnanimous position on territorial disputes, be firm with volatile leadership of North Korea and so on. The economic and security concerns vis-à-vis Beijing have not abated. Therefore, India should prepare itself economically, militarily and diplomatically for a long-term rivalry with it.

How is New Delhi preparing to deal with Beijing? Two current initiatives merit mention in this context. One is the recent visit of Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck last week with his wife queen and one-year-old crown prince. The visit was significant for at least two reasons. It followed the 73-day Doklam standoff between Indian and Chinese armies. Second, Thimpu is New Delhi’s close friend. India is Bhutan’s largest trading partner, 82% of Bhutan’s total imports are accounted for by India and 90% of its exports come to India.

Prime Minister Modi, after assuming office, chose Bhutan to be his first visit abroad. Bhutan does not have diplomatic contact with China. But Beijing wants to bypass New Delhi, in dealing with Thimpu. New Delhi will want to thwart this

maneuver, hosted the king to review the ‘whole gamut of relations’, and to discuss preparation for the golden jubilee celebration of diplomatic ties in 2018.

New Delhi has two other projects with Bhutan, one strategic, and the other economic. It has mooted the idea of BIMSTEC – Bay of Bengal initiative for multi-sectoral, technical and economic co-operation. This project is conceived as an alternative to SAARC, which is defunct owing to irreconcilable differences between India and Pakistan on cross-border terrorism etc.

Bhutan is the key partner in this initiative. BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These countries constitute 21% of the world population, totaling 1.5 billion people, and have the GDP of \$2.5 trillion. The second is to tap into the huge potential of hydel power in Bhutan.

After India’s flip-flop on Tibet under Nehru, Bhutan remains the buffer between the Asian two big powers, hence becoming the key to India’s China strategy. Let us recall that Tibet was kept as a buffer between India and China by the British, but Nehru gave away all our influence on it, without reciprocal guarantees from Beijing. Now, New Delhi considers Tibetans as a State-in-exile, where as Beijing treats Tibet as one of its provinces. India’s support to and perception of Tibet is like crying over spilt milk. Be that as it may, New Delhi cannot afford to

equivocate or fumble on Bhutan, and must avoid repeating the blunder.

The other grand strategy New Delhi is contemplating is in fact, the brainchild of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who just won a landslide victory to run the fourth term in office. This is the policy of Quadrilateralism involving Japan, US, India and Australia. The project was conceived in 2007, but got aborted next year as Australia developed cold feet not to antagonise China. After the resounding victory in the elections, and in the wake of North Korean missile threat, backed tacitly by China, Abe has revived the project, and other three countries have responded positively.

This is Abe's pet project in Asian Multilateralism. Obviously, China's unilateralism and expansionism drive makes other Asian powers to band together. In an interview, Japanese foreign minister said, "Japan will propose a top-level dialogue with the US, India, and Australia to promote free-trade and defence cooperation across Indian Ocean, from South China Sea to Africa." Japan would like to see deep and substantive cooperation among the four on defence, maritime security and infrastructure development. In 2007, Abe had foreseen an "arc of freedom and prosperity along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent."

The 'Quad', a broader Asian network will allow the free flow of people, goods, capital and knowledge. Its principle is shared and established only the purpose and process have to evolve. For the US since Obama Administration, they withdrew from the G-2 joint leadership with China, and wanted to install India as a pivot to their Asia strategy. For New Delhi, it is an

extension of joint military exercise called "Exercise Malabar". It was initially between US and India, Japan later joined as a permanent member; Australia and Singapore also have sent their warships. China calls Quad the Asian 'NATO'.

In response to Tokyo's revived initiative on 'Quad', India, unlike in the past, has responded readily. The closer India-Japan relation, what I call Japindia vs Chinpak has helped the new initiative progress fast. New Delhi has stated unambiguously that it will be open to any move that aligns with India's interest and promotes its view point. Although Japindia predate NaMo, he has added greater depth and substance. Tokyo would like to look beyond the US, and India beyond non-alignment. Unlike in the past, New Delhi is ready to embark on any complex geo-political jousting in Asia in order to advance its interest. However, Anthony Yazaki, an expert on India-Japan relations, comments, "for India, embracing Japan is work in progress". But, it is on the right track.

On containing China, New Delhi can out manoeuvre Beijing. Admittedly, India, as of now, does not have the financial wherewithal to compete in a like-for-like fashion, observed Andrew Small, of German Marshall Fund, an expert of China, US and Pakistan relations. In South-Asia India, does not have outside partners to contain China, China is making forays into South Asia. The OBOR – One Belt-One-Road, the biggest Chinese power game, is not met with any collective response. 'Quad' may provide one.

Significantly, India is embedded in a network of strategic relationships, unlike China, which will surely, have an edge. That is precisely Beijing's

concern. This is a great departure from India's policy of non-alignment in the past. Foreign policy experts continue to debate if non-alignment was a viable policy. In an interdependent world, staying neutral or non-aligned is not an option. India has paid a heavy price for doing so. Its defence budget staggeringly shot up taking away the critical funds needed for its development projects. At any rate, all that is behind us now.

Finally, India could play the Chinese game. China took Japanese and Western investment, by offering its cheap labour, India could do the same. China promises \$85 billion investment in India. So, for India, it need not be a zero-sum geo-politics with China. India could manoeuvre some of the development accruing out of China's wealth to India's advantage.

At the end of the day, all these boil down to deft diplomacy. Abe said after his election victory, "strong support at home, helps one pursue bold policy abroad." Can NaMo say the same after De Mo, GST clutter, and religious vigilantism etc ?

Madhu Dandavate

By

B. Vivekanandan

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As the Guru so the Disciple

Sankara Narayanan

While speaking at Diwali-Milan function organised at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on October 28, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a veiled warning to his own party men said the BJP is speaking in different voices.

He called for a debate on internal democracy in political parties, asserting that the growth of 'true democratic spirit' within them is necessary for the country's future. But how he had responded to even the very mild critical views of his party's elected representatives and cadre on demonetisation and GST was also widely reported in the media. Dissenting opinions of senior leaders like Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie were ridiculed as the frustrated voices of job aspirants @80. That is the real face of the 'true democratic spirit' of the Modi sarkar and the BJP.

Modi pointed out that funding of political parties is often debated but not their values, ideology, internal democracy and how they give opportunities to the new generation of leaders. But funding of political parties is no less important than their values, ideology and internal democracy. He is on a weak wicket in the case of funding received by his party, and hence the deliberate diversion. How he has given opportunities to the new generation of leaders is well exhibited in the post-Modi era in Gujarat, where leaders of taluka-level calibre have been entrusted with the state's administration.

The country, he said, is not much aware of the practice of democracy within parties and the media should turn its attention to it. He added, 'Whether democratic values are a part of their (parties') core values or not, should be debated widely. . . . I believe the development of a true democratic spirit within political parties is necessary not only for the country's future but also for democracy.'" Shourie's ridicule that BJP government is a government of 2.5 persons (Modi, Amit Shah and an in house lawyer) reveals much about the true democracy prevailing under Modi. Standard Operating Procedure of the Modi sarkar, according to Shourie, is to abuse its critics.

Modi lamented that there are many voices within the BJP. He noted that earlier, when it was a small organisation, and even during the times of Jana Sangh, its forerunner, there used to be 'ideological harmony' from its central leadership down to workers in the bottom rung. The party's expansion might be a reason behind divergent views, he said.

Modi's statement that the development of a true democratic spirit within political parties is necessary not only for the country's future but also for democracy, and his distaste over many voices within the BJP, do not go together. When internal discussions are choked, the dissent bursts out in different forms to reach the public. Should there be complete unanimity of views within the party?

Barring the core ideology, divergent views about a party's policies and programmes are very normal. Even the core ideology changes with time. Party issues are public issues and they need to be discussed publicly. To expect complete unanimity is undemocratic and it amounts to regimentation. Though all political parties dislike differing views within them, BJP is a class by itself in this respect because of its regimented upbringing.

The most prominent ideologue of the RSS, Guru Golwalkar, while addressing a gathering of top ranking RSS leaders on March 16, 1954, at Sindi, Wardha, said, "If we say that we are part of the organisation and accept its discipline, then selectiveness has no place in life. Do what is told. If told to play kabaddi, play kabaddi; if told to hold meeting, then hold meeting. . . . For instance some of our friends were told to go and work for politics. That does not mean that they have great interest or inspiration for it. They don't die for politics like fish without water. If they are told to withdraw from politics then also there is no objection. **Their discretion is just not required.**" (Shri Guruji Samagra Darshan or SGSD, Vol III, p. 32)

In another significant statement, Golwalkar said, "We know that some of our Swayamsevaks work in politics. There they have to organise, according to the needs of work, public meetings, processions etc., have to raise slogans. All these things have no place in our work.

However, like the character in a play, whatever role has been assigned should be portrayed with best of capability. But sometimes Swayamsevaks go beyond the role assigned to a performer (*nat*) as they develop over-zealousness in their hearts, to the extent that they become useless for this work. This is not good.” (SGSD, Vol IV, pp. 4-5)

Golwalkar while addressing a group of 1,350 top level cadres of the RSS in 1940 stated: “RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land.” (SGSD Vol I, p. 11). This decree of ‘one flag, one leader and one ideology’ was also the battle cry of fascist and Nazi parties of Europe in the first half of 20th century. What they did to democracy is well-known to this world.

We find here Golwalkar referring to the Swayamsevaks loaned to the political satellite as *nats* who are meant to dance to the tune of the RSS. It should be noted here that the above plan of Golwalkar of controlling the political arm was elaborated in March 1960, almost nine years after the establishment of the Jana Sangh (the forerunner of the BJP) in 1951. If the leaders of Jana Sangh/BJP are supposed to be ‘nats’, just imagine the plight of the party’s cadre! The naked truth is that RSS makes its cadres spineless. As a pracharak of the Sangh and a disciple of Guru Golwalkar, Modi has dutifully converted the government and the party into spineless *nats*.

In a democratic form of state, the government comes first, the organisation or the party next, and the leader comes last. But in Modi’s

dispensation, all the three are rolled into one entity—Modi. Strangely, while he and his government are not accountable to the party, the party is answerable to him. And his government is answerable to an unconstitutional authority headquartered in Nagpur. He, his party and the government are mere performers. Yet, he audaciously gives a grandiose lecture on true

(Continued from Page 7)

on November 11, and Ambedkar Nagar basti on November. The concluding program will take place on November 26 at SM Joshi Socialist Foundation Auditorium.

The organisers plan to take this campaign to all over Maharashtra. A daylong workshop was organised on November 5 for activists at SM Joshi Socialist Foundation to advance their understanding of the issues

democratic spirit and inner party democracy.

Reference:

Shamsul Islam, “An Open Letter to the ‘Hindu Nationalist’, Narendra Damodardas Modi Ji, Chief Minister of Gujarat”, <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv19n2/letter.htm>.

related to the campaign. Subhash Ware and Neeraj Jain were the main speakers at the workshop, in which more than 80 activists from all over Western Maharashtra participated.

This is the first phase of the campaign. The second phase will take place from November 26 to January 26, the details of which will be worked out as this present campaign advances.

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Demonetisation: One Year Later

Neeraj Jain

Those who take the meat from the table, Teach contentment.

Those for whom the contribution is destined, Demand sacrifice.

Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry, Of wonderful times to come.

Those who lead the country into the abyss, Call ruling too difficult

For ordinary men.

– *Bertolt Brecht*

Exactly a year ago, in a televised address on November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations would no longer be legal tender from midnight that night. The Prime Minister stated that this step was being taken to curb counterfeiting and funding of terrorism with fake notes, and most importantly, to crack down on black money in the country.

The total currency in circulation in the country at that time was around Rs 17.9 lakh crore. Of this, around 86%, or around Rs 15.44 lakh crore, was in Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes. This meant that till the government replaced the abolished currency with new currency notes, the economy would have to make do with 14% of the currency has to serve the task of the whole. Even though the Prime Minister claimed that the step was being planned for more than nine months,¹ the monumental inefficiency of the Modi Government becomes evident from the fact that it had made no advance preparations for quick replacement of the old notes with new notes. According to a newsreport that

quoted former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and also a former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor, even if the government printed note for note, given the capacity of the four currency note printing presses in the country, it would take at least six to seven months for these printing presses to print new notes to replace all the scrapped notes.² Once printed, the notes had to sent to the remotest corners of the country—5,93,731 inhabited villages, 4,041 towns, 3,894 census towns and 1,456 urban patches.³

The sudden move without adequate preparation for its consequences led to chaos across the country. People were first forced to queue up outside banks for hours to exchange/deposit their old notes. After that, they had to stand outside banks almost daily in long queues to withdraw their money, because the banks were short of cash and were permitting people to withdraw only Rs 2,000–4,000 at a time. The worst hit were the daily wage workers, as they had to forgo a day's wages in order to stand in the queues. It took several months for the cash crunch to ease. By then, around 120 people had died of exhaustion waiting in these queues.

The Modi Government claims that all these travails faced by the people were a small sacrifice for the gains of demonetisation. The BJP in fact made demonetisation a key poll plank during the UP Assembly elections, claiming it to be a 'pro-poor' move that showed the resolve

of the government to fight black money and corruption. Many people believed these claims, and the BJP won the state elections with an unprecedented majority. On the first anniversary of demonetisation (November 8, 2017), the BJP has announced plans to commemorate it as 'anti-Black Money Day'.

EXAMINING GOVERNMENT CLAIMS

Let us examine the claims of the government about the benefits of demonetisation one by one.

i) Will It Overcome the Problem of Terrorist Financing and Curb Terrorism?

Terrorists need financing. Modi and Jaitley argued that demonetisation would curb terror funding by eliminating fake notes circulating in the economy, and thus help reduce incidents of terrorism.

What has happened on the ground, one year later? Data from 10 months before the note-ban (January-November 2016) and the 10 months after shows a 38% rise in the number of terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir. The number of security personnel killed has risen by 2%.⁴ Clearly then, demonetisation has not helped curb terrorism in any way.

A simple analysis reveals that this was only to be expected. Terrorists use both banking channels and fake notes. The major part of their financing is done through banking channels, using various innovative techniques. That cannot be curbed

by demonetisation. And so far as fake notes are concerned, to the extent that terrorism is financed from abroad, state actors are involved in printing these fake notes. They have sophisticated facilities to print fake notes. They can easily duplicate the new notes too, and they did it within days! The Indian Army recovered fake Rs 2,000 notes from two terrorists killed in Bandipore district of Jammu and Kashmir, less than a fortnight after they came into circulation.⁵

ii) Has It Overcome the Problem of Counterfeit Notes?

The RBI in its annual report released in August 2017 says that Rs 43 crore of fake notes were detected in fiscal 2017. This includes notes of all denominations.⁶ That is a negligible amount. And when compared to the total value of currency in circulation, Rs 17.9 lakh crore, it becomes even more negligible—only 0.002%.

This is not unexpected; it is in tune with previous figures. For fiscal 2015-16, RBI data show that the total value of fake notes was Rs 29.64 crore, which was 0.0018% of the Rs 16.41 lakh crore currency in circulation.⁷

Was it worth giving citizens so much trouble in order to eliminate such a small amount of fake currency? And as the RBI itself admits, the new notes are being faked too, the above figure includes fake Rs 2,000 notes too.

Just to mention in passing, the problem of fake notes is a global phenomenon. In the USA also, there are a large amount of fake dollars in circulation; the dollar is in fact among the most counterfeited currencies in

the world.⁸ But for all his idiosyncracies, Trump has never even suggested demonetisation as a way of tackling it.

iii) Has it Significantly Curbed the Black Economy?

Both Modi and Jaitley have repeatedly claimed that demonetisation was an attack on the black economy. As mentioned earlier, the BJP is in fact commemorating the first anniversary of demonetisation as ‘anti-Black Money Day’. But figures released by the RBI belie their claim. The annual report of the RBI released on August 30, 2017 reveals that nearly Rs 15.28 lakh crore of the Rs 15.44 crore sucked out of circulation by demonetisation had returned to the banking system.⁹ That is, only Rs 0.16 lakh crore, or 1% of the total currency circulating in the economy had not come back. This was the total black cash that the government has been able to wipe out by this ‘historic’ measure.

That 99% of the demonetised currency had found its way back to the RBI has actually been an open secret for quite some time. An article published in the eminent journal *Economic and Political Weekly* had shown, based on RBI data, that 98.8% of Rs 15.44 lakh crore had come back by January 13, 2017.¹⁰ The RBI delayed acknowledging this for so long, to avoid embarrassment to its masters.

RBI data thus prove, beyond doubt, that demonetisation has completely failed in making a dent on the black economy. Official data themselves prove that Modi’s and BJP’s claims about demonetisation are nothing but bluster. The government has failed in achieving

its third, and most important, objective of demonetisation too.

There is actually nothing surprising in this. Several pro-people economists such as Professor Arun Kumar had shown, immediately after the demonetisation announcement, that this was no way of curbing the black economy, and it would end in a complete failure. We had also made the same prediction in our booklet, *Demonetisation: Yet Another Fraud on the People*, published in January 2017.¹¹ All these predictions and analyses have been borne out. We summarise these analyses below.

Why Demonetisation was Destined to be a Failure

People think that black money means bundles of notes tucked away in suitcases or pillows or lockers. That is not the case. Then what is black money? For this, it is important to understand the difference between three terms: black money, black income and black wealth. All three are different, and together comprise what can be called the ‘black economy’. People mix up these terms, and use them interchangeably.

First you earn income; out of this, you consume one part, and save the rest. This saving you invest in various assets. That gives you your wealth. Wealth is held as a portfolio—you can invest it in real estate, gold, share market, etc. or hold it as cash. Thus, cash is only one component of your wealth, and a very small part of it.

Coming to the black economy, here, first, black income is generated through a whole range of activities. These activities can be entirely

illegal, such as the drugs trade, or the manufacture of fake medicines, or the arms trade, and so on. Or they can be activities which are completely legal, but are undeclared (either wholly or in part), as people want to avoid taxes. These can include: under-reporting of income by doctors or lawyers to save taxes; under-reporting of profits by industrialists by means such as overstating costs (for example, by showing purchase of raw material at higher than actual prices) or understating production; and under-invoicing and over-invoicing in international trade.

It is not the case that only black activity or black business is carried out with cash, and white or normal activity is carried out by cheque or credit card or other such means. Normal business also requires cash. So, normal cash holding and black cash holding are not two different things. One may ask: that may be so, but is it not that black business is more dependent on cash transactions than white? The answer to this also is no. In both black and white business, cash is held for shorter or longer period, and then thrown into circulation, and this is equally so for both types of business. Therefore, if currency is demonetised, both white and black cash holdings are affected, and both are equally affected.

To put the same argument in another way, black businessmen are as much capitalists as white businessmen. It is only misers who hoard money; capitalists believe in investing money to earn more money. And so, black money holders, like white money holders, also try to expand their business by investing their black money/income. Therefore, just like white money

holders, black money holders also will be holding only a small fraction of their total income in cash at any point of time.

The point we are trying to make is, only a part of the black income is held as cash. Most black money holders invest their incomes in assets, which yield returns, such as buying land or shares with it, or sending it abroad through various means. A *Hindustan Times* report of last year gave several arguments to show that black money hoarders keep very little of their earnings in cash. It in fact quoted a finance ministry official as saying that ill-gotten wealth mostly enters the formal economic system through real estate and shell companies.¹²

The part of *black income* that is kept in cash is what is actually *black money*, while that invested in assets is *black wealth*. Demonetisation at the most affects black money; it does not affect black income generation, nor does it affect black wealth one tiny bit.

Let us consider a concrete example of black income generation to understand this in greater detail. An especially important sector where black incomes are generated, and where black incomes are invested in a big way, is real estate. Funds are taken out of the country through various illegal means such as hawala channels, or over-invoicing of imports, or under-invoicing of exports, or transfer pricing. They are then brought back into the country as foreign investment or FDI (this is known as “round-tripping”) through channels such as the infamous Mauritius route. In this, sham corporations are registered in Mauritius, through which funds are routed into India,

often through a mechanism called P-notes (participatory notes, where the ultimate investor is not identified to the Indian market regulator SEBI). The earnings on such investments are not taxed in India because India and Mauritius have a double tax-avoidance treaty (according to which a Mauritian entity investing in India does not have to pay capital gains tax in India, and only pays taxes in Mauritius), while at the same time the investors pay little or no taxes in Mauritius too because of the tax structure there. The amendments to the Indo-Mauritius Treaty done in May 2016 will not have much of an impact on this “round-tripping” of funds, as firstly, P-notes are exempted from this amendment, and secondly, there are other routes available through which such funds can be routed into India without attracting much tax, such as through Netherlands.¹³ FDI flows into the real estate sector have zoomed in recent years—between 2005 and 2010, FDI in India’s real estate and housing market jumped 80 times. In 2010, nearly \$5,700 million of foreign funds were invested in this sector. It is this infusion of black money into real estate that has contributed to the sharp and sustained rise in land prices, making housing unaffordable for an overwhelming majority of Indians.¹⁴

We have discussed the round-tripping of black money in some detail to explain how a major part of black incomes is invested via phoney legal means, through banking channels. Such black incomes would not be affected by demonetisation. That will only be curbed if the government takes steps to curb the illegal parking of funds abroad, and its round-trip back to India.

Estimating the Size of the Black Economy

Let us now try to make an estimate of the size of the black economy in India. This is not an easy exercise. Estimates of the black income generated every year vary from 25% to 75% of GDP.¹⁵ An authoritative analysis has been made by Prof. Arun Kumar, an eminent economist who was Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He estimates the black income generation in India to be 62% of GDP. This is fairly close to the estimate made by a report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy in 2014 that estimated domestic black money as being equal to 70% of GDP.¹⁶ The GDP for 2016–17 is estimated at Rs 150 lakh crore, so 62% of that would be roughly Rs 93 lakh crore. This then is the size of the black income that was generated in the economy in the year 2016-17. Black wealth would be several times this amount, as it has been accumulating over the years. Even assuming a low figure of say five times, this means black wealth would be around Rs 500 lakh crore.

Let us now make an estimate of the black money in circulation as cash in the economy. It is this ‘black cash’ that the government attempted to demobilise by demonetisation. The Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation in the economy totalled Rs 15.44 lakh crore. But not all the notes in circulation are a part of the black economy. Thus, for instance, a significant proportion of our GDP—around half, according to CSO estimates—is produced in the informal sector, and around 85% of the population relies on it.¹⁷ While

the incomes in this sector are mostly unrecorded, the dominant part of this is not ‘black’. It is true that the incomes in this sector do not fall into the direct tax net, but then in any case these incomes are too small to pay direct taxes; on the other hand, due to the tax structure of the Indian economy which collects more revenue from indirect taxes rather than direct taxes (70:30), they anyway are subject to indirect taxes.¹⁸ In this sector come the income of farmers and small traders and daily wage workers and small

service providers and other such sections of the population. Most of the transactions in this sector are in cash. Apart from this informal sector, a significant portion of the cash in the economy is in businesses, like petrol pumps, railway stations, airports, etc., and this too is not black. Therefore, of the total currency in circulation, assuming that half was in the informal sector, and of the remaining, at least 50–60% was in businesses as legal currency, that means just around Rs 3 lakh crore would be black money.¹⁹

Table: Estimating Black Money in the Economy

Total GDP of India in 2016	~ Rs 150 lakh crore
Estimated size of Black Economy	62% of GDP
Total amount of Black Income generated every year	Rs 93 lakh crore
Total value of Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes (1)	Rs 15.44 lakh crore
Legal currency in circulation in informal economy (2)	~ 50% of (1)
Legal currency in the formal sector (3)	25–30% of (1)
Estimated Black Money in circulation in economy (1–2–3)	20–25% of (1)
Total value of Black Money demonetised	$20 \times 15.44 / 100 =$ ~ Rs 3 lakh crore
Black Money as % of Black Income generated every year	$3 / 93 \times 100 = 3.2\%$

This is the maximum amount that the government was seeking to wipe out by demonetisation—Rs 3 lakh crore. But this amount is just 3% of the total black income that would have been generated in the economy in fiscal 2016-17 (Rs 93 lakh crore), and 0.6% of the black wealth (assuming black wealth to be a low Rs 500 lakh crore). Even if the government had been fully successful in eliminating this Rs 3 lakh crore of black money, it would have eliminated only a very small

fraction of the total black income generated in the economy in 2016-17, and an even smaller fraction of the black wealth.

The most fatuous thing about the demonetisation exercise of the Modi Government is that the government has taken no steps to attack the black income generation in the economy or the black wealth accumulated in the economy over the years.

(To be concluded)

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Later**
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The Indo-China Baiting Game

Kuldip Nayar

This is a familiar exercise. China resents India's rule over Arunachal Pradesh. New Delhi, on the other hand, ignores the protests and treats the Northeast territory its own. Beijing has been irked by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitaraman's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. The noise was, however, louder when the Dalai Lama went there earlier.

China and India have seldom agreed on where the actual border line lies. Beijing attacked India in 1962 when New Delhi tried to get back its territory. However, this time India showed its muscles with the stand-off at Doklam. China had to withdraw its forces behind the present border. Prime Minister Narendra Modi for BRICS in September after the face-off, did reduce tension.

The positive side of the trip is the reiteration by the two countries to fight against terrorists. But here too Beijing elucidated its own. It has again renewed the proposed UN resolution which sought to put a ban on Azar Masood, a well known terrorist. He could not be punished. The friendship of China and

Pakistan is only getting stronger to the concern of New Delhi. Not long ago, Beijing had begun stapling visas of Indians visiting Arunachal. China wanted to indicate that it was a "separate territory" not part of India.

New Delhi bore the humiliation quietly. In the past was China had accepted without demur the maps showing Arunachal Pradesh as India's territory. To recall the dispute, is over a small territory lying between Arunachal and China's border. The status of Arunachal Pradesh has been seldom questioned.

Tibet for China is like India's Kashmir which too has raised the standard of independence. There is, however, one difference: the Dalai Lama is willing to accept an autonomous status within China. Kashmir today wants independence.

Maybe, the Kashmiris will come round to accept a similar status one day. The problem is so complicated that a minor change can lead to a major catastrophe. It is not worth risking.

I have visited Bomdila Pass from where the Dalai Lama entered India to seek asylum. His land, Tibet, had been occupied by China, which also has destroyed the Tibetans culture. The Chinese have imposed communism and shown no respect for either Dalai Lama or his monastery.

The Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh has brought back the memories of the days before the Chinese annexed Tibet. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, did not raise any objection at that time because he was on personal terms with Chinese Premier Chou-En Lai. It is another story that he betrayed Nehru and attacked India. It occupied thousands of kilometres of India. It has shown no intention to vacate it.

Tibet is another story of betrayal. True, it was under the suzerainty of Beijing but the autonomy of Tibet was considered unviable. Suzerainty means a government exercising political control over a dependent state. Suzerainty does not mean absorption. Tibet was not even a part of China when India agreed to its suzerainty of China. Beijing betrayed Nehru again when it made the Dalai Lama's stay at Lhasa impossible. The biggest betrayal was when China attacked India eight years later, in 1962.

The Dalai Lama's visit may not have raised doubts about Tibet but it renewed the debate of its annexation by Beijing once again. China called his visit a "provocation". It's warning to India that the Dalai Lama's visit would affect the normal relations between the two countries. It intensified with Doklam. Yet, India managed to hold its own.

In fact, China's problems with India have roots in the British demarcation of the India-China border. China refuses to acknowledge the MacMahon Line that demarcates Arunachal Pradesh to be a part of India. Any activity that takes place in this area is viewed by China skeptically.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to the "disputed" territory despite Chinese protest showed that New Delhi was prepared for hostilities if it comes to that pass. Then, the Indian soldiers did not have shoes for a mountain combat. India is now a power to reckon with.

It looks as if China would go on provoking India to exhaust its patience. When war is ruled out this is the only option China has. How to retaliate, without resorting to hostilities is the situation India faces.

Beijing is trying to revive the India-China Bhai Bhai scenario. New Delhi cannot trust Beijing,

particularly when it is trying to encircle India. China has given a big loan to Nepal. The port which Sri Lanka is building is at the behest of China.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is happy that China is trying to placate her. All should realize that India is no push over now. Apart from war, India has many options. Taiwan is a trump card. It can revive the debate on two Chinas.

The question of terrorism is always there. Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed with a Chinese leader that they share common concern over terrorism. A portion of Muslim population living in China is beginning to assert itself. The Chinese leaders are ignoring the uprising. But they should realize that what the Muslims in China are doing has the support of Muslims in other countries. Still China would be helped by non-Muslim countries because they see terrorism as heart of Muslim chauvinism.

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Love in the Times of Fundamentalist Politics: Case of Hadiya

Ram Puniyani

The politics of communal polarisation in Kerala is focusing on many identity issues, one being *Love Jihad*, where a Hindu girl married to a Muslim or Christian man is targeted, and is legally manipulated in a manner to ensure that she is forced to be sent to her parents or sent to 'anti-conversion clinics'. There is some public knowledge about Hadiya and the bogey of *Love Jihad*, spiced up with stories about recruitment for participating in *Jihad* in Syria. A lot has also been coming in the media about the alleged immaturity of the girl Akhila, who converted to Islam and married a Muslim man, who is a worker of Popular Front of India (PFI). Other cases, like that of Swetha, a Hindu woman confined in a Yoga Center, where she is being pressurised to abandon her marriage to a Christian man, are much less known. As per Swetha, the Yoga center is actually a re-conversion clinic for those women who have adopted Christianity or Islam and married non-Hindus.

In the case of Akhila, the total focus in the media on linking the case to PFI and the alleged attempt to join terrorist activity in Syria was brought in to give a different twist to the case. This became the pretext for the NIA to step in. This made the issue of conversion of Akhila as a sinister plan to woo Hindu girls, covert them to Islam and induct them into terror modules. Quite a fertile imagination of those in authority. In Hadiya's case, the

Court went to the extent of declaring that a 24-year old girl is of tender mind and is gullible. The judges have probably forgotten that in India the age of voting is 18 years, after which a person becomes an adult and is responsible for one's decisions and actions. Hadiya asserted in Court that her conversion and marriage to a Muslim man is out of her own volition. Later Court hearings did not call her for depositions. Even the latest Court verdict has given a month's time before hearing her in person (October 30, 2017). These are surprising times. If an adult, a Homeopathic student, is considered to be mature enough to take decisions about her life, then keeping her in her parents' custody away from her husband is unthinkable on moral and social grounds, grounds which should guide the interpretation of law and consequent decisions.

In the case of Swetha, the Yoga Center in Ernakulam, where she has been detained, turns out to be a place where emotional blackmail and even threats are being used to force girls to abandon their new faith or to force their spouse to convert to Hinduism. Another Hindu woman Sruthi Meledath also testified to a similar experience when she was asked to leave her Muslim husband Anees Hamid, whom she planned to marry. This was at Yogvidya Kendram. The similarity of the agenda of such centers is very clear.

This issue of *Love Jihad* did not exist a decade ago. This cleverly crafted campaign is based on patriarchal notions, which are one of the core ingredients of communal politics. As per this communal thinking, the notion of 'our women' vs. 'their women' guides them. A woman is regarded as the property of man and is considered a symbol of community honor. In precipitating communal violence, rumours based on threat to 'our women' are put at the forefront, the Mujaffarnagar violence being a prime example of the same. At the same time, violating the modesty of women of the 'other' community comes as a badge of honor in this scheme of things. The *Love Jihad* issue began in Coastal Karnataka, where inter-religious marriages were targeted, particularly when the girl was a Hindu and the boy was a Muslim or a Christian.

In an open society, social interaction among people of different religions provides the ground for inter-community marriages, and is something which can be a strong cementing factor in the concept of Fraternity in the triad of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. During the freedom movement, people like Gandhi and Ambedkar proactively talked about the role of intercommunity marriages in promoting abolition of caste, and extending this logic, inter-religion marriages are the ground on which communal harmony and national integration find deeper and solid base. This is what should be

the social orientation in a democratic society. With the clouds of communal divisiveness coming up on the horizon, patriarchal notions and attempts to control the lives of women have become stronger. In India, Hindu communalists in particular have been floating organisations to discourage such alliances and break them when such unions take place.

One recalls the notorious Babu Bajrangji whose prime role was to attack inter-community couples. In

West Bengal the case of Priyanka Todi and Rizwan Kausar is a painful reminder of the malady taking deep roots in society. While patriarchal values are there in other social ideologies also, in communalism and fundamentalism, these are very deeply ingrained. While there are glorious examples of marriages of a Hindu boy with a Muslim girl and vice versa, it seems the intimidations of the likes of Hadiya and Shruthi are being taken to absurd limits to set an example in society to dissuade

others. Yoga Centres as decoys for breaking inter-caste marriages is sad news. Here deceit is the tool to break the spirit of girls involved in the process. The torture of the spouse involved in these cases has not been much recorded. As such love knows no boundaries of caste, class, religion and nationality. One can say that inter-religious marriages can also be an index of communal harmony and transition to a society where gender equality is respected and striven for!

This is how Swachch Bharat Treats its Sanitation Workers

Sandeep Pandey

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia is a state government hospital in Vibhuti Khand, Lucknow. According to government policy most regular hiring at lower levels has been replaced by contractual workers or worse labour contractors supplying the staff. One such agency Apnatech Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd. was given the contract for supplying ward-boys, ward-ayas (maids), drivers and sanitation workers. Except for the fact that they are paid by the contractor, for practical purposes all these workers work as hospital staff. Twentyfour of these fortunate ones have been accommodated in proper housing on Hospital campus and while other 14, working in similar positions, have to live in temporary makeshift settlements on the campus itself. The contractor, on directions from district administration, has issued a notice to its own workers to vacate the campus soon

otherwise they have been warned that they will be bulldozed. It is noteworthy that while only one of the 24 accommodated in campus housing is a sanitation worker, 10 out of 14 facing eviction are sanitation workers all belonging to the Valmiki community, a Scheduled Caste which has traditionally been involved in sanitation and manual scavenging work in India. The elite society, dominated by upper caste, has always treated its manual workers, mostly dalits, like this - the elite extract work from them and when it comes to providing the workers basic facilities, the elite simply refuse to take any responsibility. With the district administration, hospital administration and the contractor not willing to take any responsibility for these workers, they face an uncertain future. They don't know whether they'll have their hutments and their work next week.

Children of these workers, including the sanitation workers, study in schools which are near the Hospital and if the families are expelled from the campus the studies of children will be affected. If the parents are forced to move quite far away from the campus, the children will not be admitted to any new school at this advanced stage of the academic year. They may even have to drop their year or studies. In such a scenario some of them may have to return to their traditional occupation rather than dream of doing something else to break the vicious cycle of manual work, which is more of a humiliation, even after the Prime Minister is running a high profile campaign focused on it. The plight of these workers has never been highlighted in the Clean India campaign and the current situation shows the even after this campaign India will continue to treat its sanitation workers the way they have been always treated and humiliated.

Massive Protest by Workers in Delhi, November 9-11, 2017

Nearly 100,000 workers gathered at Delhi's Parliament Street from 9 November 2017 to protest against the central government's policies that have adversely affected the working class of India. The protest – called 'mahapadav' or mega sit-in – continued till 11 November.

It is one of the biggest workers protests in recent times and was a culmination of a long campaign which covered practically all districts of the country. It was organised by 10 central trade unions and several workers' and employees federations representing about 10 million workers of the country.

But that's not "news" for the major media houses in India. Most newspapers and television channels did not carry any report on the protest or carried small items buried deep inside their advertisement filled pages. As far as one could make out, The Hindu, The Indian Express and The Hindustan Times had no report while there are small reports in The Times of India and The Business Line (which claimed the protest was by "hundreds of workers" - without pictures so that people don't get to know of the real size of the gathering).

These are the same newspapers that spare no column inches in reporting about Prime Minister Modi's smallest statements and activities. They are at the forefront in discussing what the CII or FICCI has said on this and that. They go gaga over Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai. But towards the suffering and anger of millions in this country, there is no ink to be spared.

This is not the first time this is happening, of course. Mass protests by the working class have either been ignored by the Indian media, or denigrated as nuisance which causes traffic jams. There were two massive all India strikes – first in 2015 involving about 150 million workers and the world's biggest industrial strike in 2016 involving 180 million workers. But the media just reported it as partial or even failed strike. On the other hand, protests of 40 people led by an Anna Hazare or some NGOs or what Modi's followers are saying on his own app tend to make it to the front pages of these newspapers and web portals.

Why did the media black out these protests?

Because the workers come in the way of the corporate-political nexus. This is the first reason why the huge rally that continued for three days, with the workers drawn from all segments of life—industrial, agrarian, mining—giving an insight into the India that seems to have been factored out of the headlines of the corporate driven media. Both suspicious and fearful of the organised trade union movement, with the massive mobilisation by the Left parties in particular, adding to the rich and powerful paranoia.

Media houses and corporate houses worked to destroy the trade unions in newspapers through the 19980-1990's to ensure that the press workers and the working journalists were contained and controlled. Television ensured a crippling blow with contracts

favouring the management replacing the daily wage board pay scales. And as the trade unions disappeared one by one in the newspaper industry, the management control over the workers intensified, with even editors now hired and fired at will with merit and capability hardly being the qualification.

Second, the workers are seen as anti-employers. Their demands thus increase the pressure on the business houses, and the governments that are resistant to conceding what the poor of India need and want. For instance on the last day Parliament street had turned into a sea of women asking for better wages, health and education care, all pretty low on the list of those who are in government and those who control government. Hence the media, that works under the employers, decided not to give space to over a lakh of workers and their demands. As pressure makes the 'employers' uncomfortable and thus is has become the duty of the owned and subservient media to ensure that comfort levels are not damaged.

Wages was a major issue. No revision of wages, low wages, undue cut of wages, and various methods used to ensure that the workers do not get what is their due.

"Jo hamse takrayega, choor choor ho jayega" shouted the workers as their leaders told the handful of reporters who were there representing alternative media that the central employees felt cheated, betrayed, over the 7th

Planning Commission. They spoke of how work had increased manifold, wages had not, as government jobs were not filled and vacancies continued. There has been no wage revisions for instance of postal employees working in the rural areas, no confirmations, no revision. Trade union facilities are being withdrawn instead, and the government-corporate nexus is working in unison to marginalise the workers.

Those who own the newspapers too feel vulnerable against workers unity, and hence are at one with the nexus to black out the poor of India.

Three, workers are India's toiling masses from coal mines, to anganwadis, to landless labour. They are not the consumer class, and bring no direct benefit to the advertising and TRP linked revenues of the big media. Giving them even a passing mention is thus worthless, as it brings no money and instead for the reasons cited above actually cuts into the revenue with the workers demanding a fair slice of the growth pie. By giving them space the big media does not want to justify or highlight their cause. Somehow the ostrich like approach has replaced conscientious and fair reportage, a belief that if the media ignores an event and buries its head in the sand, it will pass.

Little do the mass media outlets, today so indifferent and scornful of workers and their demands, realise that tomorrow, when this govt. turns against any one of them and starts arm-twisting them – then it is these trade unions only that will stand by them. But probably this is a lesson everyone has to learn the painful way.

Arms Race Too Costly For People of South Asia

Bharat Dogra

There have been several reports during the last two or three years or so about increase in acquisition of expensive weapons in various countries of South Asia, a region with some of the highest rates of poverty and deprivation in the world. These reports have appeared most in the context of Pakistan and India.

According to the cover-story titled *Brothers in Arms* by Ananth Krishnan published in *India Today*, October 24, 2016, "Pakistan and China are jointly producing JF-17 Thunder light Fighter aircraft, while talks for an export variant of China's new fifth generation stealth fighter are ongoing. In August both countries moved towards clinching China's biggest ever military deal - the \$ 5 billion sale of eight attack submarines likely to be deployed in the Arabian Sea." Further this report says that in 2015 Russia sold Pakistan four Mi-35 helicopter gunships while earlier Russia sold the RD-93 jet engines for the JF-17 fighter aircraft.

Further this report said about arms purchases by India that during the past three years the USA sold \$4.4 billion worth of aircraft and helicopters to India but this was exceeded by Russia's \$ 5 billion sales to India in the same period.

The Dawn reported on June 18 2015 that Pakistan and Russia are close to finalizing a deal for purchase of Mi-35 Hind E attack helicopters.

The same newspaper reported on April 5 that the US Navy has awarded a \$170 million contract for the manufacture of nine AH-1Z Viper helicopters which will be delivered to Pakistan. Quwa defence news and analysis group reported on August 4, 2016 that a contract regarding new generation submarines was signed by Pakistan with China for purchase of eight Chinese AIP submarines.

The *Indian Express* reported on March 15, 2016 quoting *Jane's Defence Weekly* that Pakistan is trying to get more F-16s from the US as well as discussing with countries like Russia and France for new aircraft to match India's defense purchases. In September 2015 Russia offered to sell SU-35 planes to Pakistan. While stating that the wide ranging collaboration with China gives them confidence, Pakistani officials said that India's defense purchases also influence them to acquire matching technology.

In the context of India, DNA webdesk reported on March 16, 2016 that India's Ministry of Defence signed 28 contracts worth Rs. 36,944 crore during the last six months with 28 vendors - 18 Indian vendors and 10 foreign firms. The *Livemint* reported on January 12, 2016, quoting the defence minister of India, that India has signed \$5 billion worth defence offset

(Continued on Page 15)

Demonetisation: One Year Later - II

Neeraj Jain

It has attempted to attack only a small part of the black economy—the black cash stored with the people. Even assuming that the government had succeeded in demobilising this Rs 3 lakh crore of black cash, black income is going to be generated in the year 2017-18 too, and the year after that, and so on. 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 this is going to continue in the coming years too.

Why the Government Failed to Eliminate Even Rs 3 Lakh Crore

The government permitted people to deposit Rs 2.5 lakh per person without questions being asked. Assuming that only the richest 3% people have black money, this means 3.6 crore people had black cash of totalling Rs 3 lakh crore. This works out to an average black money holding of less than Rs 1 lakh per person. Of course, not everyone in the richest 3% would have black income, and so many had black money more than the limit of Rs 2.5 lakh specified by the government. But they found 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 also resorted 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 had seen a total of nearly Rs 29,000 crore in increased deposits.

This explains why the government was not able to demobilise even Rs 3 lakh crore; it was able to wipe out only 5% of this, or Rs 0.16 lakh crore.

Past Experience Too Proves This

This is not the first time that demonetisation has been done. In 1978, the Morarji Desai Government 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, as they did not use these high value notes; the notes demonetised accounted for only 0.6% of the currency in circulation; and so 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 suitcases or pillow cases is naïve.”¹

IS GOVERNMENT SERIOUS ABOUT CURBING BLACK ECONOMY?

Many people will argue: even if demonetisation has not significantly curbed 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.

Even assuming this to be true and assuming that the government initially wanted to tackle black money only (and not black income generation), the method adopted, of demonetisation, was 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 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 Modi Government, in the name of curbing black money, 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 Lok Sabha elections. A major part of this was spent by Narendra Modi for his high-voltage electioneering. If the BJP was indeed 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. Instead of making funding of political parties more transparent, the Modi Government has made it more opaque. In March 2017, the government got the Lok Sabha to pass amendments to the Finance Bill 2017 wherein it eased norms for contributions made by corporates to political parties. The government removed the funding limit of 7.5% of the company's net profit for the past three years, thus allowing private companies to provide unlimited funding to their political benefactors. But what is far more worse is another provision approved by the Lok Sabha – the company no longer has to disclose the name of the political party to which it has made the donation!¹²

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 lakh crore.³ 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 incomes 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.⁴

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.⁵ 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 Indian having accounts in foreign banks in the Supreme Court. The BJP thus endorsed the previous UPA Government's position on this issue, that it had earlier criticised. 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."⁶

Actually, this is not 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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. The documents show the myriad ways in which the world's rich exploit secretive tax havens to hide their wealth. The leak, that became known the world over 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.⁹ A year before that, in February 2015, *Indian Express* released the list of 1,195 Indian 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 included 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—Russell Mehta, Anoop Mehta, Saunak Parikh, Chetan Mehta, Govindbhai Kakadia and Kunal Shah.¹⁰ The action so far? HSBC whistleblower Herve Falciani, talking to the 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."¹¹

All this should not be surprising. Despite having come to power on the plank of anti-corruption and good governance, the Modi Government has actually been seeking to dilute anti-corruption legislations. Soon after coming to power, it made a U-turn on the issue of bringing political parties under the Right to Information (RTI) Act; it had earlier supported this. It has not been keen on operationalising the Lokpal Act despite it having been notified in the gazette in January 2014, and has not appointed a Lokpal even after two-and-a-half years in office, for which it was pulled up by the Supreme Court earlier this year (2016). Not only that, in July 2016, it diluted this Act and exempted bureaucrats from declaring assets and liabilities of their

spouses and dependent children. Similarly, it has not operationalised the Whistleblowers Protection Act (WBP Act), despite it too having been passed by Parliament. This Act provides a mechanism for protecting the identity of whistleblowers—a term given to people who expose corruption. Nearly 60 people have been killed in the last few years for exposing corruption and wrongdoing in the government; had the law been operationalised, the lives of many of them could have been saved.¹²

Clearly, all the chest thumping by PM Modi about fighting corruption is just a lot of hot air.

Modi Changes 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 borne out by changes 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. He too did not make any major

reference to shifting to a cashless economy.

Just a month after this so-called 'war on black money' was launched, the government 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 for nearly 20 days after the note ban announcement, too shared his *mann ki baat* on the same day, and urged people to migrate to a cashless society.¹³ The government now began pushing 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 & 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 of 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 10,000.¹⁴

According to the RBI, cash in

circulation (CIC) to GDP ratio in the economy has fallen from 12.2 per cent of India's GDP in March 2016 to 8.8 per cent by end-March 2017. The government has been touting this figure as one of the successes of demonetisation, claiming that a lower CIC to GDP ratio is indicative of lesser corruption.¹⁵

The government is lying again. 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 activities/tax evasion/corruption in an 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.

Japan is supposed to be a less corrupt economy than India. Yet, its CIC to GDP ratio is much more than India, 19.4%.¹⁶

On the other hand, in the USA, according to the Federal Reserve, as much as \$1.48 trillion is in circulation as cash, which works out to approximately 8% of its GDP. This figure is less than India.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

The situation in Europe is no different. In the Eurozone countries,

cash is 10.63% of GDP. 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.¹⁹

Therefore, the new drive of the Modi Government to push towards a less-cash economy will not affect tax evasion and will not affect the black economy one bit.

On the other hand, instead of cash transactions, as the number of online transactions increases, it increases the risk of online frauds. One study found that the value of global online fraudulent transactions is expected to reach \$25.6 billion by 2020, up from \$10.7 billion last year. Just a month before Modi announced the demonetisation drive, India's biggest internet banking security breach occurred. Over 3 million debit cards and their pin numbers were stolen by hackers, enabling the miscreants to steal personal information and do fraudulent transactions. Several banks, including State Bank of India, Yes Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank, were hit by the attack. Newsreports say that banks have reported total fraudulent withdrawals of Rs 1.3 crore because of the security breach. Considering India's huge illiteracy and poverty levels, if the poor are forced to shift to using debit/credit cards, it is going to be very easy for tricksters to defraud people of their hard-earned money.²⁰

Impact of Demonetisation on the Economy

While demonetisation has not achieved any of its announced objectives, it has had a devastating impact on the economy, especially

the unorganised sector, which is almost completely dependent on cash transactions. The three biggest components of India's vast unorganised sector are:²¹

- i) Agricultural sector, on which 53% of the population depend for their livelihoods;
- ii) Small-scale or unorganised retail sector, which accounts for around 9% of total employment;
- iii) Small-scale or unorganised manufacturing sector, which accounts for 7.5% of total employment.

All these sectors were already struggling for survival as a result of the economic reforms launched in India in the name of globalisation since 1991. These reforms have further accelerated under the Modi Government. Now, its demonetisation decision and drive towards a cashless economy has only further crippled 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, or expecting the owners of India's tiny manufacturing units to pay their daily wage workers, who are paid daily on a piecemeal basis, by electronic transfer every day, is akin to Marie Antoinette asking Parisians to go eat cake.

We take a brief look at the impact of demonetisation on the three unorganised sectors mentioned above.

Impact on Agriculture

The majority of the Indian peasants are small farmers with landholdings of less than one hectare. The globalisation reforms have pushed the agricultural sector into deep crisis, so much so that they have driven more than 3 lakh farmers into committing suicide since the reforms began, the largest recorded wave of such deaths in history.²²

Now, demonetisation has further worsened this crisis. It was announced just when the kharif crop was being harvested and sowing for the rabi crop was about to begin. This pushed farmers into a difficult situation. Business at the mandis fell by anywhere from 25% to 70%, as there were no buyers—the cash crunch affected shopkeepers, hotels and restaurants, and even the small street vendors. And so, traders at the mandis did not have cash to pay to the farmers for their produce (or they forced farmers to sell at half the price); even if they paid in cheque, farmers were not able to encash them as banks faced a cash crunch. The other source of funding for farmers, disbursement of loans by village-level credit cooperative societies, was also affected due to restrictions imposed by the RBI on these institutions. And so, farmers did not have the money to buy seeds and fertilisers, and to hire tractors and other equipment, and pay their labourers—affecting their sowing for the next crop.²³

Because of the government's push towards a cashless economy, traders in mandis continue to be unwilling to pay for agricultural produce in cash, because of which the agricultural crisis has continued. It has resulted in falling farm prices, because of

which deflation has hit agriculture. The Central Statistics Office's (CSO) GDP data for April-June shows that the annual growth in gross value added from agriculture during the quarter was only 2.3% in real terms (i.e. at constant prices), as against 6.9 per cent for October-December. But farm prices fell by 2% during this quarter, due to which the value of agricultural production rose by only 0.3% in nominal terms (that is, at current prices unadjusted for inflation).²⁴ It is this worsening crisis, made worse by the government insistence on providing social sector benefits through Aadhar, that has led to an intensifying farmers' movement across the country in recent months.²⁵

Impact on Small-Scale Retail

India has more than 1.49 crore retail outlets, the highest in the world, of which the overwhelming number are small retailers. Small-scale retail was already under severe attack because of the gradual opening of the various branches of this sector to foreign direct investment as a part of the globalisation policies.²⁶ Demonetisation has had ruinous consequences for it. According to the Confederation of All India Traders—one of the largest trade associations in India—businesses in markets across the country reduced by a whopping 75% in the immediate months following the demonetisation announcement. The reason was simple—people simply didn't have the cash to buy even essentials; even if they had cash, it was a Rs 2,000 note that most small traders were unable to accept as they did not have enough change.²⁷

Impact on Unorganised Manufacturing Sector

Since India began globalisation in

1991, despite the massive entry of giant Western 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, it has not led to a generation of formal or organised sector manufacturing jobs. Two decades later, the total manufacturing sector employment in India in 2010 was only 50.7 million, or 11% of the total workforce; of this, barely 16 million were organised sector jobs, the remaining 34.5 million were unorganised sector jobs—that is, jobs in tiny units or home-based manufacturing (this includes jobs such as workers making papads or rolling bidis in their homes).²⁸

Even though the overwhelming number of jobs in the manufacturing sector continue to be in the unorganised sector, for the last two decades, this sector has been struggling for survival due to globalisation policies such as ending of reservations for small units and decline of low interest bank credit for the small sector.

Demonetisation simply devastated this already struggling sector. Nearly 80% of the micro/small enterprises in the country were badly hit. They are very small units, and have innumerable backward and forward linkages, all of which are in cash. The drying up of cash pushed these industries to the wall. To give an example, take the brass industry of Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh. The raw material for brass is supplied by people who deal in scrap. They buy scrap from various places in cash, and sell it to the consolidator who buys it in cash. The next stage is the melting of scrap; it is turned into brass slab or bar. After that comes the making of moulds—for instance,

of a flower vase or a tap. The brass is melted and poured into these moulds. After this stage, there are craftsmen who make designs on it, then comes the stage of polishing, then of lacquering. Each of these stages is based exclusively on cash. At each stage, the workers are paid in cash, daily, on a piecemeal basis. They earn, and spend it, on a daily basis. Demonetisation and the resulting cash crunch brought this thriving industry, which had a total turnover of Rs 6,000 crore, to a standstill. Likewise, the hosiery industry of Ludhiana, the bangle industry of Faridabad, the garment industry of Tirupur, the chikankari industry of Lucknow, and so many other industries, employing lakhs of workers, were also badly affected; thousands of units shut down, lakhs of workers were rendered unemployed, and forced to go back to their villages.²⁹

The gross impact? The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) recently estimated that roughly four million jobs were lost post-demonetisation during the four month period from January to April 2017³⁰—in an economy already suffering from a huge unemployment crisis.

Economy Slowing Down

The destructive effect of demonetisation on the informal sector caused demand to fall, production to decline in several sectors, and rise in unemployment. These adverse impacts continued for several months, as money supply was not restored for several months. The obvious consequence—the economy has been continuously slowing down. Official data show that the India's GDP or gross domestic product slowed down to

5.7% on a year-on-year basis during the April-June quarter of 2017-18. More significantly, this was the sixth consecutive quarter for which the GDP growth has slowed down. It had touched a high of 9.1% in January-March 2016 quarter. After that it has continuously slowed down, to 7.9%, 7.5%, 7.0% and 6.1% in the subsequent quarters, to 5.7% in Q1 of 2017-18.³¹

Prof. Arun Kumar in fact argues that this latest GDP growth rate figure is a huge over-estimate. He points out that this official estimate is largely based on data provided by the corporate sector and some other organised sectors of the economy. It does not include data from the unorganised sectors of the economy, whose non-agriculture component contributes to 31% of the GDP, and which was hit hard by demonetisation and now the government decision to roll-in GST. While there are no official surveys that capture the extent to which this sector was hit by demonetisation, private surveys indicate that that this sector was badly affected. Basing himself on data provided by these private surveys, Prof. Arun Kumar argues that it is possible that the GDP growth rate has actually fallen to way below 5.7%, and in all probability is near-zero.³²

Then Why Demonetisation?

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?

After coming to power, the BJP made a complete U-turn on all the promises made by it during the

elections, and has continued with the same policies of globalisation–liberalisation–privatisation that have been implemented in the country for the last more than two decades. The only difference—Modi is implementing them at an accelerated speed. The sole aim of these policies is to run the economy solely for the naked profiteering of giant foreign corporations, and their junior partners, the big Indian business houses. These policies are being implemented at the behest of the governments of the developed countries led by the USA, and the international financial institutions controlled by them, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (or IMF). The reason why the Indian Government is dutifully implementing their dictates is because of our huge foreign debt, which under the Modi Government has now topped \$485 billion. (Discussing this issue in greater detail is beyond the scope of this booklet.³³)

As with the other important policies being implemented as a part of globalisation, Washington is behind Modi Government's demonetisation exercise too! This may sound incredible to our readers, especially the Modi bhakts, but there is enough evidence to substantiate this. All evidence points to the fact that PM Modi's demonetisation and cashless drive has been implemented at the behest of US Government's development agency USAID.

Ever since the Modi Government came to power, it has been bowing to US pressure and implementing policies to benefit US corporations, such as: amending the Land Acquisition Act (on which the government had to backtrack due to a countrywide protest movement); diluting India's nuclear liability law

so that US nuclear corporations can set up nuclear plants in India without having to worry about paying indemnities in case of design defects causing a nuclear accident; and amending insurance laws to permit increased inflow of foreign capital into India's insurance sector.³⁴ The push to demonetisation is a continuation of this surrender to US corporate interests.

In October 2016, the USAID and the Indian Finance Ministry entered into an agreement known as *Catalyst: Inclusive Cashless Payment Partnership* with the goal of effecting a quantum leap in cashless payments in India. The partnership was based on a report commissioned by USAID in 2015, and presented in January 2016, titled *Beyond Cash*. The study and subsequent plans were kept a secret³⁵—this explains Modi's statement that preparations for demonetisation had been going on for many months before the November 8 announcement.

Who are the real beneficiaries of this partnership and drive towards a cashless economy? This is revealed by USAID itself. In a press release following the release of the *Beyond Cash* report, it declared, "Over 35 key Indian, American and international organisations have partnered with the Ministry of Finance and USAID on this initiative."³⁶ These organisations are mostly IT companies and payment service providers who stand to benefit from the increased digital payments and from the associated data generation. They include Microsoft, credit card companies such as Mastercard and Visa, the internet services company eBay Inc., the financial services corporation Citigroup, among others.

India's digital payments industry is estimated to have the potential of growing to a whopping \$500 billion by 2020, but only if millions of Indians can be drawn into the digital payments net!³⁷

USAID and its partner corporations are well aware that this policy would likely spell disaster for India's small traders and producers, and people in remote regions; *Beyond Cash* had analysed the impact of demonetisation extensively.³⁸ But they are not bothered. In today's world dominated by big corporations, profit maximisation is all that matters, even if these profits come drenched in the blood of lakhs of poor and starving people.

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 BJP Government led by Narendra Modi is undoubtedly the most anti-people of them all.

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(concluded)

(Continued from Page 6)

contracts, while \$10 billion worth of additional contracts are in the pipeline. The Diplomat reported on February 10, 2016, citing The Times of India and other sources, that India is close to signing a \$3 billion defence deal with Israel.

The Times of India reported on October 14 2016 that a Rs. 39,000 crore deal with Russia may help India to get a missile shield. This involves five new generation Russian S-400 Triumf air defense missile systems, which can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, stealth fighters, missiles and drones at ranges of up to 400 kms. In addition, this report said, India and Russia are in the process of a deal for the joint production of 200 light utility helicopters at a cost of \$ 1 billion. Negotiations for other mega defence projects with Russia like the joint development of the futuristic fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) and the \$1.5 billion lease of a second nuclear powered submarine are also on track.

Such reports indicate that South Asia is in the middle of an arms race which will prove prohibitively expensive for the people of this region who are already suffering from the denial of basic needs to

millions of them. Hence people of South Asia should strive to create a very strong peace movement which should decrease insecurity and

suspicious to such an extent that the extremely expensive and ever increasing arms race can be checked.

Footprints of A Crusader

(The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by

Rohini Gawankar

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janata

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Can Yogi Continuing as a Chief Minister of U.P

Rajindar Sachar

Challenge before Rahul Gandhi
Kuldip Nayar

Sarvanash Bharat Abhiyan
Sandeep Pandey

India: Rising Asian Power !
D. K. Giri

**Ayodhya dispute: Supremacy
of Constitution or faith?**
Irfan Engineer

**Freedom Of Speech
For Whom**
Justice B.Sudershan Reddy

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The Shocking statement by Yogi, the Chief Minister of U.P., namely “I believe that the word “Secular” is the biggest lie since independence”, should result in his immediate dismissal. Would some advisers of Yogi enlighten him that the preamble to our Constitution specifically states that India is a Secular, Socialist State. Would his advisors also enlighten him that the Supreme Court has held that “Secularism” is the basic feature of our Constitution and any state government which fails in upholding this basic feature has no right to continue—in fact in Bommai’s Case, the Supreme Court upheld the dismissal of Nine State governments on this score alone.

May I also remind Yogi and his colleagues that as per article 75(4) of the Constitution of India they took oath before entering upon their offices which requires them to swear in the name of God that they will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established. The oath covers the protection of Secularism as mentioned in the Preamble to

the Constitution as existing at the time of taking oath. Anyone suggesting to the contrary would be taking the ludicrous stand that the oath would not oblige the Ministers to follow the mandate of over 100 amendments to constitution made since the original constitution of 1950.

No, Yogi Sahib, unless you accept Secularism as a part of your government as per Bommais case by the Supreme Court, the Central Government is under legal obligation to dismiss U.P. Government.

I hope Yogi Ji would certainly accept that there is no greater exponent of Hinduism than Swami Vivekananda. This is what he said; Therefore, 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 which ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expression of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam, the Vedant brain and Islam body is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.

Secularism does not signify anti-religion. Secularism signifies giving equal dignity and respect to all religions. Of course it goes without saying that Indian State has no religion of its own, nor for that matter can any religion claim superiority over another religion as by resorting to false premise that a religion in the country is indigenous while others are foreign. This is heresy not permitted by our Constitution which gives equal reverence to all the religions practiced by various communities of India.

Thus inclusive development in India and, for that matter, in any country, alone is the path to prosperity. It is an undeniable truth and needs to be irrevocably accepted by all in India, namely that minorities, Muslims and Christians, are not outsiders. They are an integral part of India. Let me quote what Swami Vivekanand one of the greatest spiritual personality of India has to say of the intimate connection between the spirit of Islam and Hinduism thus, "He also told Hindus not to talk of the superiority of one religion over another. Even toleration of other faiths was not right; it smacked of blasphemy. He pointed out that his guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans had accepted all religions as true. Swami Vivekanand in fact profusely praised Islam and in a letter to his friend Mohammed Sarfraz Hussain (10th June 1898) without any hesitation wrote "therefore 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 hop...the future perfect India."

Thus inclusive development in the country alone is the path to prosperity. It is an undeniable truth and needs to be irrevocably accepted by all in the country that minorities, Muslims and Christians are not outsiders. They are an integral part of India. There can be no real progress which does not include minorities, Muslims and Christians as equal stakeholders. I can not put it better than what Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan, one of the greatest leader of our country, had to say over a century back. Gandhiji repeated it in 1921, and also in another prayer meeting at Rajghat on 24th March 1947 thus; "In the words of Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan...I would say that Hindus and Muslims are the two eyes of mother India just as the trouble in one eye affects the other too, similarly the whole of India suffer when either Hindu or Muslim suffer."

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's clarion call emphasizes that composite culture is the bed rock of Indian Secularism pervading our country. He said thus;

"Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow Islam. I shall enlarge this orbit still further. The Indian Christian is equally entitled to say with pride that he is an Indian and is following a

religion of India, namely Christianity."

If there are any Hindus amongst us who desire to bring back the Hindu life of a thousand years ago and more, they dream, and such dreams are vain fantasies. So also if there are any Muslims who wish to revive their past civilization and culture, which they brought a thousand years ago from Iran and Central Asia, they dream also and the sooner they wake up the better. These are unnatural fancies which cannot take root in the soil of reality. I am one of those who believe that revival may be a necessity in a religion but in social matters it is a denial of progress."

"I am proud to be a Muslim. Everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. Our languages were different, but we grew to use a common language. Our manners and customs were different, but they produced a new synthesis...No fantasy or artificial scheming to separate and divide can break this unity – Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism, and that is true of Christianity too".

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Challenge before Rahul Gandhi

Kuldip Nayar

POLITICAL parties all over the world have come to be closed shops. What is known as the 'High Command' usually dictates on who will be installed as the president. Rahul Gandhi has been 'elected' as the Congress president. The outgoing chief Sonia Gandhi saw to it that her son would occupy the top party position.

I had seen the change in the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom from close quarters when I was India's High Commissioner at London in the nineties. Mrs Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister. But she was asked to step down and she had to abide by the orders of the party.

I asked her directly why she was doing so. Her children were doing business in South Africa and they were not in any way connected with the issue. She said that she had purposely sent them far away lest she should be accused of nepotism. She said that "the men in grey suits decided when the Prime Minister should step down. They would tap the shoulder and you are expected to step down." John Major was her successor.

When there was a clamour for Sonia Gandhi to occupy the position of Prime Minister she declined the offer and instead selected the faithful Manmohan Singh ahead of the most acceptable and experienced Pranab Mukherjee. It was an open secret that the government would be run from 10 Janpath, Sonia Gandhi's residence

and Manmohan Singh fitted into her scheme of things.

The government's secret files would go to her residence where her political secretary Ahmed Patel first vetted them and then sent to Sonia Gandhi for her approval. So much so that Manmohan Singh came to be known as 'Accidental Prime Minister' and a book by his press officer also confirmed the expression. When he was asked to comment on the title given to him, he merely said that the posterity would judge.

Newspaper reports published since then confirmed that he was merely the *mukhota* (mask) and in his name the administration ran from 10 Janpath. In fact, even Rahul Gandhi once denounced the controversial ordinance to negate the Supreme Court verdict on convicted lawmakers as "complete nonsense" and said what "our government has done is wrong." This was a huge embarrassment for the UPA government and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

It is another matter that Congress president Sonia Gandhi and other party members stood behind what Manmohan Singh had said. But then the damage had already been done. There were several other occasions when the Prime Minister was ridiculed by the party members, including those who were a part of the inner circle. It is unfortunate that Manmohan Singh himself felt that he was only keeping the chair of Prime Minister warm for Rahul Gandhi to

take over.

The anointment of Rahul Gandhi as party president has not come as a surprise at all. But it does underline the fact that there is no other go for the Congress except depending on the dynasty to give a name which is generally acceptable to the country. Priyanka Vadra could have perhaps been the right choice in the eyes of the Congress stalwarts. But nobody dares Sonia who has decided that her son would take over. This is said to be the practice in Italy where the son inherits the mantle.

But the million dollar question is whether Rahul would fit in the role he is expected to perform? I recall the initial days of Indira Gandhi when after the sudden death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Congress president K. Kamaraj installed her as the Prime Minister. I asked him then why did he choose her? He said that before his death, Jawaharlal Nehru had indicated that his successor would be Shastri. When Kamaraj asked Nehru specifically why not Indira Gandhi, he said: Not now.

Morarji Desai, the claimant, did not agree to the choice of Indira Gandhi and insisted on election. With the party president and other stalwarts opposing him, Morarji Desai lost the race. It is another matter that Kamaraj was subsequently sidelined. I was in the thick of things and asked Kamaraj why he preferred Indira Gandhi over Morarji Desai? His answer was that "Morarji was too rigid and did not believe in principle of consensus."

The timing of Rahul's anointment as party president has come at a time when the Congress has lost the sheen. The party still believes that he would be able to dispel the magic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his home state which is going to the polls next month. Understandably, the Congress has struck a seat-adjustment deal with the Patidars to capture power in Gujarat. But it remains to be seen whether Rahul Gandhi will be able to make the turn around which the party is looking for.

In the past, when he was made vice-president and poll campaigner he miserably failed in states like Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and even in Uttar Pradesh where the Congress had a poll alliance with the Samajwadi Party. In other words, he could not make much of a difference to the fortunes of the party. Unfortunately, despite having some stalwarts in the party, the deep-rooted culture of dynasty has come to prevail.

The biggest challenge to Rahul Gandhi is the forthcoming election in Gujarat. In fact, this is a key election for all political parties, including the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party. Apart from Rahul Gandhi, the state assembly polls will also be a litmus test for both Prime Minister Modi and BJP president Amit Shah. They will leave no stone unturned to see that their party wins because what happens in Gujarat would decide the fate of general elections, due two years later. This will also show which way the wind is blowing.

But then two years is too long a period to depend on what happens now. The Congress which is irrelevant now may retrieve the ground because no government can meet the demands of what people want.

Freedom of the Media

The press has been able to consolidate its freedom after several struggles. And today it is generally free from the government pressure. There are still other forces which do not allow it to be completely free. Yet among all the democracies in the world, the Indian press is considered independent.

The electronic media is to a large extent at the mercy of estate owners who earn money through property dealings and spend it on maintaining a channel or two. This cannot be, however, said about the print media with certainty.

When it comes to films, the pressure of government is relentless and visible. Every film has to have censor's certificate. When the freedom of expression has been guaranteed by the Constitution, it has been for all modes and the methods. The requisite of censor's certificate curbs freedom.

Why the film makers have never made it an issue is beyond me. It is still not too late to do so. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film can be the rallying point. Film director Bhansali, has preferred to face the consequences. He was attacked in Rajasthan where he was shooting the film. Yet he has stuck to guns.

The radical Hindus in Rajasthan, who have organized themselves into the krini brigade, have broken furniture and put it to fire in one of the cinema halls in a Rajasthan town. Most of the liberal voices are conspicuous by their silence. Bhansali must be feeling lonely. Whether the film Padmawati, which he has directed, is based on fiction or fact is not the point at issue. It is

Bhansali's determination to screen it. He gets full marks for his resoluteness.

Not many film directors will emulate his example because of the huge money at stake. The financiers will hesitate to invest. They are interested on returns not the principles which Bhansali has pursued caring little about the fallout. At present, a good film has become a victim of chauvinism.

The worst part is that the whole thing has been politicized. The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is backing the anti-Bhansali elements. For them, the film is an attack on Hindutva and must be stopped from screening. Bhansali has been described as a leader of anti-Hindu group. Nobody is there to explain why he becomes anti-Hindu because of his film and why he would be a proud Hindu if he gives up the effort to produce Padmavati.

It is surprising that the top leadership of BJP is remaining silent and not coming down hard on those people who are carrying out lawless activities by taking stern action against them. It should realize that all the gains of ease of doing business will get dissipated if this type of activity is allowed to go on. Investment in India, which is what the government is desperately seeking, will not take place in light of these actions.

Many years ago, the famous film producer and director Gulzar faced a similar situation. His film Aandhi was drastically censored when it was screened. It gave, however, a message to the people who were against Prime Minister Indira

Gandhi's autocratic rule.

Probably a third force, which is neither communal nor authoritarian, is the answer. It is not yet even on the horizon. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is probably the answer to such questions raised. But if he were to leave Bihar, the space comes to be occupied by Laloo Prasad Yadav and his family, not a good choice.

For some reasons, successive governments at the centre have rejected the demand for a press or media commission. Since independence there have been only two commissions. One was soon after the independence and the other following the emergency in 1977. The recommendations of the latter were not even considered because by the time the report was ready, Mrs Gandhi was back in power and refused to look at any step suggested during the post-emergency period. She had returned to power and dealt with her critics with a vengeance.

The most important aspect is the ownership of newspapers, television and radio by the same house or individuals. Even America has some kind of control over cross ownership. But there is no such bar in India where it is like putting up yet another factory.

True, the media has come a long way. Still current annual report of the Press Council of India is helplessly demanding the television channels to come under its purview. The rulers continue to turn a deaf ear to what is asked.

The Council says: "For quite some time an issue has arisen about the

(Continued on Page 12)

Sarvanash Bharat Abhiyan

Sandeep Pandey

United Nations Special Rapporteur Leo Heller has criticised India's water and sanitation policies and said its implementation lacks a clear and holistic human rights based approach. According to him Indian government's emphasis on constructing toilets should not overshadow the focus on drinking water provision for all and it should not involuntarily contribute to violating fundamental rights of others, such as those specific caste-affected groups engaged in manual scavenging or those who are marginalised such as ethnic minorities and people living in remote rural areas. The government as expected has rejected his report.

However, there is a real threat to ground water because of the soak pit or leach pit design of toilets being promoted by the government. There should be a gap of two metres between the base of leach pit and the ground water table. But in the tarai belt of north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and even West Bengal at most places the water table is very high. Famous environmentalist and former member secretary, Central Pollution Control Board and Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, Professor G.D. Agrawal, now Swami Gyanswaroop Sanand says that UP and Bihar float over water.

Leach pit toilets should also be 15-20 meters away from hand pumps or wells, which may not always be possible in the dense population of these areas. The design given to schools for constructions of

toilets has only one leach pit instead of the standard two, which will create a problem when one pit is full.

The faulty design is likely to pollute the ground water sooner or later. In the mad hurry to build toilets nobody is questioning the appropriateness of design. Considering that areas with non-expansive clays, compact silty loams, compact silty clay loams, porous silty clays, porous silty clay loams, hills, rocky terrain, plateaus and black cotton soil is unfit for this design and hence almost half the country's area is excluded. The cracks in rocks can also let polluted water seep through to the ground water table. That is why IIT, Kanpur, graduate and ferrocement construction expert Dr. Ashok K. Jain calls the Clean India Campaign as 'Sarvnash Bharat Abhiyan' and proposes septic tank design as the alternative.

Considering who'll benefit from the pollution of ground water - the bottled water industry - the problem starts looking more sinister. In India substantial market of bottled water is captured by Pepsi and Coca Cola. The conspiracy of silence of the scientific and technological community in the country on this issue is inexplicable.

How the government completes its target

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, launched in 1999 and which ran upto 2012, was called the Total Sanitation Campaign. The objective was to eradicate open defecation by 2017.

It was based on the idea of community involvement so that cultural values of people would change and they would start using the toilets. However, after looking at the construction of toilets in a neighbouring district of Lucknow, the quality of work needs much to be desired and certainly we are quite far away from fulfilling the objective.

In the Gram Panchayat Kaudia, Block Bharawan, District Hardoi, a survey was conducted during 3-5 August, 2016, of the 576 toilets built by the Gram Panchayat. There was discrepancy between the beneficiaries on ground, names mentioned on the toilets built and the list supplied by the Village Panchayat Development Officer. In Village Dehua, all the 32 toilets mentioned in the official list are fake because nothing exists in reality.

Only one sack of cement has been used to construct one toilet as a result the plaster is coming off in all of them. Sub-standard bricks have been used instead of good quality. 10% toilets don't have ceiling. Even the ones which have ceiling, it is made of sheet instead of RCC. Only one soak pit has been constructed in more than half of the constructed toilets and even that has been damaged as it has not been constructed following the standards. The floor of toilets has given in in almost all toilets indicating even that has not been constructed following the standards. In 30% toilets the seat has not been installed, making them practically useless. 50% of them don't have doors and hence cannot be used by females at all. Among the ones constructed hardly 5% toilets are useable, rest 95% are either closed or being used as storage space for wood, cow dung cake, etc. A number of toilets were

found damaged indicating the poor quality of construction.

In village Ramnagar one toilet is fake, in Baraua four toilets are fake, in Kaudia 93 toilets are fake, in Mandauli four toilets are fake, in Kathauni 42 toilets are fake whereas in Veerpur four more toilets have been built than shown on paper. Some beneficiaries have been mentioned twice, the duplication artificially increasing the number of beneficiaries.

Rs. 10,000 was released for each of the 576 toilets. It is estimated that out of Rs. 57,60,000 spent by the government an embezzlement of Rs. 38,57,000 took place. When a complaint was made to the administration during the days of Samajwadi Party government about this corruption, a senior bureaucrat Joint Secretary in the Panchayati Raj Department reported on 1st September 2016 that there was no misuse of funds in the construction of 576 toilets. Another complaint was filed after the Bhartiya Janata Party government came to power on Chief Minister's portal. Authorities reported on 27th October 2017 that only 441 toilets were found on ground. Money for 56 toilets was still in GP account and 79 toilets had disappeared in floods or because of lack of maintenance! It is a wonder how an official had claimed a year earlier that the target was met.

In reality during another survey conducted on 3rd August 2017, only 26 toilets were found to be in use, a low figure of 4.5% of the target. The quality of remaining 380 built is so abysmal that they can't be used. In the government records, of course, there is nothing wrong with them. This is the state of affairs after Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has been

in place for over 3 years now.

In a peculiar rarity above-mentioned corruption is a blessing in disguise because it'll save our ground water.

How Swachh Bharat treats its Sanitation workers

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital is a state government hospital in Lucknow. According to the government policy most regular hiring at lower levels is replaced by contractual workers or worse then labour contractors supply the staff. One such agency Apnatech Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd. was given the contract for supplying ward-boys, ward-ayas (maids), drivers and sanitation workers. Except for the fact that they are paid by the contractor, for practical purposes all these workers work as hospital staff. 24 of these fortunate ones have been accommodated in proper housing on Hospital campus and while other 14, working in similar positions, have to live in temporary makeshift hutments on the campus itself. The contractor, on directions from district administration, has issued a notice to its own workers to vacate the campus soon, otherwise, they have been warned that they will be bulldozed. It is noteworthy that while only one of the 24 accommodated in campus housing is a sanitation worker, 10 out of 14 facing eviction are sanitation workers, all belonging to the Valmiki community, a Scheduled Caste which has traditionally been involved in sanitation and manual scavenging work in India. The elite society, dominated by upper caste, has always treated its manual workers, mostly dalits, like this - the elite extract work from them and when it comes to providing the workers basic

facilities, the elite simply refuse to take any responsibility. With the district administration, hospital administration and the contractor not willing to take any responsibility for these workers, they face an uncertain future. They don't know whether they'll have their hutments and their work for very long.

Children of these workers, including the sanitation workers, study in schools which are near the Hospital and if the families are expelled from the campus the studies of children will be affected. If the parents are forced to move quite far away from the campus, the children will not be admitted to any new school at this advanced stage of the academic year. They may even have to drop their year or studies. In such a scenario some of them may have to return to their traditional occupation rather than dream of doing something else to break the vicious cycle of manual work, which is more of a humiliation, even after the Prime Minister is running a high profile campaign focussed on it. The plight of these workers has never been highlighted in the Clean India campaign and the current situation shows the even after this campaign India will continue to treat its sanitation workers the way they have been always treated, read humiliated.

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India: Rising Asian Power !

D. K. Giri

India's rise as a formidable Asian Power was confirmed around ASEAN and East Asian Summits held last week. Major countries engaged in the region reckon and back India as a potential countervailing force to China's aggressive and expansionist policies in the region. The only impediment to India's march is its domestic determinants such as the economy and social harmony. The economy has to grow at least at 8 per cent for a decade or so to meet her commitments at home and the objectives abroad. Because it is only the economic might of China India should be wary of.

India is unique in Asia in many respects: in political democracy, the only one in Asia that has sustained for 70 years since its independence in 1947; in social pluralism, it is the most diverse country in the world, with 22 official languages, 6 major religions, hundreds of castes, it holds together without falling apart unlike the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, the so-called developed countries; and in civilisational resilience, it has a 6000-year-old civilisation that has withstood several invasions, yet survived and thrived with its indigenous attributes.

In economy, India's growth has not been as meteoric as that of China, it has been unaffected by the vagaries of the world economy, been reformed democratically, and is steadily growing. India can also pride itself in producing a massive technical human resource which is

contributing to the knowledge economy of the world.

Undoubtedly, India faces the most difficult external challenges from Pakistan and China, says former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal. But, I have difficulty in accepting his argument that Islamabad has been the spoilsport in India's engagement in Asia. He argues Pakistan has blocked the integration process in SAARC to stem India's growing clout in the region. It has bled India by abating cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, and has used nuclear blackmail to thwart India. Pakistan's open and loud admission of its continued aggression on India is centred on Kashmir. Pakistan would not put the sword back in the sheath until Kashmir imbroglio is resolved.

India needs to address Kashmir issue with a defter diplomacy. For instance, why not India put entire Kashmir—both PoK, and the part in India—on its agenda, and decide if it should remain in India, or jointly be administered with Pakistan. That way, both India and Pakistan would remain partners, or tied as friends around Kashmir. Or alternatively, Pakistan and India settle for their respective possessions of parts of Kashmir, and sign another peace agreement like the one at Shimla, and, not ever stir the hornet's nest any more.

Third, New Delhi and Islamabad, should keep Kashmir aside for a while, Islamabad stops supporting terrorism in India, helps revive the

SAARC process, build closer co-operation leading to eventual integration in various sectors, and then address the Kashmir issue. One perceptive observer said to me in a seminar on Kashmir in University of Hull, UK, “India will not cede an inch of Kashmir even after a bloody war, but Kashmir can be handled in an integrated framework under SAARC, where territorial affinities become less relevant to the growth and development in South Asia”.

Whatever may be a possible scenario ‘New Delhi has to resolve the Kashmir controversy to silence Pakistan forever and resume the bilateral relations in a healthier and friendlier setting. At any rate, New Delhi should be sending positive vibes to Islamabad treating it as a potential friend.

Admittedly, China is the real worry for India. It is run by an authoritarian Communist Party, has built a gigantic economy by exploiting its cheap human resource. Beijing perceives India to be a competitor in Asia. It is buying off India’s friendly neighbours with project finances. Of late, it is propping up Pakistan to contain India strategically. China is the only country in the world that is making territorial claims on all the countries it borders. It is making ‘fantastic’ claims on Indian territory.

Ludicrously, it objects to India’s current president visiting Arunachal Pradesh, one of India’s 29 states. It supports Pakistan on terrorism; blocks India’s entry into UN Security Council as a permanent member, although all other permanent members agree to it, and denies access to Nuclear Supply Group. Beijing, ungratefully, forgets that

Jawaharlal Nehru generously suggested China’s permanent membership in UNSC.

India has to seriously and strategically counter China’s designs in Asia. New Delhi has smartly drawn closer to Japan, another country aggrieved and hurt by China’s geo-politics. India-Japan partnership across the Globe—Asia and Africa — would checkmate China’s moves. The ‘Quad’ conceived and nurtured by Japan, comprising India, Japan, US, and Australia is the perfect instrument to stop China on its tracks.

During the latest ASEAN, and East Asia Summits India’s position in Asian stage was acknowledged by most countries. The nomenclatural change of Asia-Pacific into Indo-Pacific includes India into the equation, acknowledging India’s role, being vital to Asia’s security.

So far, New Delhi has done remarkably well, stitching strategic alliances with Japan, US, Israel, ASEAN and East-Asian countries. India can become an Asian Power, more effective and acceptable than China by being a model of politics and development, at home and abroad. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can no longer ignore the symbiotic link between domestic and foreign policies.

In the current globalised world, the efficacy of a country’s foreign policy is the function of the success in politics and economy at home and vice-e-versa: It seems the mandarins in South Block under leadership of NaMo are yet to learn this fundamental truth of foreign affairs. They will do well to recall the advice by the author of *realpolitik*, Professor Hans

J.Morgenthau, who said, “India cannot promote its laudable foreign policy objectives due to her chronic and widespread poverty”. To be sure, much water has flown down river Yamuna since, but not enough to propel India to the world stage. How is China flexing its muscle, if not for its economic might?

Obviously, NAMO is enjoying his new found status in the world. He is perceived to be one of the effective global leaders. Will he be able to retain this image, at least in Asian context, if he fails to shore up the economy and maintain the social equilibrium? In addition to addressing the domestic challenges, the prospects of India emerging as the Asian power also depend upon how India develops its relations with in neighbours. Modi made a sound start by inviting the heads of the neighbouring countries to his swearing – in ceremony in 2014. Also, he made his first foreign visit as Prime Minister to Bhutan. But China has surreptitiously slipped into India’s neighbourhood. New Delhi seems to have conceded, in advertently or otherwise, some space to China in her neighbourhood.

Modi’s visit to Nepal invited euphoric response, but our subsequent policies like supporting the Madhesi movement provoked anti-India feelings. Nepal has been the most trusted friend of India, but now courts China, supposedly to tap into its surplus money. Similar is the story with other neighbours. Being the largest country, India overawes its smaller neighbours. It must be sensitive to comparative geo-politics, and embark on positive engagement in the South-Asia region. That will be the hallmark of a big power.

Ayodhya Dispute: Supremacy of Constitution or faith?

Irfan Engineer

Babri Masjid is once again in news. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has taken an initiative to bring all stake holders for negotiating an out of court settlement. Apparently the initiative is in his personal capacity. However, Sri Sri Ravi Sahnkar is well connected with the BJP leaders. When he organized 'World Cultural Festival' on the Yamuna flood plains, the pontoon bridge for crossing over the river bed was constructed by none other than the Indian Army. He could get the Prime Minister of India to inaugurate the event. When the National Green Tribunal imposed Rs 5 crore as an interim environmental compensation on the foundation for the event's impact on the environment, he shirked from doing so and yet could go ahead with the event.

To firm up his initiative on settling the Ramjanmabhoomi – Babri Masjid (RJ-BM) dispute out of court, he met the Home Minister Mr. Rajnath Singh as well as the Chief Minister of UP. All the leaders of the Sangh Parivar and Hindu Supremacist organisations have declared their support to the initiative and expressed their desire to settle the dispute out of court. Even if technically the initiative is not on behalf of the state, it is apparent that it has blessings of the BJP led governments in the State as well as the Centre. However, in case the dispute is not settle, there is a window for both the Governments to dissociate with the initiative.

Earlier, in the month of March, Subramanian Swamy BJP leader and

nominated Rajya Sabha Member had sought an urgent hearing of the appeal against the order of Allahabad High Court dated 30th September 2010 in the RJBM title suit. Subramanian Swamy had no locus standi in the case and was not a party in the Appeal. Yet the Supreme Court exercised its discretion and even asked the BJP leader to talk to all parties to the case and bring them to negotiating table. In a surprise development, the Supreme Court on 21st March 2017 urged the rival parties in the Ram Janamabhoomi – Babri Masjid (RJ-BM) case to negotiate and resolve the dispute in a spirit of give and take. The then Chief Justice of India J. S. Khehar had offered himself to be a mediator should both the parties agree. However, after the Apex Court realized that Subramanian Swamy was not a party to the Appeal, it dismissed his Application for urgent hearing.

Vulnerability of the Muslim community

If RJ-BM dispute is news once again, there must be elections round the corner! And yes elections are round the corner! The civic polls will be held in the state of UP beginning November 22 in three phases. Around 30 million voters would be eligible to exercise their franchise in these polls to be held for over 650 posts, including 438 municipal boards, 202 town areas and 16 corporations, also comprising two newly constituted Ayodhya Nagar Nigam and Mathura-Vrindavan Nagar Nigam. The Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath had kicked off his campaign from Ayodhya on November 14. The forthcoming State Assembly elections in Gujarat are also increasingly becoming a tough fight for the BJP.

The upcoming municipal polls in UP would be a key test for the CM Yogi Adityanath who is also being projected as one of the important Hindutva icon by the BJP. The outcome of the civic poll would indicate the mood of the voters ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In fact the CM Adityanath had organized a grand Diwali celebration in Ayodhya with lighting record number of lamps and announced installation of statue of Lord Ram on the banks of River Saryu with tax payer's money. The programme included grand Aarti and performance of Ramlila by artists from Indonesia and Thailand. All this while hundreds of children suffering from encephalitis and other curable diseases have died in BRD Hospital in Gorakhpur where the CM has his political base. Children's deaths are a result of crumbling infrastructure of the hospital and lack of payment for oxygen supply. The public health expenditure in UP is abysmal for a population of 220 million. The public health budget was in fact reduced from Rs. 17,828 crores in 2016-17 to 15,834 in revised estimate for 2016. The budgeted amount on public health fell from Rs. 17,823 to 17,181 in the 2017-2018 budget.

However, more important reason behind the Hindu supremacist blessed initiative to settle the RJ-BM

dispute out of Court seems to be that the Muslim community is most vulnerable at present. The Hindu Supremacists believe that their combined political might may not be better at any other time. They are in a position to corner the Muslim leadership and coerce them into accepting a solution which favours Hindu Supremacists. The state encouraged sectarian division within the Muslim community in order to weaken them. From nowhere a section of Shia sect of the Muslim community claimed that the disputed land belonged to Shia Central Waqf Board.

Dividing Muslims and uniting Hindus

About 70 years after a local court in Faizabad ruled in favour of the Sunni Waqf claim over Babri Masjid, following a dispute with the Shia Waqf, the Shia Central Waqf Board has decided to challenge the old order and simultaneously suggested an “amicable settlement solution” to the RJ-BM dispute and suggesting the construction of new mosque at a distance from the temple. The Shia Central Waqf Board did not file any application to be impleaded as a party to the proceedings in any court all these years. The BJP has always tried to exploit the sectarian division among the Muslims. During the last General elections, Rajnath Singh met Shia Muslim leaders to divide the Muslim community. The BJP tries to convey that Shias, the Sufis and Muslim women are supporters of the BJP. Subramanian Swamy once said that the BJP needs to unite all Hindus and divide the Muslims.

Shia leaders publicly stated that they were willing to resolve the RJ-BM row and letting the Hindus construct Ram Temple on the land.

Mosque could be constructed elsewhere they said. This was the straw in the wind that the Hindu Supremacists wanted to clutch onto. Now, even a section of Muslims (should we say *sarkari* Muslims?) wanted a Ram Temple constructed on the disputed land and the recalcitrant could be coerced into accepting the terms propounded by Hindu supremacists. The *sarkari* Muslims would be accommodated somewhere on the lower rungs of power structure and indeed, some of them were promptly appointed to the UP Waqf Board.

The will of the Muslim community to resist any coercive attempt and let the institutions of democracy decide the dispute has to be broken. The Hindu Supremacists didn't have faith in the institutions of democracy, particularly the judiciary when they demolished the Babri Mosque and they don't seem to trust the judiciary to favour Hindu Supremacists and privilege faith over the law of the land. That is because the law of the land is clear. Faith of one community has no place in adjudicating disputes between two communities. The Hindu Supremacists seem to be in a hurry to pre-empt judicial adjudication by the Apex Court.

It is not surprising that All India Muslim Personal Law Board leaders have placed its faith on the judiciary and are willing to accept any judicial outcome. They at least stand a chance to argue their case on the basis of their title to the land. All those whom Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has assembled in Ayodhya would not touch the issue of title of the land under dispute with a barged pole. The only issue in Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's *darbar* in Ayodhya would be faith. Sri Sri has already indicated his solution to the dispute by putting

words in the mouth of Muslims. He said, “by and large” Muslims were not opposed to a temple on the site. How did he reach the conclusion when the major stake holder in the dispute – the Sunni Waqf Board has not shown its willingness to come to the negotiating table! To which Muslims he talked to and how did he reach the conclusion about views of ‘Muslims by and large’? Sri Sri is seen by even a section of Hindus who have fought for Ramjanmabhoomi as an outsider to the dispute who is trying to grab fame at the last moment on their hard work! Muslims are apprehensive as he has offered no concrete formula for resolution of the dispute.

There are Hindu Supremacists who want the entire 2.77 acres of land for construction of Ramjanmabhoomi Temple. Others want entire 67 acres of land which has been acquired by the Central Government around the 2.77 acres of land under dispute. Still others say no Mosque should be allowed in the region of *chauriyasi kosi* (84 kos or 168 miles) *parikrama* which would mean much beyond Ayodhya and Faizabad. Muslims in Sri Sri's *darbar* would be able to negotiate whether Mosque should be anywhere at all on the 67 acres of land acquired by the Central Govt. or beyond 67 acres or even beyond *chouryasi kosi parikrama*.

If today Hindu Supremacists are eager to reach a negotiated settlement, they opposed such moves earlier when they were not in a strong position. One out of many attempts was made by the Shankaracharya and religious leaders from Muslim community. Muslim religious leaders had then given favourable statements and nod at the initiative. They were hopeful of the

initiative leading to an amicable settlement with the spirit of give and take. However, the Sangh Parivar opposed the initiative as they then felt that a settlement would be reached without their involvement. Statements were planted in the media that Shankaracharya was a devotee of Shiv rather than Lord Ram. Shankaracharya withdrew from the initiative and the settlement did not materialize. The inhabitants of Ayodhya would have long settled the issue in the spirit of give and take had the dispute been left to them.

The Head Priest of Hanumangarh, the largest temple in Ayodhya, Mahant Gyandas has organized *iftaars* for Muslims inside his temple and repaired Mosque situated on the land owned by his temple with their funds. Muslims have invited Mahant Gyandas, inside their mosques. Such was the amicable relations between Hindus and Muslims of Ayodhya during the peak of Ram temple agitation. The agitators were mobilized from outside.

More than Temple or Mosque, we need to reclaim our democracy and democratic institutions which are being compromised in Sri Sri's initiative and that of the Hindu Supremacists that are gathering around him. A number of win-win solutions have been suggested. However the solutions won't be acceptable to either the Hindu Supremacists or to the Muslim communal leadership. The win-win solutions will succeed only with the marginalisation of both.

Press Release

Socialist Party's statement on Communal Persecution of Minorities in Bangladesh

The Socialist Party believes that it is the duty of every state to fully protect life, property, dignity and business of minority citizens with their religious identity. It is also the responsibility of the state to ensure that the minority population can live freely, enjoying full civil rights without any fear and discrimination. The very concept of modern nation-state and the instructions of the United Nations Organization (UNO) have made this very clear. But Bangladesh's governments have failed to fulfill this responsibility.

Bangladesh is the third country in the world as far as the Hindu population is concerned. Here the largest, about 1.5 crore population of Hindus, are living as citizens, after India and Nepal. But due to frequent attacks of Islamist fundamentalists and the failure of the government, the Hindu population is constantly declining in Bangladesh. According

to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the reason for this is that the Hindus have been fleeing from Bangladesh. According to statistics, in 1947 there was about 28 percent Hindu population in East Pakistan. In 1971, after the formation of Bangladesh, the first census was held in 1981, in which the Hindu population was 12 percent. After this, according to the 2011 census, there are about 9 percent Hindus left in Bangladesh.

The United Nations, several countries of the world, including India, civil rights organizations and independent researchers have been pressurizing the government of Bangladesh to stop communal violence against Hindus. But the situation is not improving.

In Bangladesh, incidents of communal persecution of minorities, especially Hindus take place frequently. During the Bangladesh

Liberation War in 1971, Pakistani army and Islamist communal elements specifically targeted the Hindus. In 1992, after the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, there were communal riots against Hindus in Bangladesh. International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in 2013 awarded death sentence to Jamaat-e-Islami vice-president Hussain Sayeedi for committing war crimes in the war of 1971 in which millions of civilians, mostly Hindus, were killed. Radical Islamists have accused the Hindus for the punishment given by the ICT and a widespread communal violence against them was witnessed in 20 districts. There were communal attacks on minority Hindus during the 2014 general elections. This series continues in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The new trend of communal violence against Hindus has been due to pictures and comments

perceived as blasphemy or defamation of Islam, Prophet Muhammad and Quran are uploaded on social site Facebook. This trend started from the year 2012 and its ire came to Bangladeshi Buddhists also. In reaction to a objectionable Facebook post, allegedly uploaded by a Buddhist boy, in 2012, a crowd of about 25,000 destroyed 22 Buddhist monasteries and 50 houses. The latest example is an objectionable post on Facebook that led to the burning of more than 30 Hindu houses in Thakurbadi village of Rangpur district on 10 November 2017. In most such incidents, it is believed that Islamist fundamentalists themselves use Facebook with an intention to make the minorities their easy target.

The present Awami League government, which calls itself secular, often says that the attacks against Hindus made by fundamentalist elements are politically motivated. In the national/international media and other reports, mainly Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), its student organization Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are named for organizing and promoting Islamist fundamentalist elements. The name of international terrorist organizations like ISIS also comes in. BNP leader Khaleida Zia formed a coalition government in 2001 with Jamaat-e-Islami. However, Jamaat and BNP both deny their involvement in communal persecution of Hindus.

Experts also point out the economic reasons behind the attacks on minority Hindus in Bangladesh, besides religious and political reasons. According to them, particularly due to 'The Vested Property Act', socially and politically

influential people of the majority keep encouraging radical elements for communal unrest with the intention to grab the lands of Hindus.

Socialist Party urges the ruling Awami League and all opposition political parties, particularly Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, to ensure full security of life, property, dignity and business of minority citizens in Bangladesh. So that Hindus, Buddhists and Christians can live freely in their country enjoying full civil rights without any fear and discrimination. At the same time, the party demands that the government should immediately arrest and convict the criminals involved in the incidents of communal persecution.

The Socialist Party would like to warn that the situation in Bangladesh is a lesson for India. The ruling class of India should follow the principle of secularism as outlined in the Indian Constitution. Unfortunately, the leaders of the stature of Prime Minister and Chief Minister in the present UP government, openly show contempt to and ridicule the principle of secularism. This is a very dangerous situation for the country and society. Bangladesh, created in 1971, was declared constitutionally a secular state in 1972. But the military dictator General Irshad made Islam the state religion of Bangladesh in 1988 which was totally contrary to the slogans of Bangladesh's freedom movement - secularism and democracy. Muhammad Ali Jinnah also decided to make Pakistan a secular democratic country. But the situation there is obvious for everyone to see. The Socialist Party believes that democracy cannot run without secularism.

– Dr. Abhijit Vaidya

(Continued from Page 5)

need for qualification for entry into the profession of journalism. Since the media is a fully developed field and has some influence on the lives of the people, the time has now come when some qualification should be prescribed by law."

I do not agree that there should be any remote control. I would have rather an undisciplined press in a democratic set up than a disciplined press in an orderly society. The polity runs by the elected representatives and may look like a rule by mob. It is any time preferable to a disciplined autocratic rule.

–Kuldip Nayar

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
- Published by Rajkamal Prakashan, 2a Netaji Subhash Road, New Delhi 11002
3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.
4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

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Freedom Of Speech For Whom

Some constitutional and philosophical underpinnings

Justice B.Sudershan Reddy

When I was asked, to deliver this Keynote Speech my initial reaction, momentarily, was to politely decline the invitation. The primary impulse was that the pace of events, the intensity of emotions being expressed, and indeed the manner in which they have begun to be expressed presents an immediacy that seems to make careful analysis and considered opinion more difficult. A knee jerk reaction would more often than not be destructive of reasoned and reasonable debate in a world that is necessarily to be viewed from multiple viewpoints, interests and heterodox perspectives.

The sorts of social, political and economic forces and narratives that have arisen and coalitions of them that are being coupled with various identity issues in a vicious cocktail, present only a very hazy picture, and there is a need for a great deal of introspection about where we had begun, with what goals, and what went wrong. The only thing that seems less hazy is the rapid retreat of the normative foundations of forms and purposes of collective action – on the international, national, sub-national and indeed even local levels. It wasn't too long ago many of us could speak of those normative foundations, of tolerance of multiple viewpoints and the power of peaceful discourse and ideas, as being strongly grounded in human cultures. The killing of more than 220 journalists in the past seven years across the world, that was slowly filtering through seemed to indicate

a strong change in the direction of the winds. They implied a great churning.

The killing of Gauri Lankesh, as she was opening the gate of her house, literally rammed that churning into our homes. The murder of Santanu Bhowmik just a few days ago, and following so closely on the killing of Gauri Lankesh, almost seems like a further emphasis of the point of the killings: sporadic protestations do not have any impact on groups, political and cultural organizations that are bent on destroying the liberal spaces of open discourse and dissent. These killings seem to presage a great struggle looming before us.

Yet that momentary disinclination to speak was overcome by the need to speak. This so, not because I believed that what I have to say necessarily holds any magical keys or greater valence than what many other shocked voices have been saying. But, my choice to speak is based on my perception that speech itself is under attack. The very notion that we, as human beings, have a primordial right to express our opinions, describe our circumstances, have a say in how we are organized in various associations that we choose to be a part of at various levels of collective action and what we are organized to achieve, is under attack. That existential threat, increasingly perceived by many reasonable people as being pushed forward by forces of in-

egalitarianism, needs to be fought. Many people realize that those forces undergird the argument that a small number has a social right to usurp most of the benefits of social action, leaving very little for the rest. And in the quest for greater and greater degrees of usurpation, those forces are increasingly attacking the foundations of liberal democracies – that human beings are capable of engaging in reasoned and reasonable debates to set and describe the paths to goals deemed as important for all, and that protection of human dignity of all is a necessary envelope in which those other common goals are to be achieved. Free speech is viewed as necessarily problematic to those who would usurp everything, and hence the destruction of free speech becomes an essential component of imposition of the logic of discipline upon the masses, their opinions and their voices.

I have always said on various platforms that it is important to organize public spaces for exchange of views. This is very important for those of us who specialize in various professions. As experts we tend to become limited in our perspectives by virtue of specialization. I believe that the range of ideas, concepts and structures of events that journalists and lawyers can discuss is vast. Yet, lawyers – with their intimate knowledge of institutional structures of democracy -, and journalists – as the primary purveyors of news and

creators of platforms for public intellectuals – seem to meet more as adversaries rather than as collaborators in the task of taking forward the project of a constitutional democracy. This, I believe, is an unsatisfactory state of affairs, and something that we can attempt to rectify in the future.

Consequently, I suggest that what I say here be viewed as the tentative sharing of certain perspectives and view points, and to learn, in turn, from the ones assembled here, from their perspectives, of where we are as bearers of the right to “free speech” and to what purpose might that speech be used for. Given, the nature of that enterprise – its magnitude and complexity – I would also have to humbly submit that I am honoured to have been asked to contribute. Additionally, I would also like to further add, that I do not view such honour as deserved but only incidental to being given the space to deliberate with such an august gathering of public intellectuals.

The standard content that one would expect a lifelong lawyer to deliver at such a meeting of journalists and media personnel would be about the various constitutional protections, and the constitutional gloss – in the form of various judgements by the Supreme Court of India about the guarantee of “freedom of expression” in Article 19 of the Constitution.¹ Much of the justification of that freedom, which has been interpreted to include the freedom of the press² as being equivalent to that of a citizen, has been premised on the utilitarian and instrumental purposes that such freedom serves in constructing, strengthening and protecting a deliberative democracy, and is to be treated, consequently, as a defining

feature of democracy itself.³ It is now well recognized in the Indian constitutional gloss that democracy as government by the people is vitally dependent on the availability, to citizens, spaces for frank and public discussion⁴ subject only to reasonable restrictions. As observed by the Supreme Court:

“Democracy is Government by the people via open discussion. The democratic form of government itself demands from its citizens an active and intelligent participation..... public discussion with people’s participation is a basic feature and a rational process of democracy which distinguishes it from all other forms of Government.”⁵

The concept of democracy, and the notion of a stake for the citizen—every citizen – in the decision as to who would hold the powers of the collective was itself considered revolutionary for India. Many constitutional experts had opined that - when our founding fathers had elected for universal adult franchise - with vast illiteracy and poverty the experiment with democracy would not survive for long. The danger that the poor and the illiterate would not take their right to vote seriously has been largely belied. As study after study has revealed, it is mostly the poor and the illiterate who turn out to vote in large numbers – or at least in much greater proportion than the well heeled and/or cultural elites. That India has survived, as a popular democracy for nearly seventy years, is largely due to the exercise of that right by the masses and the manner in which institutions of a constitutional democracy were carefully nurtured and built – on larger principles of tolerance, a deep commitment to an ontological assumption of political equality, and

a leadership that was willing to accept and protect the formal trappings of political equality.

While the involvement of the masses, and in fact their consolidation for formation of political groupings to compete thrived, we seemed to have had a greater difficulty in constructing a broader culture of “epistemic justice”. The phrase “epistemic justice” refers to the rights and being repulsed by the consequences of the deprivation of those rights, to be involved and heard in the process of deliberation of who gets elected, what ends and goals are chosen for prioritisation and the methods used to pursue those goals, and how the nation and/or other political and social spaces are constructed and sustained.

M.N. Roy, one of the doyens of Indian Humanism, had very early in his deliberations (in 1946) understood the dangers posed by tendencies in parliamentary democracy to become fascist. His argument had been that charismatic leadership combined with the nature of competitive party politics, and competition for electoral office, could lead to centralization of power. With the review of performance of elected representatives being ultimately bookended only by elections – and the potential tendency of citizenry to attribute legitimacy to all actions by the elected, especially when uninformed about the actions taken by those wielding power and the rationale for the decisions by the elites and their consequences, both to themselves and to others – M.N. Roy was worried that massive injustices could be carried out in the name of the poor and the masses. This was borne out by history, with the emergence of dictatorial and fascist

regimes that used popular mandates, and the platforms of those mandates, to proclaim supreme power to take decisions and make the institutions of the State to undertake any and all actions without the citizenry itself having the rights to raise any questions about them. A plethora of emotive factors were used to sustain such claims: from religion, to ethnicity, from ideology to personality, and from language to skin colour – every possible division had been used to divide citizens into monads, concerned at best with the immediacy of their own circumstances.

In such a setting, the role of the media was essentially conceived and expected to be that of a watch dog; to ensure that it provides the citizenry with the space for news, inter alia, about the decisions being taken and the reasons being asserted by those in power for such decisions and actions, and their consequences, both potential and actual. The primordial function of the media was to ensure that removal of citizenry from the communicative processes regarding state action would not lead to either misuse or of misdirected use of collective power. Democracy, in this sense was not just about voting, but about construction of institutions in the civil society – such as the media – to prevent the abuse of power and epistemic injustice to the citizens.

Consequently, even if one were to begin justifying the right to “free speech” on the instrumental ground that it enhances democratic participation, the right to free speech essentially gets located in the very notion of human dignity, the core minimal content of rights that each and every citizen/human being possesses by virtue of being human. If being “left alone” itself is a

fundamental right as observed by the Supreme Court in the Privacy Case⁶, the source of this right is located in the notion of human dignity. But it goes beyond that. The right to be left alone, at least in certain zones of individual autonomy that ought to be protected as an element of the right to life itself, and pursuit of life’s goals, is also accompanied by the human desire, and necessity in life, of being a part of associations to achieve common goals. The Nation State, and its various sub-levels of political administration, is of course the most prominent and primordial of such associations for collective action. How that association is run, and to have a say in policy making – through raising voices in support or in dissent, to form opinions in favour of the ruling coalitions or in opposition – as well as in what the nation-state protects or does not protect is a vital ingredient, nay an essential component, of human dignity. Individual autonomy is not capable of being sustained in the absence of this aspect of epistemic justice. The citizens ought to have, and our Constitution guarantees, the right of the Citizen to not just be informed, but also to drive the public discourse about the affairs of the state and the public sphere in general.

I would have thought existing constitutional gloss had made this rather clear and hence it was a bit shocking to me to read that the Attorney General had argued, on behalf of the Union of India, that human beings who are poor and/or illiterate have no need for a right to privacy. This was a rather shocking submission to make, as it represented an assault on the very ontological foundations of what we have come to understand “human beings” to be – as embodiments of a substantive core of human dignity. In this regard, the Supreme Court of India very

categorically and strongly, and I might add justifiably, rebuffed such a suggestion. The words of Justice Chandrachud in the recently delivered judgement are worth recounting *in extenso*:

“In our view, the submission that the right to privacy is an elitist construct which stands apart from the needs and aspirations of the large majority constituting the rest of society, is unsustainable. This submission betrays a misunderstanding of the constitutional position. Our Constitution places the individual at the forefront of its focus, guaranteeing civil and political rights in Part III and embodying an aspiration for achieving socio-economic rights in Part IV. The refrain that the poor need no civil and political rights and are concerned only with economic well-being has been utilised through history to wreak the most egregious violations of human rights. Above all, it must be realised that it is the right to question, the right to scrutinize and the right to dissent which enables an informed citizenry to scrutinize the actions of government. Those who are governed are entitled to question those who govern, about the discharge of their constitutional duties including in the provision of socio-economic welfare benefits. The power to scrutinize and to reason enables the citizens of a democratic polity to make informed decisions on basic issues which govern their rights. The theory that civil and political rights are subservient to socio-economic rights has been urged in the past and has been categorically rejected in the course of constitutional adjudication by this Court.”⁷

(To be concluded)

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**Moody's Upgrades India's
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'unconventionally'**
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**Farmers Freedom from
Debt Bill**

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Mandir and Masjid can Co-Exist

Kuldip Nayar

ON December 6, the demolition of the Babri masjid would be 25 years old. Instead of making amends for what the Congress government did in 1992 with the connivance of then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party government is bent upon building a temple at the site where the masjid stood once.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has made a statement that only a 'grand temple' would be built in Ayodhya and nothing else. This is unfair to the Muslims or the liberals who support the country's diversity and had come to agree that both the mosque and the temple could stand side-by-side at the site. However, the demolition remains a blot on India's secularism. To build 'only' the temple would tantamount to rubbing salt in the wound that was inflicted.

I recall that after the demolition, which initiated countrywide Hindu-Muslim clashes, Prime Minister Rao convened a meeting of senior journalists to explain what had happened. He sought the media cooperation in quenching the fire. He

said that the central government was helpless because of the determination by hundreds of *kar sevaks* to demolish the masjid. But Madhu Limaye, the late Socialist leader, later told me the puja that Rao performed was meant to camouflage the demolition. When an aide whispered into his ears that the masjid had been demolished, he opened his eyes.

Rao could have easily acted before the demolition took place. The proclamation to impose President's rule was ready a fortnight earlier. It was awaiting the cabinet approval. The Prime Minister did not convene its meeting. When the demolition began, there were frantic calls to the Prime Minister's Office.

Even if the Congress were to deny the allegation against Rao, the party has not yet explained how a small temple had come up overnight at the site where the masjid stood earlier. The centre was then in full control because UP had been put under President's rule after dismissal of the state government. In any case, the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute had transcended the state borders and the centre was following

the developments every day. The Justice Manmohan Singh Liberhan commission's silence on Rao's behaviour was meant to cover up his complicity and that of the Congress party.

"Let the temple come up." This was the remark by Atal Behari Vajpayee when I asked for his reaction to the destruction of the masjid one day after the incident. I was surprised by his comment because I considered him a liberal force in the BJP. In fact, the Liberhan Commission had named Vajpayee as one of the collaborators in pulling down the mosque. How could he have reacted differently when he was a party to the "meticulously planned" scheme to demolish the mosque?

That L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, the other two BJP leaders, were co-conspirators was known on December 6, 1992, itself. The surprising name for me was that of Vajpayee. The Vajpayee, when he was Prime Minister, was a changed person. He had led a bus of intellectuals and journalists to Lahore to give the message of peace and conciliation to the neighbours.

The indictment has exposed our polity because all the three came to occupy top positions in the country. Vajpayee became the Prime Minister, Advani the Home Minister and Joshi, the Human Resources Development Minister. If all the three were collaborators in the demolition of the Babri masjid, they were dishonest in taking the oath of office which demanded that the oath-taker would work for the country's unity and uphold the constitution that mentions secularism in the preamble. The Liberhan Commission has said that they were

among the 68 who were "culpable" in taking the country to the brink of "communal discord."

Not only that. The three leaders acted against the Supreme Court's order "not to disturb the status quo." In other words, they made a mockery of the country's judiciary and the constitution to which they swore before assuming power. And they ruled for six years without a tug of conscience.

The question is not only legal but also moral. How can the planned demolition be squared up with the holding of office by Vajpayee, Advani and Joshi? This is a matter that the nation should have debated to find an answer. Those who have no clean hands should not be allowed to defile the temple of Parliament.

Meanwhile, Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has been making efforts for mediation among the stakeholders. During his recent visit to Ayodhya, the spiritual guru has said that the problem could be solved through dialogue and mutual respect rather than "conceit and accusation." Even UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath, whom the guru had met, agreed to provide all necessary support.

The spiritual guru's meeting with the UP chief minister came in the backdrop of BJP launching its civil poll campaign from Ayodhya with promises of redevelopment. However, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an arm of the RSS, and the Muslims Personal Law Board has rejected Sri Sri's offer to mediate on the issue. The feeling within the BJP leadership is that the decision be best left to the Supreme Court, which is slated to hear the case on December 5.

"Ram temple matter is in the Supreme Court and I think we should let the legal process be complete. Other discussions can be held after that," said Ram Madhav, BJP's National General Secretary. Similarly, the VHP also voiced its concerns over the Art of Living founder trying to resolve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.

"This is not for the first time that Sri Sri has taken this initiative. In 2001, he made attempts but failed. The reaction to his efforts was the same as today," VHP joint general secretary Surendra Jain had said. The real hitch is the statement by Bhagwat that only the temple would come up in Ayodhya and nothing else. When Muslims have, by and large, come to accept that the temple could be built by the side of the mosque, the RSS chief's lament is unwarranted.

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Moody's Upgrades India's Sovereign Rating: What Does it Really Mean?

Neeraj Jain

On November 17, 2017, international rating agency Moody's on Friday upgraded India's sovereign bond rating by two notches to Baa2 Stable from its lowest investment grade Baa3 Positive. This was the first ratings upgrade by Moody's for India since 2004.

Let us first explain these ratings, before going ahead with our analysis. The various ratings of Moody's are: Aaa, Aa, A, Baa, Ba, B, Caa, Ca, C. Aaa is the highest rating, and it means 'Highest quality, lowest risk.' C is the lowest, defined as 'Typically in default, with little possibility of recovery of principal and interest'. The category Baa that Moody's has given to India means 'Medium grade, moderate credit risk, speculative characteristics'. Attached to all these categories are one of three numeric codes 1, 2 and 3, which stand for stand for 'high', 'medium' and 'low' respectively. And attached to each numeric code are one of the three categories: Positive, Stable and Weak. Thus, when Moody's upgraded India's rating from Baa3 Positive to Baa2 Stable, it is an upgradation by two notches: Baa3 Positive to Baa2 Weak to Baa2 Stable.

What does this upgradation mean? It basically means that Moody's has given the thumbs up for foreign investors to increase their investments in India. Why? According to newspaper reports, Moody's cited the BJP government's 'wide-ranging program of economic

and institutional reforms' for this ratings upgrade. These include:

- its efforts to reduce corruption, formalise economic activity and improve tax collection and administration, including through demonetisation and GST
- its efforts to reduce its expenditures, including through measures like targeted delivery of benefits through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system
- measures such as Aadhaar
- the measures taken by it to address non-performing loans in the banking system
- the fast pace of growth in incomes etc.

It further added that if the government took steps to further reduce its expenditures, and implemented key pending reforms, including land and labour reforms, that would help India further upgrade its sovereign rating.¹

This news made the headlines in almost all newspapers. Finance Minister Jaitley immediately termed this as a "belated recognition of all the positive steps taken in India in last few years." He went on to say, "it is a recognition and an endorsement of the reform process that has gone on in India particularly in last 3-4 years where a number of structural reforms have taken place

which has placed India on a path of high trajectory growth. It's also a recognition of the fact that India continues to follow a path of fiscal prudence that has brought stability to the Indian economy." He further added: "If you look at the big picture for three years in a row India is the fastest growing amongst the major economies. India is one of the few economies undertaking structural reforms. I'm sure that many who had doubts in their minds about India's reform process would now seriously introspect on their own positions itself."

The PMO tweeted "Moody's believes that the @narendramodi Government's reforms will improve business climate, enhance productivity, stimulate foreign and domestic investment, and ultimately foster strong and sustainable growth."²

This upgrade giving a thumbs up to the performance of the economy comes at a strange time, just when all the economic indicators show that the economy is performing terribly, with no signs of improvement in the near future. A few statistics.

India: External Accounts

Our external accounts were never in a worse state:

1. Our external debt crossed \$485 billion in June 2017, making India one of the world's most indebted countries.³ The Indian

economy has become totally dependent on foreign capital inflows, including both foreign direct investment inflows and speculative capital inflows, to stay afloat. All the glib talk about our large foreign exchange reserves is meaningless; as we have shown elsewhere, our foreign exchange reserves are much less than our 'vulnerable external liabilities' (foreign capital that has come into the country that can leave the country very quickly).⁴ This means that if foreign investors decide to pull out their money from India—which they can do at the tap of a computer key—our foreign exchange reserves are simply insufficient to prevent the economy from once again plunging into foreign exchange bankruptcy, similar to what happened in 1990-91.

2. In financial year 2017-18, our external accounts situation is getting worse. During the first quarter of this year, India's current account deficit (CAD) rose to a four-year high of \$14.3 billion. Our trade deficit for the first six months of this year zoomed by a whopping 166% to \$43.8 billion as compared to \$16.5 billion in April-September 2016.⁵

Economy Heading Into Recession

1. The economy is slowing down. Official data show that the India's GDP or gross domestic product slowed down to 5.7% on a year-on-year basis during the April-June quarter of 2017-18. More significantly, this was the sixth consecutive quarter for which the GDP growth has slowed down. It had touched a high of 9.1% in January-March 2016 quarter. After that it has continuously slowed down, to 7.9%, 7.5%, 7.0% and 6.1% in

the subsequent quarters, to 5.7% in Q1 of 2017-18.⁶

2. One may argue that even this growth rate of 5.7% is not bad, but in all probability, even this is a huge overestimate. That is because this quarterly data is largely based on data provided by the corporate sector and some other organised sectors of the economy. It does not include data from the unorganised sectors of the economy, which contributes to 45% of the GDP. This sector was hit hard by demonetisation and now the government decision to roll-in GST. While there are no official surveys that capture the extent to which this sector was hit by demonetisation, private surveys indicate that that this sector was badly affected, by as much as 60-80%. It also led to a huge increase in unemployment, as more than 92% of our workforce is employed in the unorganised sector. Basing himself on data provided by these private surveys, the noted economist Prof. Arun Kumar argues that it is possible that the GDP growth rate has actually fallen to way below 5.7%, and in all probability is near-zero.⁷

3. The drastic slowdown in the economy is also indicated by the collapse in credit off-take. Low credit off-take suggests that production and investment has slowed down. Credit off-take was already at a whopping six-decade low of 5.08 per cent during the financial year 2016-17. It in fact turned negative in July and August 2017, something that has never happened before.⁸

4. The Index of Industrial Production, a measure of India's factory output, turned negative (-0.1%) in June 2017, the first time it has happened in the past four years. The IIP growth for the first

quarter of 2018 (April-June) was only 2%, the lowest in the past eight quarters.⁹

5. The Modi Government has waived bank loans given to the rich in record amounts. It has written off bank loans to corporate houses and the rich to the tune of a mind-boggling Rs 1.87 lakh crore during its three years in power. On top of it, has also restructured loans to the rich whose total amount may even be more than this loan write-off figure.¹⁰ And yet, Indian bank's bad loans climbed to an astounding Rs 9.5 lakh crore by the end of June 2017.¹¹

Those were broad economic indicators. So far as the people are concerned, the situation has never been more worse:

Terrible Unemployment Situation

1. The overwhelming number of jobs in the economy, nearly 93%, continue to be in the informal sector, characterised by low wages, no job security and no social security benefits. And this has been so for the past more than two decades. The Planning Commission admits that during the decade 2000-10, the economy created no formal jobs, in fact the total number of formal sector jobs actually declined in absolute terms!¹²

2. The actual employment situation is far worse than suggested by the above figures, as economy is simply not creating jobs for all the new entrants into the job market, even in the informal sector. Total number of people entering the job market is estimated to be 13 million per year.¹³ Official figures indicate that barely 40% of the new entrants

into the job market are getting jobs. Barely 85.8 million got jobs during the period 1993-94 to 2009-10.¹⁴

3. This situation has further worsened under Modi rule. The quarterly surveys carried out by the Labour Bureau of selected labour intensive organised sectors finds that employment generation in 2016 had fallen to just 25% of the jobs generated during 2009-11.¹⁵ A more recent study says that there was an absolute decline in employment during the first two years of the Modi Government (2014-16), possibly the first time this has happened since independence.¹⁶

Appalling Poverty Levels

India's poverty levels are appalling. The Government of India claims that that poverty levels in the country have fallen from 37.2 percent in 2004–05 to 29.8 percent in 2009–10, and then within two years to 21.9% in 2011-12!¹⁷ A closer look reveals their trickery: the Planning Commission has deliberately lowered India's poverty line to the shamelessly low level of Rs 27.2 per day in rural areas and Rs 33.3 per day in urban areas (for 2011-12).¹⁸ In other words, our poverty line does not measure poverty, but destitution. Basing herself on the original definition of poverty line accepted by India's Planning Commission in the 1970s, wherein all people unable to access 2200 / 2100 calories per day in rural / urban areas are considered poor, the noted economist Utsa Patnaik has made estimates of the number of people in the country who are living below this poverty line using data from the NSSO surveys of 2004–05 and 2009–10. Her estimates show that:

- In 2004–05, the percentage of people in rural India unable to access 2,200 calories was 69.5 percent; this percentage had gone up to an appalling 75.5 percent in 2009–10!
- 64.5 percent of the urban population was unable to reach 2,100 calories energy intake in 2004–05; this figure too had gone up to 73 percent in 2009–10!¹⁹

To most people fed on a daily diet of media propaganda that India is rapidly growing and is an emerging superpower, these figures would appear to be an exaggeration. But these distressing figures are borne out by other surveys too:

a. The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS), established in 2004, estimated that 77 percent Indians lived below Rs 20 a day. This figure is in fact more than Utsa Patnaik's estimates for poverty in 2004–05.²⁰

b. India is one of the world's worst performing countries in providing its citizens two square meals a day. The Global Hunger Index, a report published by the International Food Policy Research Institute, ranked India at 100 out of 119 countries in its latest report released in 2017.²¹

c. Data from the National Family Health Survey–4 (2015–16) show that 38.4 percent of children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition, because of which their growth is stunted (low height for age).²²

Analysing Moody's Upgradation of the Indian Economy

If the economy is in such terrible state, then why is Moody's praising the Modi Government and has upgraded India's rating?

The truth is, Moody's is not at all concerned about the state of Indian economy, it has not upgraded India's rating because it is doing well - which it is not, as all the above facts testify. The real reason why Moody's has given the thumbs up to Modi Government's economic policies is because it is continuing with the policies of globalisation–liberalisation–privatisation that have been implemented in the country for the last more than two decades. These policies are being implemented at the behest of the governments of the developed countries led by the USA, and the international financial institutions controlled by them, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (or IMF). The reason why successive Indian Government's at the Centre have been dutifully implementing their dictates since 1991 is because of our huge foreign debt, which under the Modi Government has now topped \$485 billion. (Discussing this issue in greater detail is beyond the scope of this article.)²³ The objective of these economic reforms is to remould the Indian economy and allow big corporations—both foreign and Indian—to acquire decisive control over it so that they can maximise their profits.

This can be easily understand by taking a look at Modi's policy of demonetisation that has been praised by Moody's. No one who knows anything about economics will praise demonetisation. Yet, Moody's praises the Modi Government for this, saying that it was a serious effort to reduce corruption and formalise economic

activity. As we have discussed elsewhere,²⁴ demonetisation was not an attack on corruption, that is just a lot of hot air. Where Moody's is right is in stating that it was a serious effort to formalise the economy. Demonetisation was indeed an attack on India's vast informal sector. The three biggest components of India's vast unorganised or informal sector are:

- i. Agricultural sector, on which 53% of the population depend for their livelihoods;
- ii. Small-scale or unorganised retail sector, which accounts for around 9% of total employment;
- iii. Small-scale or unorganised manufacturing sector, which accounts for 7.5% of total employment.

Why does Moody's want the government of India to attack this vitally important sector that provides 93% of the employment in the country and contributes nearly 50% of the GDP. The reason is, the big corporations stand to benefit. The foreign and big Indian corporations are interested in destroying India's informal sector and corporatising the Indian economy because it will give a further boost to their profits. Thus, for example, the big shopping malls will obviously want to destroy India's small scale retail sector so that all Indians will be forced to go to the malls to buy their needs. Likewise, agribusiness corporations want to destroy India's small farmers so that they can take over their lands and corporatise Indian agriculture. India's informal sector was already struggling for survival under the neoliberal economic reforms being implemented in the country since 1991 in the name of globalisation.

Now, in the name of demonetisation and cashless economy, the Modi Government has launched yet another offensive to further cripple it. No wonder that Moody's is full of praise for it.

The unfortunate truth is, Modi-Jaitley are implementing the World Bank dictated neoliberal policies at an even faster pace than the previous UPA Government. This is the real reason for Moody's upgrading India's sovereign rating. We give a few more examples.

1. In 2015-16, the new BJP government twice announced huge liberalisation of foreign direct investment (FDI) rules for foreign investors, and proudly declared that these reforms have made the country the most open in the world. It has gone to the extent of permitting FDI even in defence. It does not matter to Moody's that the more the FDI inflows, the more the profit outflows, which push the economic into deeper external debt crisis.

2. Ever since India began globalisation in 1991, foreign financial corporations have been demanding that the Indian Government end its control over the country's financial sector, in other words, privatise it, and allow foreign investors to enter and take it over. The BJP Government has taken several steps in this direction, including getting the Insurance Laws Amendment Bill passed by Parliament to increase FDI inflows into the insurance sector, and setting up the Banking Boards Bureau as an important step towards eventual privatisation of the banking sector, and gradually privatising the pension funds. That these steps will endanger the lakhs of crores of rupees of savings of the people that are deposited in these

public sector financial institutions, and will be devastating for the Indian economy in the long run, is of no consequence for Moody's; all that matters is the present profits of foreign investors.²⁵

3. The Modi Government is diligently implementing yet another policy demanded by India's foreign investors, that it reduce the fiscal deficit. Now, for an economy like India, a high fiscal deficit is actually good for the economy. The theory, that high levels of fiscal deficit relative to GDP will adversely impact growth, is humbug. John Maynard Keynes, one of the greatest economists of the 20th century, had debunked it long ago. He had argued 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. All developed countries, when faced with recessionary conditions, have implemented Keynesian economic principles and resorted to high levels of public spending and high fiscal deficits.²⁶ Then why do Moody's and the big foreign investors want the Indian Government to reduce its fiscal deficit?

Well, the truth is, they are not really concerned about the fiscal deficit. This can be explained by a simple argument. The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government's expenditures over receipts. Even a cursory look at the policies being pursued by the Government of India reveals that it is giving away lakh of crore of rupees as subsidies to the rich. Why don't Moody's and the foreign corporations demand that

the government reduce these huge give-aways and thereby reduce the fiscal deficit? But in the new economic lexicon of these foreign scoundrels, these concessions are called 'incentives' and are considered essential for 'growth'. Note that Moody's has no problems with the government writing off bad loans of public sector banks, it in fact has praised this. Then why are they pressing the Government of India to reduce its fiscal deficit? The real reason is: they want the Indian Government to reduce the concessions being given to the poor, which are aimed at making available essential welfare services like education, health, food, transport, electricity, etc. to them at affordable rates. They give these concessions are given the derisive name 'subsidies', and are demanding that these be drastically reduced in the name of containing the fiscal deficit. As the quality of these services deteriorates, that gives the government the excuse to privatise them, resulting in fabulous profits for the private sector.

- This is precisely why Moody's praises the government's efforts to implement Direct Benefit Transfer. This, together with Aadhaar, is nothing but a step to reduce government food subsidies and gradually wind up the public distribution system. It will lead to a huge increase in food prices, as the PDS was an important measure to check hoarding of foodgrains and speculation in food prices, and will spell absolute disaster for the millions of impoverished people in the country.²⁷

To conclude, the upgradation of India's sovereign rating by Moody's is not an indicator of how well the Indian economy is doing for the

people, but is an indicator of how well the economy is doing for profit maximisation of giant foreign and Indian corporations. India is on SALE, and the foreign investors and their ratings agencies are celebrating.

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Press Release

Farmers Freedom from Debt Bill

On 20th November, the Kisan Mukti Sansad began in New Delhi, as a culmination of the Kisan Mukti Yatra of more than 10 thousand kilometers by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee in 19 states. Lakhs of farmers participated in Kisan Mukti Sansad. Since morning, thousands of farmers started marching with flags and sloganeering from Ramlila grounds, Ambedkar Bhavan, Gurudwara Rakabganj and different railway stations to reach Kisan Mukti Sansad at Parliament Street. The Sansad started with paying tribute to the farmers martyred in Mandsaur and other police firings, to farmers who had committed suicide and to farmers of Yavatmal, who died due to pesticide poisoning.

V. M. Singh, convener of AIKSCC, welcomed the farmers and said farming had become a loss making activity which was beneficial before. That’s why we are reminding the Prime Minister of this country about his promises of farm loan waiver and assurance of doubling farmer’s income. All the previous farm loans must be waived off. PM has to fulfill his promises when farmers showed faith in him during elections. After that Medha Patkar, leader of Narmada Bachao Andolan and National Alliance of People’s Movements (NAPM), chaired the

assembly of 545 women of families of farmers who had committed suicide and many other women farmers. Kavita Kurungati, a woman farmer, and convener of Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA) put forward the issues of women farmers in detail and emphasized on the need of passing the bill for loan waiver and ensuring prices of farm produce at least raise to 1.5 times of the input cost.

It was shocking to hear the stories shared by women of the bereaved families. They felt for the first time that someone was listening to their grievances and were hopeful that no other family will face the consequences, which they had suffered due to farmer’s suicide. Farmers will not commit suicide but will resist now for their demands, asserted by them.

While addressing the women’s parliament, Medha Patkar said that this is a historic moment when women from all over the country have gathered for their parliament and not only they are discussing their issues but also putting forward the bill to Kisan Mukti Sansad, aimed at bettering lives of farmers, peasants, farm workers, adivasis, landless, tenant farmers, fishworkers. She said that Govt. have displaced more than 10 crores farmers from all over

the country including farmers of Narmada Valley without complete rehabilitation. Putting forward the need of alternative development policy, she declared the current policy disastrous for farmers, workers and others. We want development for all, not disaster. Women farmers raised their hands and approved the bill.

Hannan Mollah, president of AIKS, presented the Farmer's Freedom From Debt Bill, 2017 and the former MP, and Raju Shetty, MP and president of Swabhimani Shetkaari Sangathan, supported the कृषि उपज लाभकारी मूल्य गारंटी बिल.

Amidst applause, Convener, V M Singh felicitated Raju Shetty for joining AIKSCC leaving the ruling alliance of Maharashtra Government and contributing significantly to farmer's movement of Maharashtra, and former MLA Amra Ram for contributing significantly to farmer's movements of Rajasthan.

Hannan Mollah said that Government has looted the farmers by paying them less continuously and forced them into debt. This in turn caused the suicide of more than 5 lakh farmers in the country. Farmers will not allow this exploitation now. AIKSCC will not allow the Government to loot the farmers anymore, especially when governments are giving easy concessions to corporates. He also said that farmer's organizations from all over the country have consistently demanded for loan waiver but we are not only demanding but also presenting the bill for the Parliament to discuss and approve. Now, any small loan waivers cannot work for farmers, we need a comprehensive bill to ensure freedom from debt cycle for farmers.

MP Raju Shetty said that we would not spare anyone found cheating farmers. We, the farmers, had the capability to overturn the ruling government three years ago. No political party would have got clear mandate in the parliament. It is only because of farmer's support, Narendra Modi was able to come with clear majority on the promise of raising farmer's policies to minimum 1.5 times of the cost. We will not sit down quietly now. Raju Shetty said that the date of Kisan Mukti Sansad was decided in such a way that we would be able to raise our voices both inside and outside the Parliament. But the Prime Minister fled. He was afraid to face the Parliament and the farmers from all across the country, he added.

Yogendra Yadav, leader of Jai Kisan Andolan and Swaraj Abhiyan declared the Kisan Mukti Sansad a milestone in the history of farmers' movements while addressing the crowd. This is the first time when farmers bearing red and green flags have come together and it has become a rainbow when yellow and blue flag bearers also joined. Farmers have faced a lot of betrayal before from politicians and the governments but this is not going to happen anymore.

While addressing the farmer's rally, Atul Kumar Anjan, National President of AIKS, said that corporates are looking towards corporatization of farming, and marking seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. He said that the narrative propagated by the Government and few economists about less production due to small and medium farm size is totally false. 54% of wheat production and 57% rice are being produced from these small and medium farms only.

Rajaram Singh, president of Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Mahasabha and former MLA, said that Government is continuously persuing running anti farmers policies in the country, giving profits to corporates and loss to farmers. The number of deaths due to hunger are increasing in BJP ruled states. Due to which, we farmers and workers will claim and demand for rights together otherwise we will not allow the government to run.

Butta Singh Burjgil, Secretary of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda), said that the Congress party promised to waive off the farmers loan in their manifesto but after a long struggle by our organizations, the committee formed in the chairmanship of Dr. Haq only waived off crop loan of farmers having less than 5 acres of land and aggregated crop loan including the principal amount and interests together, less than Rs 2 lakhs. That too it is being kept for only those farmers who have taken loan from cooperatives which results into less than 10% of farmers indebted in Punjab from farm loans. This is again causing distress among farmers and pushing them towards suicide.

V. Venkat Ramiyaa, secretary of AIKMS, said that Government promised to double the income of farmers whereas they are actually keeping the support prices lower than the actual cost. Nine crops among 17 are kept lower than the CASP production cost. Central Government is not implementing their promise of doubling the farmer's income and due to this farmers will only fall into debt trap. Thus we are demanding comprehensive loan waiver. Government says that economy of the country will weaken due to farmer's loan waiver which is

completely wrong when the government itself providing lakhs of crores of rupees of subsidy to corporates.

Pratibha Shinde, secretary of Lok Sangharsh Morcha, said that thousands of farmers from the home state of Narendra Modi, that is Gujarat have arrived to put forward the struggle of farmers against the anti farmers policy of the state. The same BJP Government in Maharashtra announced for farm loan waiver but none have benefitted even after issuing certificates by Government of Maharashtra. This clearly exposes the anti farmer character of the state. Three Lakh farmers have committed suicide in Maharashtra till now.

Kodahally Chandrashekhar, secretary of Karnataka Rajya Raiyat Sangh, said that the government policy is anti farmer and in favour of corporates. Seeds, fertilizers and pesticides produced by the corporates are very costly. Government never tried to control their prices and asks farmers to buy products by mortgaging their lands. The prices of diesel in India is 58 rupees whereas they are only 49 rupees and 41 rupees respectively in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Foreign companies are being called to buy farm produces at low prices by the governments.

Dr. Sunilam, executive secretary of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, national convener of National Alliance of People's Movements, and former MLA, said that Prime Minister promised to double the farmer's income but due to GST and Demonetisation, already the farmer's income are on decline. In the last three years, public sector loans have increased to 10.65 crores

from 8.11 lakh crores. This is happening contrastingly when the farmers have raised the production of fruits, vegetables, and crops by one and a half times to 534 crore tons in the last decade. The central government is finishing farmers and villages by imposing Modani Model on them. Whoever challenges the government, they are killed in police firings as happened in Multai, Mandsaur and other places. He also said that farmers were on the forefront in India's independence struggle. Now again, 184 farmer's organizations have united for historic struggle which can be seen as a formation of new energy and hope among the farmers of this country.

During the Kisan Mukti Sansad, people demanded unconditional and immediate release of Akhil Gogoi, leader of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, who has been imprisoned for one year under the sedition charges under National Security Act. People called this murder of democracy and dissent. The farmer organizations coming from different parts of country have declared that they will form committees in their states and fight for the release of Akhil Gogoi.

Representatives from 184 farmer's organizations from 25 states expressed their views in Kisan Mukti Sansad. Satyan, Ashish Mittal, Rampal Jat, Avik Saha, Kiran, Sachin Ghade (Lok Sangharsh Morcha), Shetkari Sabha, K Putnaiyaa, KRSSMLA, Chukki Nanjul, Swami Shivappa, Vednata (KMSS, Assam), former MP Shekh Abdur Rehman (J&K), Prof. Prakash Prfile, Dr. A. K. Khan (Kisan Sangharsh Samiti), Adv. Aradhana Bhargava, Dilip Patidar (Mandsaur), Parmanand Patidar, Bhanuja (Raiyat Swaraj Vedike),

Soma, Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch were among them.

Dr. Sunilam, Pratibha Shinde, Kavita Kurungati, Dr. Darshan Pal, Ashish Mittal, Prem Singh Gehlavat, and Avik Saha (convener of Jai Kisan Andolan) moderated the Kisan Mukti Sansad.

—Kisan Mukti Sansad

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

Published by Rajkamal Prakashan, 2a Netaji Subhash Road, New Delhi 11002

3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunauiyan.** Price 400 rupees.

4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

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Om Saraf lives and dies ‘unconventionally’

Suresh Chander

Shri Om Prakash Saraf was a man of extraordinary sensitivity and human wisdom, a bridge between various regions of state of Jammu and Kashmir, including Pakistan administered Kashmir.

Doyen of journalism Om Saraf on Saturday breathed his last here after a brief illness. He was 95. As per his wish, his mortal remains were donated to Government Medical College Jammu for research, and he desired not to hold any rituals after his death.

Born on May 3, 1920, he started his journalistic career at a young age of 18 as joint Editor of Rattan (1938-47) and Ranbir (1942-50). Even Munshi Prem Chand contributed to Rattan, a children’s magazine. Ranbir was banned by Sheikh Abdullah for its independent policy notwithstanding the fact that Om Saraf was one of the founding members of the National Conference.

Many National Conference members along with Om Saraf, from Jammu, were expelled by Sheikh Abdullah when they were part of the emergency administration in 1947 after Maharaja handed over power to Sheikh Abdullah. It did not deter Omji to side with Sheikh Abdullah after his arrest in 1953.

It was his conviction of making the section of pro-Pak Muslims in the State to give up their fanaticism. He engaged with them throughout his active life. It was due to his efforts that a would be administrator

of failed infiltration in 1965 in valley realised that violence is no solution to local problems and left the country for good.

It was this conviction that he founded Praja Socialist Party in 1954 in Jammu and Kashmir and was elected as its first Chairman. The PSP had members from both sides of the Pir Panjal and attracted a large number of young students and others among them, to name only a few, former CJI Adarsh Sen Anand, DD Thakur, ex Governor and Dy. Chief Minister of J&K under Sheikh Abdullah, ex DG Police SS Wazir. In his own words:

Our contention had been that the presence of a pro-India opposition as against a pro-India Government will always be helpful to the cause of people of Kashmir as much as for Indian democracy. Let not every Kashmiri who is anti-Government be labeled as anti-State. The need for it further increased when the communal, reactionary elements in the Valley and in Jammu succeeded, as it appeared, in creating a gulf between the people and the forces really working for the accession of the State with India. Let not the Government party alone become the monopoly of pro-India elements. The failure of the one-party State experiment to check the communal and reactionary forces should have opened our eyes.

It speaks volumes of his foresight and follies of the central government. Had the forces represented by PSP not been crushed, the narrative of

Kashmir would have been different. This was intolerance at its worst that too during Nehru’s regime. It is sad that Nehru, a great upholder of democratic values, allowed it to happen

His 1962 election as a candidate of the Praja Socialist Party, his proposer and seconder were abducted on the night of filing nomination, from Srinagar’s Amirakadal constituency is still talked about in serious and knowledgeable political circles as one man’s attempt to fight corrupt, brutal and unscrupulous political power.

It is amazing that a man with no official or political position could command the respect and affection of public figures and bureaucrats across the socio-political spectrum from Leh to Lakhapur. They looked to him more for affection than for guidance. His home in Srinagar had no locks, anybody could come and stay without any formal permission. He had differences with RSS brand of ideology and surprised me when a prominent leader of Jan Sangh came in early morning to collect a memorandum or a resolution which he had asked Om Saraf to rewrite. This speaks volumes of his integrity and respect of his political opponents.

He was personally known to most of Presidents, Prime Ministers, senior bureaucrats including Judges in Pakistan administered Kashmir. In his demise, a vital link between various regions of Jammu and Kashmir has been lost.

At the personal level, he had a legion of admirers. He treated everybody as his equal and became member of their families. One could discuss anything with him whether it was the existence

of God or necessity to say thank you or not. He never imposed his own viewpoint but encouraged others to articulate their views. Om Saraf had a rare quality of seeing only positive qualities of others,

never once he talked ill or negative qualities of others. Always spoke of their virtues.

He was a sort of modern Rishi. With him an era has ended.

Birth of the PSP in Kashmir

Om Saraf

Shri Om Prakash Saraf, founder Chairman of PSP in Jammu and Kashmir in 1954, passed away on November 25, 2017 at the age 95+. The best tribute to him is in his own words on Birth of P.S.P. in Kashmir. He wrote this article in 1959 and is of relevance even today. - Suresh Chander

The problem of emotional and spiritual integration of the Jammu and Kashmir State with the Indian Union is undoubtedly one of the few vital problems confronting the nation ever since independence. That we, of the Praja Socialist Party in Jammu and Kashmir, as part and parcel of an all-India party, stand for it was in fact the main reason for our setting up a Party unit five years ago. Ours remains so far, the only organization in the State which is bound by the ideology and constitution of an Indian party.

All along since 1947, it had been and perhaps still continues to be the policy of the Government of India not to encourage the formation of any secular, democratic opposition in the State. They have always advised us to restrict our struggle within the National Conference. On the other hand, the National Conference, which had been our united front till 1947 was, in our view, no longer a fit instrument for bringing about the necessary social change. Like the Indian Socialists who left the Indian National Congress, the Socialists in Jammu and Kashmir left the

National Conference. First, separate parties came into being in Jammu and Srinagar; and later, these merged to form the PSP in the State in November, 1954.

Our contention had been that the presence of a pro-India opposition as against a pro-India Government will always be helpful to the cause of people of Kashmir as much as for Indian democracy. Let not every Kashmiri who is anti-Government be labeled as anti-State. The need for it further increased when the communal, reactionary elements in the Valley and in Jammu succeeded, as it appeared, in creating a gulf between the people and the forces really working for the accession of the State with India. Let not the Government party alone become the monopoly of pro-India elements. The failure of the one-party State experiment to check the communal and reactionary forces should have opened our eyes.

That it did not and does not is our grievance. Asoka Mehta, who

inaugurated our Party unit, was beaten in broad daylight in an open street and some other leaders met with the same fate. It had been the privilege of our State Party executive that all of its members had been assaulted by the ruling party goondas at one place or other at different times. The saddest part of it all was to be dubbed by Prime Minister Nehru himself in the course of his speeches in Parliament in 1955, first as a Hindu communal body and, then after some weeks, as a Muslim communal body. Obviously he had been misinformed by interested authorities. At both times I failed to get an opportunity to bring to his notice personally the right perspective. I, however, had once an occasion to explain my case to Dhebarbhai, the then Congress chief, on the eve of his visit to Srinagar. It was, nevertheless, a hopeless experience.

I can well understand unqualified support the Congress leaders gave to the National Conference at the party level but the common national cause will not be served if every opposition to the State is dubbed by

the Government of India, and even the Indian National Congress, as hostile to India. The absence of a powerful progressive opposition, perhaps more than anything else, was responsible for giving a new lease of life to narrow regional forces represented by the Praja Parishad in Jammu and the Political Conference in 1953. Prime Minister Nehru's uncharitable attacks on the Kashmir PSP, soon after its inception, had actually resulted in popular anti-Government sentiments being exploited full by the regional elements.

Unfortunately Hindus and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir are broadly separated regionally and linguistically also. This triple communal, linguistic and regional division is probably the greatest hindrance in the way of establishing cordial relations between the people of Jammu and Kashmir themselves. It equally affects the relationship of Kashmir with the rest of India. In such a situation I feel it is imperative for leaders of the ruling party in India to tolerate at least, if not

encourage, the functioning of a healthy democratic socialist opposition throughout the State. Also, unless the State Government chooses to behave like a healthy democratic Government permitting an opposition to function in the State, it will continue to be responsible for communal, regional and linguistic rivalries endangering the very integrity of the State and the relationship between India and Kashmir. You may have to doubtfully look at "irrevocable accession" and then resort to "finalise" it over and over again.

It will be wrong to shut our eyes to a number of pro-Pakistan Muslims who will always be there, so long as Pakistan is there to whip up sentiments and some Hindus are there to react to it in an aggressive manner. No doubt, Prime Minister Nehru has ruled out the possibility of a plebiscite in the State in the existing context of the world situation which obviously, however, is not in our hands entirely; yet, the need for an Indo-Pak agreement on Kashmir will be there, always. I do not know

to what extent the people of Kashmir will be ultimately required to play a useful part in any agreement with Pakistan. But in pursuance of India's role that it is seeking to play today, quite rightly, in the world politics, a policy of respecting the local wishes is as conducive to the cause of amity between India and Pakistan at present as it will surely be in the future for an amicable settlement of outstanding disputes between the two countries.

I leave it to the Government of India to frame its Kashmir policy. But speaking as a public worker, I believe I will have done some service to the cause of peace, democracy and socialism if I, as a PSP worker, succeed in making a section of pro-Pak Muslims in the State give up their fanaticism and instead desire genuine India-Pak friendship and in convincing Indians that those who oppose the Bakshi regime are not all pro-Pakistanis or constitute a danger to the security of the State. I am pretty certain Bakshi's policy of "gun or gold" has done more harm than good to India.

Freedom Of Speech For Whom - II

Some constitutional and philosophical underpinnings

Justice B.Sudershan Reddy

Asserting that "[C]ivil and political rights and socio-economic rights do not exist in a state of antagonism", Justice Chandrachud went on to elucidate some of the consequences of perpetrating epistemic injustices upon the citizenry: (i) Subversion of political freedoms making the task of ensuring the optimal allocation of social and economic welfare more

difficult; (ii) Rent seeking behaviour (or corruption) enabling capture of social welfare benefits by those not eligible to receive them; and (iii) "*Opacity necessarily being conducive for monopolization of scarce resources. He went on to state:*

"On the other hand, conditions where civil and political freedoms

flourish ensure that governmental policies are subjected to critique and assessment. It is this scrutiny which sub-serves the purpose of ensuring that socio-economic benefits actually permeate to the under-privileged for whom they are meant. Conditions of freedom and a vibrant assertion of civil and political rights promote a constant review of the justness of socio-economic programmes and of

their effectiveness in addressing deprivation and want. Scrutiny of public affairs is founded upon the existence of freedom.”¹

Justice Chandrachud also recognized great merit in the work of Prof. Amartya Sen – one of the greatest scholars that this nation-state has produced.² Prof. Sen’s work on famines, and the realization that no famines have ever been reported in democracies, led to a great realization: the watchful eye of the citizenry, combined with the competition for their political affections, ensures that the elites and those who are manning the levers of power, do not ignore the signals of great calamities like famines. In that sense, the condition of freedom itself becomes a mark of development – because the innate autonomy of the citizen and necessity of agency of the citizen in having a say in working of the levers of power are essential to the citizen herself being in a position to demand respect for her innate human dignity; and protect herself against misdirection of the collective power away from ensuring the maintenance of the core content of human dignity of human beings. The implication is clear:

Epistemic injustices, in which the citizens are denied both the information about the happenings with their elected government, as well as non-communication of their dissent or approval to the elected government could lead to great tragedies. Democracy, as a system of government by the people, would be undermined if the rights to information, rights to freely speak and right to be heard are denied to them.

I am, I submit, a bit perplexed as to why public intellectuals,

professionals in the press and the broader media, have not commented more about the nature of the submissions made to the Supreme Court that fundamental rights, such as right to privacy and human dignity, are less relevant to the poor and the illiterate and that they are essentially elitist concepts. I am actually positively shocked to hear that, in certain regions of our country, at least as reported in the media, government servants have been asked to take photographs of men and women defecating in the fields to “shame them”. The gap between what the Supreme Court asserts as essential to “human dignity” and the manner in which administrative officers treat citizens could not be more flagrant. How could it not be, when we have individuals who are wielding constitutional powers are reported as claiming that “mid day meals” have rendered schools as places to eat and not to learn. And yet the implications of such actions – to the notions of human dignity being entertained within the portals of governance and the contempt that the poor and the illiterate, the marginalized and the lowered castes are subject to – have not yet become a cause for much greater and sustained scrutiny and critique by the media and the public intellectuals who fancy themselves as being capable of forming public opinion. The “right to be informed”, and the “right to be heard”, as a part of condition of epistemic justice, and their violation as denigration of human dignity needs to be unpacked a bit more.

Arguing that while we have managed to overcome the limitations of extreme poverty and the shackles of ignorance in sustaining the project of constitutional democracy, Professor Amartya Sen argues that

we seem to have had greater difficulty in constructing spheres of reasoned, and reasonable debates, so that tolerance can inform us with regard to the opinions of others and description of the conditions of others. Let us take the last point up – the condition of others.

According to Sen, while we may justifiably congratulate ourselves for sustaining formal institutions of democracy, we ought not to be satisfied with just that. He argues that we also ought to be able to pursue the critical analysis of what we have achieved, through our collective action via the State, by way of material, cultural and socio-psychological developments for our people. This immediately places in focus the issues regarding what development (or what developments) have been achieved in the nearly seventy years of the working of a constitutional democracy, especially for those at the bottom of the socio-economic totem pole. And we will have to readily admit that the results here are, however charitable we might be, rather mixed, and as Professor Sen points out, this may be a case of not quite an immeasurable failure as of “measurable underachievement”.

In the middle of 1940s, Babasaheb Ambedkar also noted – after surveying the rubble of World War 2 – that liberal parliamentary democracies tend to become fascist, and while achieving some modest economic gains might end up legitimating, on a much wider scale and with greater intensity, the dehumanization of those who have been subjected, historically, to unconscionable social and economic injustices and deprivations. In his speech on the occasion of ratification of the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar

drew a very vivid contradiction between the grant of political freedom, based on notions of political equality, and the conditions of graded and unconscionable inequality, in the social and economic sphere. His worry was two-fold: (a) that graded social and economic inequalities would imply, in real terms, the inability of the weak, the marginalized, the lowered castes and those pushed into ignorance, to protect their political freedoms; and (b) that the institutions of political democracy could be destroyed, either by the masses and/or in combination with the elites who eviscerate the normative content of institutions of constitutional democracy.

Yet, notwithstanding his deep and intimate understanding of the extent of discrimination and dehumanization that Dalits had been subjected to, Dr Ambedkar had posited a condition that could make the elites and the ones commandeering for themselves most of the fruit of social action much more empathetic towards their fellow citizens. He believed that a move towards a humanist oriented society, in which citizens are allowed to identify with, and feel an empathetic resonance with fellow human beings – recognition of the essential equality and oneness with each other – might lay the foundation for a more secure social democratic polity. The Directive Principles of State Policy, in Part IV of the Constitution, and in particular the emphasis in Article 38 and Article 39 – the former demanding instantiation of social justice in all institutions of national importance and walks of life, and the latter demanding that the State establish a welfare state, in which economic forces and common resources are not concentrated in the hands of the

few to the detriment of common good – were expected to undergird the scrutiny of how the society and economy are constructed and used to deliver the benefits of social action. Those principles were to provide the foundations for our empathetic resonance for fellow citizens, and inform our voices with an urgency to eliminate the conditions that dehumanize a vast majority.

Over the past few decades, much of the elite discourse has acted as if the Directive Principles of State Policy do not exist. We seem to have constructed an era of “I, Me, Mine”, in which “laissez faire free markets” on a global scale are supposed to be the only legitimate institutions, and the philosophy of “greed is good” being the only worthwhile value to pursue. If we were to critically evaluate the dominant content of our discourses, at least of the voices that have captured the ears of the political elites, all that the poor and the marginalized require are meagre benefits that might “trickle down” to them as the “animal spirits” of predatory capitalists are left free to indulge in rapine, plunder and loot. At best, some of the more recent statements by certain individuals, who maybe presumed to be very important opinion makers in the broad camp of a particular ideological regime, have even claimed that: (a) the State does not have any responsibility to modulate the economy to ensure the creation of jobs; and even more shockingly, that (b) the very concept of welfare is alien to Indian ethos and culture, and that such concepts were introduced into India by the foreigners, specifically British. When I read these reports I was

left scratching my head as to whether these gentlemen occupying important positions, official and unofficial and with apparently influential voices – as either ideological mentors or professional advisers – in policy making, have even read the Constitution of India in general, the text of Directive Principles of State Policy in particular and much of our constitutional gloss that India, as a nation-state, was established to instantiate, progressively, a welfare state in which human dignity will be protected.

What is even more shocking is that few commentators, in the media and in public discourse, have sought to critically analyse and debunk such claims and propositions. On second thoughts, that should not really be shocking, isn't it? After all, in the rush to be a part of the global elite, riding on cultural assuredness of the few that was built on the demolition of the human dignity of the many, hasn't it been a long time since we spoke about “welfare of the people” as the primordial reason to be of the nation-state? In the trickle down model, how could it possibly be? When the welfare of the people, who are being left behind in illiteracy, squalor, bad health, want, poverty and still subject to unconscionable levels of discrimination, is to only be what leaks through to them, because the ones at the top have allowed benefits of social action to seep down, or have missed preventing it from seeping down, then human dignity is no longer an a-priori goal. And in degradation of its ontological status we would have effectively degraded our national commitments.

(To be concluded)

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Way to Socialism through Socialist Unity

Prem Singh

This comment is about the situation that has arisen after the split in Janata Dal (United). The comment is made by me as a citizen with a socialist background, and not as a member of the Socialist Party (India). The National Election Commission of India has decided in favour of Nitish Kumar's faction on the party symbol dispute. The Sharad faction, however, has petitioned the High Court challenging the decision of NECI but is simultaneously engaged in an exercise of forming a new party. It is very likely that soon another 'Janata' outfit will be born from this exercise.

After the split in the Janata Party in 1979, most political outfits formed from time to time by various socialist leaders of mainstream politics retained the word *janata* while naming or renaming their parties. This includes Chandra Shekhar [Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)] and Surendra Mohan (Socialist Janata Party). The only exception was Samajwadi Party (SP) formed by Mulayam Singh Yadav in UP in 1992.

The Socialist Party was merged into the Janata Party in 1977, and thus lost its original glory and national image. It would be interesting to analyse why and how the word *janata* still continues to haunt socialists! When Surendra Mohan parted ways with JDS, I had a discussion with him about the name of the new party he was planning to form. I tried to convince him that the word *janata* should be avoided and the original name of the Socialist Party of 1977 should be revived and strengthened. That would have certainly helped in regaining the lost glory and national status of the original party in the long run. But he was not convinced with my arguments and named his new Janata Party with the prefix 'socialist'.

Recently M.P. Veerendra Kumar, who resigned from the Rajya Sabha a few days ago, has given indications of reviving his old party, the Socialist Janata (Democratic) Party.

In this connection I would like to forward a suggestion to the Sharad faction, M.P. Veerendra Kumar

particularly, and individual socialists in general. Forming another leader-based state-level 'janata party/dal' with a 'samajwadi' prefix or suffix will contribute little in the direction of much needed socialism and socialist unity. It will be more appropriate if they join the Socialist Party (India) and take up its leadership. The Socialist Party was revived as Socialist Party (India) in 2011 in Hyderabad in a two-day foundation conference by several senior and young socialist groups/leaders after holding country-wide meetings/discussions at the initiative of Surendra Mohan and Justice Rajindar Sachar. The foundation conference was attended by around 600 delegates from 19 states. The SPI was formed to creatively carry forward the inheritance of the Indian socialist movement and ideology propagated by its leaders and thinkers such as Acharya Narendra Dev, Jai Prakash Narayan, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, S.M. Joshi, Yusuf Meharally, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Kishan Patnayak and other genuine socialist leaders. The Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha (SYS), youth wing of the Socialist Party, was also formed simultaneously as Socialist Yuvjan Sabha.

The sole aim of the SPI and SYS is to provide an elaborate alternative political ideology to counter and replace the nexus of neoliberal and communal forces. The party, through its varied programs, is trying to create a space for socialist politics at the national level with its limited resources. This uphill task/responsibility should be shared by all those socialists who really believe in the socialist legacy. If the Sharad

faction and M.P. Veerendra Kumar decide to join Socialist Party (India), several socialist individuals/groups will also join. Workers and leaders who feel suffocated in dynasty-based state-level parties may then also come forward to join the SPI. The party can be renamed as Indian National Socialist Party (Bharatiya Rashtriya Socialist Party) or Socialist Party of India (Bharatiya Socialist Party).

I would further suggest that persons like Dr. G.G. Parikh, H. Hanumanthappa, Kuldip Nayar, S.P. Shukla, Michel Fernandez, Dr. Sunilam, Subhash Ware, Suresh Khairnar, Dr. Raj Kumar Jain, Qurban Ali, Dr. D. Sreekumar, Ravikiran Jain, Surendra Kumar,

Vijay Pratap, Subhash Bhatnagar and many other concerned socialists should take initiatives in this direction. Friends of small parties, who participated in the unity meeting held at Tara, Mumbai and later in SPI's national executive committee meeting held at Delhi, should also speed up their efforts. They are Prabodh C. Sinha (Socialist Democratic Party), Brajkishore Tripathi (Samata Kranti Dal), Arun Kumar Srivastav (JDU) and Manju Mohan (Socialist Janata Party), as well as representatives of Socialist Party (Lohia) and Loktantrik Samajwadi Party. Incidentally, senior SPI leaders Bhai Vaidya, Pannalal Surana and Justice Rajindar Sachar have already started dialogue with leaders of the Sharad faction and M.P. Veerendra Kumar.

Prof Shyam Dutt Paliwal

Socialists and activists associated with JP movement of the 1970s condoled the death of veteran socialist leader and thinker Prof Shyam Dutt Paliwal, who died in a Noida hospital on Wednesday. He was 87.

Paliwal was arrested during the 1975 emergency and was an accused in the Baroda Dynamite case (in which George Fernandes was allegedly involved in overthrowing the then Indira Gandhi government).

He won the 1977 Vidhan Sabha election and represented the Agra rural (Dayalbagh constituency) on Janata Party ticket. Former minister in the Chandra Shekhar government Ram ji Lal Suman, said "Paliwal inspired a whole generation of young leaders in the 1970s.

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BJP Routed in Uttar Pradesh Urban Local Body Elections

Sandeep Pandey

On 2nd December 2017 most newspapers flashed a front page story that Bhartiya Janata Party had swept the urban local bodies' elections. It was accompanied with pictures of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offering sweets to one of his deputy CMs or the state BJP President and all of them displaying victory signs.

Nothing could be farther from truth. BJP has actually been routed in these elections, having managed to win mere 18.7% of the seats, whereas the opposition, especially independent candidates, has come out with flying colours. In fact if independents were considered a party, they have got a thumping majority in these elections.

The only category in which BJP has done well is the post of the Mayor. Out of 16 Mayoral positions they have captured 14. But that is the beginning and end of their success story. There is nothing unusual about the BJP winning a majority of the Mayoral posts. Big cities have been BJP strongholds for a long time now. It would have been surprising if they would not have won so many seats. But in every other category of elected positions other than Mayor's post, the opposition has decimated the BJP. The details are revealing.

For the post of Corporators in 16 Municipal Corporations, BJP has won 596 seats while the opposition has taken away 703. The Samajwadi Party (SP) has got 202 seats whereas the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has won 147 seats.

For the post of Chairperson of Nagar Palika Parishad, while BJP has managed to win 70 posts, the combined opposition has won 128 posts. SP has 45 and BSP 29 chairpersons of NPP. When it comes to members for Nagar Palika Parishads, BJP with merely 922 seats stands nowhere close to 3,380 independents. The combined opposition has got 4,338 members. The SP has 477 members and BSP 262. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has managed to win 17 seats in this category.

There are more independent Chairpersons of Nagar Panchayats than belonging to any single party. Their number is 182. The BJP has managed to win 100 positions, but more than three times this number, 338 positions, are occupied by the opposition. SP is not very far behind BJP with 83 positions, while BSP has about half that of BJP, 45 positions. Even AAP will have 2 persons chairing the Nagar Panchayats. If we look at members of Nagar Panchayats, again 3,875 independents clearly represent the people's mood. BJP could manage merely 664 seats. SP with 453 seats closely follows behind.

Thus out of a total of 12,644 positions, non-BJP representatives hold 10,278!

If anybody can claim to have swept the elections, it is the Independents who have a whopping share of 61% of all seats.

So, the question is why is the

media gung-ho about an imagined BJP victory? What are its compulsions? Has it been managed so that UP urban local bodies election results don't have an adverse impact on the forthcoming Gujarat elections? Except for the Mayor's post in big cities, people have decisively rejected the BJP as a party in spite of it spending many times more money than all the other parties. The BJP Chief Minister himself led the BJP election campaign from the front, addressing numerous election meetings. On the other hand, Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati chose to keep themselves out of campaigning, leaving it to local leaders and workers.

Quite clearly the charisma of Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath failed to fetch votes, contrary to what is being claimed. The economy has been badly hit and the mood among people is that of despair. Common people are quite badly hurt by the decision of BJP government to implement demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax; businesses have suffered greatly. People have lost jobs and income levels have dropped. Whether it is the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for which everybody has to pay extra cess, or the Ujjawala scheme where the connection is free but there is no subsidy for the poor on gas cylinders for cooking, people are feeling the pinch. With no demonstrable benefits, people have a feeling of having been taken for a ride or being treated like culprits with authorities breathing down their necks. In such a situation it would have been really surprising had the

people handed over a convincing victory to the BJP.

BJP rode to power on the basis of a high profile media and advertisement campaign, and it continues to use the same tool to hoodwink people. The media has been made to fall in line; it has given up its role of being an independent agency and holding the government accountable for its lapses, and instead meekly toes the government line, or worse, toes the ruling party's line. This is dangerous for democracy.

The media is part of the conspiracy to keep an unpopular anti-people party in power by swaying the public opinion. It is a great disservice to the people. All the people cannot be fooled all the time. The sheen of the government created by media is now beginning to fade. Government is finding hard to maintain its credibility, nationally and internationally. Contrary to media stories, international standing of India has gone down under the Modi regime in spite of him having made numerous foreign forays. India's relationships with bigger countries like the United States, China and Pakistan have worsened, while the smaller neighbours like Nepal and Maldives don't trust India.

While not taking any concrete steps to control deaths of children in Gorakhpur Medical College hospital, the CM Yogi Adityanath has been giving more time and importance to religious issues. Ayodhya is back in focus although it is not clear how a grand temple in Ayodhya is going to help common people overcome their sufferings. When the government doesn't have anything concrete to offer to people, it relies on politics of symbolism and media blitzkrieg.

No Alternative to Dynastic Rule

Kuldip Nayar

THERE is no surprise. It was well known that the Congress Party is hopelessly dependent on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Elevation of Rahul Gandhi to the post of Congress president was along the expected lines. But Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has given another dimension to the happening. He has likened Rahul's succession to the Mughal dynasty. He says that the king's son would always be the king.

Whatever be the declaration of the party, it is essentially nothing but a dynastic show. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru groomed his daughter Indira Gandhi to the position. At the Congress Working Committee where the then party president U.N. Dhebar proposed Indira Gandhi's name, Home Minister G.B. Pant had stated that she should not be bothered as she did not enjoy good health. Nehru objected to his remark and said that Indira was far better in health than he and Pant were. Indira was then elected as the party president.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi did not even need to argue. She straightaway put her son, Rahul Gandhi, in the chair. There was a rumour that she would name her daughter, Priyanka Vadra, because Rahul Gandhi was not selling in any way. But then the Italians, like Indians, prefer the son to daughter for inheritance.

Celebrating Rahul Gandhi's elevation, Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia said that it was the beginning of a new era. Senior

Congress leader Digvijay Singh said that the issue of Rahul's elevation had to be decided by party president Sonia Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee. Even otherwise, he said, the grassroots Congress workers wanted the elevation to happen: "Yes, this is the common feeling among grassroots workers." But one could read Digvijay Singh's disappointment.

In fact, the party would now run from 10 Janpath as it was done from the Teen Murti or Safdarjung residences of Nehru and Indira Gandhi during their tenure. Even otherwise, it was Sonia Gandhi who was reigning when Dr Manmohan Singh was installed as Prime Minister. I was a witness to the drama at the central hall of parliament when members of the party wept that Sonia Gandhi should be the Prime Minister. But she kept quiet because Sonia had her son in mind. And if she were to become Prime Minister at that time, it would have looked like a stage-managed drama.

Even Dr Manmohan Singh had on occasions said that he would be too happy to vacate the chair for Rahul Gandhi as and when he was ready to take over and that he was keeping the chair warm for him. Though it was coming for quite a while, particularly with Sonia Gandhi keeping an indifferent health, Rahul taking over the party reign was inevitable.

Rahul Gandhi has already made secularism as the Congress plank.

The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) may not own Hindutva in public but it is all clear that the party would fight the next election in 2019 on the slogan of Hindutva alone. Prime Minister Narendra Modi makes no secret of the fact that he visits Nagpur, the RSS headquarters, and seeks guidance from leaders like Mohan Bhagwat. His slogan of *sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* has proved to be a mere slogan.

One can see that Muslims do not count in his scheme of things. The landslide victory in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls is proof of how the BJP captured power in the state. It was clear that the party wanted the people to know that it was not in any way dependent on the Muslim electorate.

This is bound to be underlined yet again in Gujarat, where the state is going to polls later this month. And Modi is making it clear that the one who wins Gujarat would win India in the next general election. The whirlwind campaigning by Modi is already raising the question whether he is staking too much in the Gujarat assembly polls. Maybe it is because of the Patidars joining hands with the Congress in the state to fight the BJP, with the youth who want a change supporting them.

So far the record of Rahul Gandhi has not been impressive from any point of view. He has fought many elections, including UP, where he aligned with Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party. But this did not help and the Congress lost miserably, reduced to the fourth position. Now he has to prove his popularity in the coming Gujarat election. If he fails, it would come to be known that he cannot win on his own.

It is surprising that Rahul Gandhi is defending the dynasty factor. He says that all parties are dependent on it, citing the examples of Punjab, UP, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. But what he forgets is that in all these states the parties have been coming to power alternatively. Can he, or for that matter the Congress, win a majority to form the government at the Centre? He will have to work hard if he wants the Congress to be in power. At present he doesn't seem to have the pulling power. But the scene can change.

We have witnessed Indira Gandhi, who was called a *goonghi gudia* (mute doll), becoming the

Prime Minister and within a short time period taking on the entire opposition. Even her son, Rajiv Gandhi, who was foisted upon the nation by President Gyani Zail Singh, was accepted. There is no reason why Rahul Gandhi would not come to be acknowledged.

But then it will depend on how he is able to lead and help the party win elections. At this time it looks difficult because secularism has been pushed into the background. A kind of soft-Hindutva has spread all over the country. It is a pity that a country which fought for freedom on the plank of pluralism has not been able to follow the ethos of independence.

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Demolition

Demolition of Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992

Qurban Ali

quite evident that they were on their way to demolish the disputed mosque. After all, they had been feverishly practicing and rehearsing the demolition for days. The *Kar Sewaks* came prepared and equipped with all the logistics needed to demolish the enduring 460-year-old structure of the Mughal era.

Revisiting decisive moments of your life is always a cathartic experience. Even then, I have always avoided writing about the day of 6th December 1992, which brings back a series of haunting memories that I would rather not revisit. However, recently when some of my journalist friends asked me to write down my memories of that tragic day and asked me how I felt as a journalist at that time, I decided to share the story as I had witnessed it 25 years ago.

I was working for the Hindi *Sunday Observer* at that time and was also a stringer for the BBC. BBC Hindi and Urdu services often had telephonic interviews with me those days and that were called 'Phono' or 'two ways'. On the 5th of December, I reached Ayodhya and checked-in at the journalists' favourite accommodation, Hotel Shan-e-Awadh. Anticipation and excitement ran high in the hotel lobby that evening. The Sangh Parivar, especially one of its wings Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), had announced *Kar Sewa* that day. It was

On the morning of 6th December, Ayodhya was caught up in a buzz. Journalists positioned themselves on an elevated platform near the Babri Masjid. At exactly 10am, *Kar Sewaks* started gathering near the mosque and made their way towards the barbed wiring of the security cordon. Within minutes, there was commotion; the storming into the mosque had begun. The *Kar Sewaks* could be seen climbing the walls and holding fort on top of the tombs. At that time, the then South Asia Chief of BBC, Mark Tully, decided to go to Faizabad so that he could file the news of the storming of Babri Masjid. At that time there were no mobile phones and the only place to connect to the BBC headquarters in London was through the Central Telegraph Office, Faizabad. Mark's colleague Gillian Wright, Ramdutt Tripathi, a Lucknow-based journalist and I reached Faizabad around noon where Mark filed his first report. By 1pm, we were on our way back to Ayodhya where the demolition of Babri Masjid was on full swing, but were stopped by the crowd at the outskirts of the city. We went back

to Faizabad and decided to follow the para military forces, that is, the RAF & CRPF when they began to move to Ayodhya. However, the forces were stopped as well at a railway crossing between the two towns.

When all our efforts to reach Ayodhya were exhausted, a journalist friend Vinod Shukla, then resident editor of *Dainik Jagran*, suggested a way out. He told us that he knew a way through the city cantonment area and offered us a lift in his personal car along with his wife and his local correspondent Saral Gyapte. In half an hour, we managed to reach the Babri Masjid to see all three domes of the mosque demolished. As soon as we got down from our car, a group of violent *Kar Sewaks* armed with trident lathis charged at us. Most of them were local residents and were angry to see Mark Tully with us. They knew Mark was a journalist working with BBC and were quiet unhappy with his reportage on Ayodhya. As the mob gathered to beat us, perhaps even kill us, one of the agitated *Kar Sewaks* suggested that killing us would perhaps disturb the ongoing demolition. He prescribed that it would be better if they locked us for the time being and killed us later. The five of us were locked in a room in a nearby building. For the next two hours, we were in a state of shock, waiting to be killed when demolition was over.

Saral Gyapte managed to free himself and rushed to the Mahant of Bada Sthan or Badi Haveli, a respectable figure in Ayodhya. When he came to know that the editor of *Jagran* along with some other journalists were being held hostage, he immediately came to our rescue and on his assurance and guarantees, we were freed at around 7pm. We were then taken to the local office of the VHP where prominent VHP leaders including Ashok Singhal, Praveen Togadia and some BJP leaders were celebrating the demolition. The statue of 'Ram Lala' was recovered from the mosque and was now at the VHP office where the leaders were performing 'darshan'.

Saral Gyapte asked them for cover so that we could be escorted safely to our hotel at Faizabad. The Mahant of Bada Sthan gave his shawl to Mark Tully so he could hide under it and we were all asked to tie a sort of headgear with the words *Kar Sewak* written on it. We were put in a UP Police truck and dropped at the Shan-e-Awadh at 8pm.

When we reached Faizabad, the government controlled media, All India Radio and Doordarshan broadcasted the news that "Ayodhya main vivadspad Dhanchey ko kuch nuqsan Pahuncha hai" (the disputed structure in Ayodhya has been damaged)

My last sight of the Babri Masjid was at twilight. It wasn't just damaged, it in fact had been razed to the ground with the *Kar Sewaks* taking away its rubble as souvenir. At 11pm IST, I broke the news on BBC Urdu service's news bulletin that the Babri Masjid has been demolished completely.

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Babri Masjid Demolition: 25 Years On...

Irfan Engineer

but the implications it would have on the polity and future of democracy in our country.

I shared the news with all the 8 to 10 other Adivasi inmates in my cell. They were arrested for various petty crimes like consumption of alcohol when there was prohibition. They would not believe me. One of them said, why would anybody demolish the house of the Supreme Being? I had to show the photograph published on the front page of the newspaper with people dancing on the dome of the mosque with saffron flags in hand. They too were horrified. Then I heard something that sounded like a victory procession and bursting of crackers outside the jail. After a few days I was bailed out. Bhikubhai advised me not to go towards the market where police station was located as the cops were preparing to arrest me in another false case. I hitch hiked and went to Adv. Paresh Chaudhary's home in Vedchhi (Dist. Surat). In the Adivasi dominated areas of the Dang and Surat districts, Babri Masjid was a non-issue, although *Ramshila puja* processions—where consecrated bricks meant for construction of the proposed Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya were accompanied with DJ to attract people—had been taken out there too largely consisting of non-Adivasi people.

For the Adivasis, their main issues were their right to forest land and forest produce; access to quality education and health care and

cultural space to sustain their way of life and their identity. Temple-Mosque conflict was for the *ujaliat* (non-Adivasis). Most of them were unaware of the existence of Babri Masjid or the proposal to build a Ram Janmabhoomi temple. A few who were never discussed it. Their world was totally insulated from the outside world, even from the rest of Gujarat! For the Adivasis, Dang was not a part of Gujarat, and they only travelled outside Dang to Gujarat when they needed to access health care or markets, both of which were instruments of oppression. All temples belonged to the *ujaliat* who were by and large seen as oppressors, and if some of them were not oppressors, they had a condescending attitude towards them.

In the second week of January 1993, I headed towards my home in Mumbai. As I disembarked at Dadar Station, I learnt about the riots in city. I managed to reach Anand Patwardhan's residence and learnt that a Hindu friend living in Andheri (West) feared an attack on her. Preeti had a running dispute with her landlord and she feared that the landlord would take advantage of the riots to get her to vacate her home. I decided to be with her and confront the Muslim mob that she feared would come to attack her.

I called my father to inform him that I was safe and in Mumbai and would be going to Preeti's home. My father pleaded with me to come back home. It was not usual for him to

On 6th December 1992, I was in judicial custody in Vansda (Gujarat) jail. We were struggling for the rights of Adivasis on forests and forest produce which often led to friction with the state and a couple of times I had to face false cases lodged on me and my comrades in the struggle. I must have been in judicial custody for about a week. Eager to read the daily newspaper, I would ask the night duty prison guard, who was from an Adivasi community, to buy one for me while he went to the market for a cup of tea and he would oblige me. On 7th December I did not ask Bhikubhai to buy the newspaper for me but he nevertheless got one for me. I protested and told him that I had no money to pay him for the newspaper. With a smile on his face he told me not to worry about the price of the newspaper and to read it. It is only when I opened the newspaper that I understood why he wanted me to read the paper that day. The paper carried the news of demolition of Babri Masjid. I was horrified, not because a mosque was demolished,

plead in this manner as I was going to help a Hindu friend. But the times were not usual as well. I went to Preeti's residence assuring my father that I would come home soon and wouldn't take unnecessary risks. When I reached her home, some other friends too were there. The next day, when I returned home, we were getting frantic calls from survivors of communal violence for help. All we could do was contact police officers known to us for their integrity and the fire brigade, only to learn that they too were inundated with calls.

Communal violence in Mumbai drew me to work for communal harmony—an issue to which I had not paid much attention so far as I was working among Adivasis since 1989. My father, Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, was heading a coalition of organizations—*Ekta*—which worked for communal harmony and included trade unions, women's organisations and civil liberty organisations. *Ekta* had campaigned for peace in Mumbai and other riot prone towns by organising peace marches, public meetings and street corner meetings, bringing out publications countering demonisation of minorities and organising perspective building camps for peace workers. *Ekta* had opposed *kar seva* and had called upon religious Hindus not to join it, as the campaign for demolition of Babri Masjid and construction of Ram Janmabhoomi Temple was being carried out with a political motive. However, *Ekta's* outreach was limited on account of limited resources. Communal violence immediately after the demolition of Babri Masjid was on a limited scale and the casualties were mainly from the police firing on Muslim mobs protesting demolition of Babri Masjid.

Shiv Sena was not satisfied and bayed for violence on a larger scale with the *sainiks* controlling and participating in street violence. Only deeper communal polarisation would ensure electoral benefits they aimed at. The daily newspaper published by Shiv Sena—*Saamna*—started hyping up the January 6 incident of arson in Gandhi Chawl (which killed an entire Hindu family) in Jogeshwari and the murder of two Mathadi workers in South Mumbai, both of which they blamed on the Muslim community. They organised a series of Maha-artis to arouse communal hatred against Muslim community on these two issues, and the crowds dispersing after the Maha-artis indulged in violence against minorities. These efforts of Shiv Sena resulted in the second phase of rioting which began from 9th January.

Helplessness and Hope

The riots in this second phase were very destructive in terms of lives and properties. While police had opened fire on the mobs protesting demolition of Babri Masjid killing several people, they remained by and large bystanders when the mobs mobilised by Shiv Sena were rioting on the streets. Even the middle class was scared, and the city came to a standstill for days. The leaders of industry and finance were greatly disturbed due to huge economic losses and future of investments in the metropolis which then appeared to be chaotic and lawless. Some of them took the initiative to meet the then CM Sudhakar Rao Naik, but even he appeared to be utterly helpless; control over the administration seemed to have slipped out of his hands.

Concerned activists flooded the

office in Santacruz East where *Ekta* called for a meeting. We had intense discussions on what we could possibly do. All that we were able to organise was relief for the survivors. When organised lynch mobs are on the streets filled with fear and hatred for the 'other', and at times armed with deadly weapons, it is impossible to reason with them. Only state security forces could have dispersed them, if they so willed. But in most cases, the security forces and their commanders did not seem to have any such will.

There were shining examples of citizens cutting across religions coming together to defend their neighbourhood from communal mobs wanting to target members of the 'other' community living in their locality. This was the only way to save the city from communal madness. Let me recall one such example in Sakinaka, where *Ekta* had organised meetings for communal harmony along with Kashtakari Sanghatana, an organisation that had mobilised slum dwellers on their local problems. Sakinaka is inhabited by Hindus speaking Oriya, Telugu, Marathi and Hindi as well as Muslims. Here, in the past, Muslims had provided space for installation of an electric sub-station, enabling inhabitants of Sakinaka to register for electric meters. Before the installation of this sub-station, BSES, the electric supply company, would not install meters and the local residents had to buy electric connections from contractors who charged them ten times more.

The Muslims of Sakinaka were receiving threats from the Shiv Sena Shakha and were fearing an attack on them. The Hindu residents told them not to worry and sleep

peacefully as they would protect them from the Hindu mobs. Muslims were told not to react to any rumours and not to prepare for their defence as their houses would be defended by the Hindu residents. The Hindu residents with sticks in their hands stayed awake several nights with Muslims providing them tea so that they could remain awake. When the Shiv Sainiks saw the locality protected by Hindus, they did not dare to attack the Muslims in the area. There were other areas too where citizens took matters in their hands and protected their neighbours while the state appeared to be collapsing.

Peace March

Ekta gave a call for a peace march from Khodad Circle, Dadar in Central Mumbai to Azad Maidan in South Mumbai. I do not remember the date but prohibitory orders u/s 144 of Cr.P.C. restraining gathering of more than four people were still in force. We were mentally prepared that only a few would turn up. However, over a thousand people reached Khodad Circle, including Asghar Ali Engineer, Anand Patwardhan, academicians from TISS and Mumbai University, journalists, trade unionists and peace activists. As we all gathered, police asked us to disperse as prohibitory orders were in force. We defied the police, assured them of our intention to promote peace and harmony, and proceeded to march carrying white flags and placards with slogans of peace and love in our hands, and songs of peace on our lips. We passed through areas where rioting had taken place. People witnessing the procession from their balconies waved their hands expressing support. Communal tensions melted as people saw Hindus and Muslims

marching together and appealing for peace through songs and placards. The procession converted into a public meeting at Azad Maidan. Police officers thanked us.

Gradually Mumbai limped back to normalcy as this commercial city does after every disaster—human-made or natural. Yet it has never been normal again. Among the things that changed irreversibly is ghettoisation. Muslim survivors from many areas where they had suffered human and property losses during the riots sold their dwellings or shops to move to areas which had large Muslim populations. Mumbra, Mira Road and other such suburbs witnessed a huge increase in Muslim population. Similarly in many localities where Hindus were in minority, the Hindus shifted to Hindu majority localities where they felt more safe. Most survivors of riots are today economically worse off than before. Only a few received compensation, which too was very inadequate; most did not even get this meagre compensation, let alone rehabilitation. The perpetrators of the riots have by and large gone scot-free due to laxity in police investigation and lack of political will to secure justice for the riot survivors.

In response to the riots in Mumbai in 1993, we established the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) under the leadership and vision of Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer with the support of peace loving citizens of Mumbai. Since then, CSSS has been organising peace workshops to create an army of peace workers. CSSS also brings out a journal—*Indian Journal of Secularism*, which it has been publishing for two decades now. This year, it has brought out a special

issue of this journal, entitled “*Babri Masjid, 25 Years On...*”. The issue is a collection of essays written by journalists, artists and activists going down the memory lane and examining what went wrong and what has changed since. CSSS also organises lectures, seminars and peace activities through peace centres in communally sensitive towns. Through these peace centres, CSSS reaches out to colleges and schools to inculcate values of peace, harmony, secularism, diversity and respect for human rights. With limited resources we have been able to bring about significant change and promote peace. However we need to do much more and need the support and solidarity of more and more people and institutions. Peace loving people need to be more organised and committed than they are at present. We need to multiply our ranks if we wish to see peaceful, secular India which respects freedom of expression and works for social justice.

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Babri Masjid demolition: ‘I was there’

Sharat Pradhan

Two decades after the fateful day, the question was fired at me by none other than former deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani’s legal counsel Mahipal Aluwalia, during the course of my cross-examination in a dingy Rae Bareilly court, holding trial of Advani and others charged of criminal conspiracy behind demolition of the 16th century mosque.

My reply was plain and simple — “Well, if I knew that you would pose this question to me 19 years later; I would have carried a measuring tape and a compass to know the exact distance and the direction.”

Not amused by my reply, the lawyer threw a fresh volley of questions — “What was the name of the building from where I watched the entire demolition scene?; whether the building was a single-storeyed one or double-storeyed; whether there was a Vishva Hindu Parishad office in the building; what route did I take to reach the Babri Mosque on that day; the names of buildings that I passed; how many security gates did I have to pass; whether the *karsewak* wore some identification badges... so on and so forth.”

The cross-examination that ran for days (and the recorded text running into as many as 88 pages) seemed more like a test of my memory rather than any confirmation of how the mosque was pulled down. But when I embarked upon spelling this out by drawing the court’s attention to the fact that the lawyer and his team were only testing my memory, he

screamed his lungs out — “now this is contempt of court.”

All I had done was to raise a pertinent question — where was the equity in law when lawyers on both sides remained armed with documents, files and anything else under the sun, while the witness was expected to have a super-human memory to remember every distinct detail of whatever he had seen two decades ago.

Unmindful of the threat, I declared that I was ready to face the music if speaking the truth was seen as contempt.

What I could not understand was why every witness was seen as a liar and the whole idea behind his cross-examination was to prove him as one. I could not resist telling the open court that from the proceedings it was quite apparent that lawyers were probably more used to dealing with tutored and fake witnesses. No wonder, therefore, they found it difficult to come to terms with a true “chashmadeedgawah” (eye-witness).

Later, I was advised not only by the lawyers but even by the presiding officer to bear with the way things were as that was how the practice had been for decades and decades. And since law does not discriminate, the legal procedures and practices remained the same irrespective of the nature of the crime — be it a theft in the neighbourhood, a murder on the street, a trespass into the property of a neighbour or the demolition of a historic mosque that

Must read for everyone concerned with the well-being of India and her future. The Babri Masjid demolition case has made a mockery of our judiciary. This is, in fact, an explosive case in which the Supreme Court should order that it will be left untouched for the next 50 years. That is the only way to avoid unprecedented bloodshed that is the intention of the Hindutva forces in their game plan of establishing a Hindu Rashtra — a deathknell for the unique largest democracy of the world. At best, the court may consider allowing these forces to build a Ram temple at the Karsewak Nagar where they have already assembled the components of the temple. They should be clearly told that they may take it or reject it but they shall not be allowed to play with the lives of thousands of innocent Indians. They may or may not, but as a concerned citizen of India.

—C. B. Tripathi

“How far were you standing from the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, and what was your position viz a viz the mosque.”

had changed the communal destiny of the world's largest democracy.

About the pace of the process, less said the better. Nineteen years after the demolition of the mosque, the trial court was far from nailing down the culprits to book. In fact, trial was yet to commence against some of the key accused persons including then Uttar Pradesh Chief minister Kalyan Singh, who was otherwise known as the prime culprit.

His matter was pending before the country's apex court which is to decide whether Kalyan Singh should be tried for conspiracy or for inciting communal hatred.

Even the cases against 49 key accused persons was going on in two separate special courts — one in Rae Bareilly and the other in Lucknow, hackneyed procedures and processes had eaten up all the time and no one knows how many more years it would take the courts to take the case to its logical conclusion.

The court in Rae Bareilly was holding the trial against Advani and seven others prominent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leaders — Murlimanohar Joshi, Uma Bharti, Vinay Katiyar, Sadhvi Rithambhara, Ashok Singhal, Acharya Giriraj Kishore and Vishnu Hari Dalmia — for “inciting communal hatred in the name of the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue.”

The Lucknow special court was hearing cases against smaller fries of the saffron brigade, who were charged of hatching the conspiracy for demolition.

But even as the court in Lucknow appeared more firm and stern, yet there could be no denying that the

slow pace of judicial process was equally visible in both places. The lethargic procedures and the hackneyed approach of lawyers who take professional pride lingering the judicial process see no need for expeditious disposal of the case that has clearly lost the appeal it once commanded on the masses of this country.

I have spent hours standing in both the courts — answering mundane and irrelevant queries raised by the counsels who seemed to be more interested in displaying and proving their professional skills rather than in taking the case to an expeditious logical end.

The queries have never gone beyond memory test with the sole intent of establishing that my story was just a concoction. What was worse that even the courts do not apparently believe in looking out of the box. When I reacted sharply to what is described as “suggestion” by the lawyer fraternity, I was advised by the court to simply remain cool and take it in the stride — something any forthright person would find it difficult to do.

After all, how can you remain quiet and docile when you are told that whatever you have stated under oath before the court was simply all bunk? No matter how much I controlled my emotions on being publicly labeled as a liar, I could not help retorting, “How would you react if I were to tell you that even though you had grabbed a black coat, your law degree was fake.” The advocates look horrified and were ready to get me sent to the gallows for what they termed as a big “contempt of court”.

To me, the whole court exercise looked like a ritual for the benefit of counsels. I never could see any

other purpose being served.

When the special court was set up for taking up the demolition case, no one had in his wildest of dreams imagined that the exercise would go on and on endlessly.

In the beginning, when prominent political personalities were summoned to court, they were swarmed by thousands of people who were clearly passionate about the Ayodhya issue. As years went by, their numbers started falling. Today, when I go to the courts, I find no one other than the battery of lawyers engaged in the case to be present.

The crowds have lost interest, a generation has passed and demolition appears to be story of an era gone by. The BJP and its allies have seen the faded electoral futility of the Ayodhya issue. All it continues to spin is perhaps to hold BJP's hardcore Hindutva vote bank together, just as it continues to incite anger and vengeance among a section of Muslims, who use it as fodder for arousing Islamic militancy.

Considering that I was just the 12th witness out of Central Bureau of Investigation's long list of nearly 100, the judicial exercise was bound to take very many years to complete — even if CBI chose to limit its witnesses by avoiding testimony of the entire lot.

The face of the Ayodhya site where Babri Masjid stood until this day 19 years ago is already transformed beyond recognition. The finalisation of the trial proceedings alone may see yet another generation. After all, the trial court was just the first step in the judicial process.

Courtesy : The Wire

Freedom Of Speech For Whom - III

Some constitutional and philosophical underpinnings

Justice B. Sudershan Reddy

Writing in late 1990s and early 2000s, sociologist Prof Manuel Castells talked about the impact of neo-liberal agenda on the social and psychological aspects of the persona of those being left behind. As the voices that normatively prioritise the well being of the rich and the powerful – including the voices in the press – dominate, even the scope for articulation about the full extent of the problems of those who have been historically marginalized, those who continue to be marginalized, and the new ones being made to join the ranks of marginalised would be systematically squelched. Prof Castells then posited that, as uncertainty about economic welfare sweeps across an economy that is constructed on a network of the global elites, the social reality would be that the ones being left behind and/or marginalized would fall prey to the seduction of identities provided by cults and hate groups.

Notwithstanding such warnings, there has been much glibness in the elite frameworks that posited that the only purpose of collective power and action is the allowance of free play of individual economic interests – almost as if humans could only be epistemic and ethical monads, with no space for value systems based on the deep potential of human beings to construct a consciousness that was concerned by welfare of others in a shared world. That glibness is now coming home to roost, as identity politics and politics of deep hatred for the others have emerged with a rapidity that

proponents of neo-liberal order have completely missed and/or were unprepared to countenance as definitive possibilities.

That is what we are increasingly facing – all across the world aren't we? As Edward Luce¹ points out, no fewer than 25 democracies have failed in the past two decades. After examining the implications of growing inequalities, the threat of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence on top of a technological paradigm that makes rapid obsolescence of skills a necessary fact of life, and massive interdependence implying inability or disinclination to protect those inside national boundaries from uncontrollable economic and social forces, Edward Luce goes on to analyse the resulting degeneration of Western politics:

*“We are taught to think our democracies are held together by values. Our faith in history fuels this myth. But liberal democracy's strongest glue is economic growth.... When those fruits disappear, or are monopolised by a fortunate few, things turn nasty. History should have taught us that. The losers seek scapegoats. The politics of interest group management turn into a zero-sum battle over declining resources. The past also tells us to beware of Times of stark and growing inequality. It rarely ends well.”*²

Nearly a century ago, John Maynard Keynes had proposed that

while inflation is bad, unemployment is worse. Paraphrasing him, he basically said unemployment makes the young of the country feel unwanted, and unloved. That is a dangerous proposition for a country like India. The Supreme Court of India, in the context adjudicating the legality of using tribal youngsters as SPOs with guns to fight the Maoists, recognized that demographic promise could turn into a demographic curse and observed: “Tax breaks for the rich, and guns for the poor isn't a political economy that our constitution mandates.”

In response to the above, one of your brethren threateningly proposed that maybe it is time to pack the Supreme Court with “committed judges” – i.e., the judges who will kow-tow to the executive that is hell bent on delivering a neo-liberal order.

It is against the foregoing background, that one needs to analyse the brutal assassination of Gauri Lankesh. By all accounts she wasn't a “successful” journalist in the sense of one who is a prima donna at the national or state level. Working with limited budgets, and at times starved for funds she ran a regional publication whose circulation was barely 10,000 or so. But the power of her ideas was of far greater purport. Her voice threatened an established political economy that was increasingly choosing to elide out of reckoning the poor, the marginalized, the exploited and the oppressed. Her voice was for social justice, and its articulation

a matter of moral urgency, and constitutional means, and their assertion a matter of moral necessity. And that voice was brutally silenced. And like so many times before, the spirit of the Constitution of India and the soul of this nation was yet again brutalised.

The optics of her killing are no less chilling. In front of her own house, a woman who was just opening the gate to park her car is brutally killed by an assassin emerging from the dark. The message was clear: those who will speak about constitutional means, assert an innate right to freedom of speech, and will speak on behalf of the marginalized and against those who will loot the nation for the benefits of the few – even your homes would not be safe.

What are we to do? How are we to go ahead with fearless journalism in a world such as this? Where the first principle of journalism – of speaking the truth to power – is seen as being anti-national? There could of course be many, many answers. But here is a small submission: if journalism, and its underlying value - freedom of speech as an essential element to construct human dignity – are to be in service of “speaking truth to power” – then speak that truth fully. Especially about the degradation of human dignity of the masses. That is the singular truth that stares at us in the face, and which we refuse to acknowledge and speak about it – to ourselves, and to those who wield power in our name, and on our behalf.

In any nation, and more so in a democracy, the moral force of institutions is intimately linked to whether the masses – especially the vast numbers in our country – continue to believe that the State, and

the elites, are thinking about them – at least in some small but meaningful measure. When the hope that empathy of fellow human beings may be aroused to action, to ensure greater justice, is lost we end up losing the greatest protection we have when we speak truth to power. Unless the powerful, and the groups their control are made to believe that the people will punish them if those who speak truth to power are not protected, all of us may face what GauriLankesh and SantanuBhowmik have. A retreat cannot be an option. For we could be attacked for something else. Until, every aspect of our human dignity is ground afoot. If GauriLankesh’s death is to mean anything, then we need to relearn to speak the truth to power, and that too about the truth of what is happening with and what is being done to the disempowered masses.

I end with the the hope that each one of you will assert the moral foundations of “speaking truth to power”.

(concluded)

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¹For a good summation see LIANG, Lawrence “Free Speech and Expression” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution*, eds – Choundhry, Sujit; Khosla, Madhav; & Mehta, PratapBhanu. Also see, BHATIA, Gautam “Offend, Shock or Disturb: Free Speech under the Indian Constitution.

²*Sakal Papers (P) Ltd v Union of India AIR 1962 SC 305, Bennett Coleman & Co v. Union of India (1972) 2 SCC 788 and Indian Express Newspapers v Union of India (1985) 1 SCC 641.*

³*RomeshThapar v State of Madras AIR 1950 SC 124; Superintendent, Central Prison v Dr. Ram ManoharLohia AIR 1960 SC 633. Also see Liang, Lawrence, supra note 1 above, page 816.*

⁴ *S. Rangarajan v P Jagjivan Ram (1989) 2 SCC 574*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶ *Justice Puttaswamy v Union of India, WP (Civil) No 494 (2012)*

⁷*Ibid, para 155, page 216.*

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⁹ *Ibid, paragraphs 157-160, pages 217- 220.*

¹⁰ *LUCE, Edward: “The Retreat of Western Liberalism”, Little, Brown (London) 2017, p 12-13.*

¹¹ *Ibid, page 13.*

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Love, Marriage and Religion

J. L. Jawahar

“Love in Times of Fundamental Politics” seems to have become an issue these days. (Janata, 19-11-2017) Why has it become a problem? Love should never create problems. At the most basic level, what is love? It is affection between two persons, ultimately leading to a desire to live together, share their lives and if possible, create a family. Not all love connections result in establishing a family. Some may be more ephemeral, perhaps as a result of youthful emotions. But when two adults who love each other want to spend their life together, they should be able to do so without the consent of any other person. That is what happens in the liberal western societies.

Whether it is good or bad is a different matter. Leave that problem aside for the present. That tendency is intruding into the Indian society now. Unfortunately, neither the lovers involved nor the society around them is mature enough to understand and accept the consequences of such a relationship. After leading a joint life for some time, one of the parties asks for marriage while the other party hesitates or refuses whatever the reasons might be. It becomes a problem and the police are asked to take charge of the situation, whether it is legitimate or not. The fact is, both of them are adults and living together voluntarily. Either of them can claim to have no intention of marriage, while the other party (usually the girl) can say that the relationship is being maintained with expectation of marriage finally. Intention is of no consequence unless it is expressed and specifically

accepted by the other party. In the absence of such an acceptance, the party cannot be compelled to enter into marriage.

Consensual cohabitation is based on mutual consent and the law is not concerned with it. But marriage means creation of certain legal relationships. It is to establish that relationship that one party wants to get married. That is why gays and lesbians struggled to get the right to marry. Otherwise nobody bothered how they lived. (The provision against unnatural relationship in the Penal Code is being diluted). Statute has provided Special Marriages Act to enable adult persons to marry irrespective of their religion or caste and in disregard of any other person.

The problem comes when one of the parties wants to bring in some extraneous consideration into the marriage. It may be caste or religion or consent of elders that was not raised till then. The position of parents is always precarious. They bring up their children with the hope, in fact, expectation that they will be respectful of them. They want that respect to be shown in a particular way – either by bestowing wealth on them or being bound by their wishes in life, particularly in regard to selection of life partners. Parents want their children to settle happily in a married life. But that is not in their hands exclusively. They cannot get the children married when they are minors so that they will not resist. Even after the child becomes a major, parents still expect to exercise their choice in the life partner for the child. But times have changed. The children are getting educated and not

conforming. They tend to form their own opinions about their own life. When the son or daughter makes an independent choice of life partner, parents get offended that they did not have an opportunity to decide. They are afraid that the choice of the child could be wrong as they have less experience of life. Some parents swallow their pride and agree. But some take it as an offence and betrayal and try their best to prevent that relationship. They consider it a matter of personal or family prestige as in tribal communities of earlier days. The social situation encourages it. They go to the extent of killing the daughter and also her husband. It is true that they took all the trouble to bring up the children. But children are not like pets. They are individuals with their own individual preferences unlike pets. More over law also recognizes them as separate and independent individuals and give some rights to them as citizens. If the child makes a choice after becoming an adult, the parents have an opportunity, not a right, to argue and persuade but not to object. If the parents really love their children, they should excuse the folly of independent decision and leave them to their fate. If the choice happens to be wrong, it is for the child to suffer the consequences. That is the privilege or burden of being an adult. You are responsible for your decisions. Even the courts do not have any right to find fault with the decision unless some fraud is played on the person to ensure a particular decision. It means it was not an independent decision and so need not be upheld.

(To be concluded)



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Defective Kettle and Dead Sabarmati
Sandeep Pandey

**Who Killed Sohrabuddin?
Debate Around Judge's Death
Puts Focus Back on Murders
by Gujarat Police**
Harsh Mander

**Rampage around Film
Padmavati: Power of
Historical Fiction**
Ram Puniyani

Love, Marriage and Religion
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Bangladesh After 46 Years

Kuldip Nayar

Even after 46 years, the liberation of Bangladesh is very vivid in my memory. I was the first Indian journalist who landed at Dhaka after liberation. My first visit was to the Press Club where I heard anti-India remarks. When I ordered smoked Hilsa, a delicacy, one of the scribes remarked: Hilsa is now available at Kolkata, not Dhaka. This hurt me really.

I complained to Bangabandhu Sheik Mujibur Rahman about the remarks made at the Press Club. He appreciated my feelings and when I pointed out that some 6,000 Indian soldiers died along with MuktiBahini supporters, the Sheikh laughed away at my disappointment. He said: A Bengali does not forget even a glass of water you give. How can he forget the lives lost by the Indian army?

This was the time when Syed Mohammad Ali, who later founded The Daily Star, called me and complained that India was writing on the defeat of Pakistan but not a word on the courage and sacrifices made by the Bangladeshis to liberate their country. On my return, I called a

meeting of journalists at the Delhi Press Club and told the members how disappointed Bangladesh felt.

Why did this omission take place? The Bengali journalists, who were in the agitation, gave up the cause as soon as the Bangladesh flag flew at Dhaka. Many years later, I found that the Indian government saw to it that there was no follow-up to the liberation. It was afraid of the renewal of sentiments that the two Bengals should unite. That was the reason why even the mention of Bangladesh was discouraged. True, for the Bengali journalists, the mission of seeing Bangladesh liberated was over. They should have followed the agitation with stories on how the Bangladeshis had sacrificed their all and the Indian army fought by the side of Mukti Bahini.

During the liberation war, D.P. Dhar, who was in charge of Bangladesh in the Indian cabinet, gave me the impression that India would dovetail its five-year plan with the development of Bangladesh. But this did not happen and Dhaka was understandably disappointed. All that Dhar was interested in was that

another coup should not take place to oust the Awami League's regime. Dhar saw to it that the Indian army would quit soon. The army withdrew.

When the coup took place and the tanks were used, New Delhi regretted that it did not follow up its resolve. These were the tanks given by Egypt. They were used to overthrow and eliminate the entire family of MujiburRahman. Only Sheikh Hasina escaped because she was in Germany at that time. The rest is too well known.

Once Bangladesh became free, New Delhi tried to distance itself from Dhaka because it wanted to mend its fences with Pakistan. Rawalpindi did not forget or forgive India for the division of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. This may not be mentioned at the dialogue table between India and Pakistan, but this occupied the minds of rulers at Islamabad very much.

For a long time, Pakistan did not recognize Bangladesh. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said at a UN meeting that they would fight a 100-year war with India and not normalize relations until the original Mountbatten plan, with a weak centre but a united country, was implemented. The Mountbatten plan wanted East Pakistan to be a part of Pakistan. When I met Mountbatten at Broadlands, where he was living after retirement, he said he had warned Bhutto that East Pakistan would not be part of Pakistan some 25 years hence. This is precisely what happened and his prediction came true. Lord Radcliffe, who drew the boundary, told me that he had no problem with settling the affairs in the east but he faced the

intractable situation in the west.

It goes to the credit of successive governments at Dhaka that they have maintained a six-per cent growth in the last 30 years. The garment industry is respected all over the world. Yet, the problem of poverty is exploited by the anti-Hasina forces, which comprise both pro-Pakistan elements and fundamentalists. Islamabad is said to have given currency to another idea. Although it is not in good shape economically, Pakistan is telling Bangladeshis that they were better off when they were part of East Pakistan. Some people have been taken in by the propaganda. This has only added to the anti-India feelings because Delhi is seen as an 'exploiter'.

For the Bangladeshis, the dream becoming economically viable has not come true even partially. With 40 per cent unemployment among the educated, the disappointment in the country about not making good is deep. But there is vicarious satisfaction that Pakistan is in more economic trouble than Bangladesh. To my dismay, I discovered that Delhi only wanted to escape the fallout of the enmity between the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Khalida Zia.

The ongoing battle between the two begums, Sheikh Hasina and Khalida Zia, is also affecting the progress of Bangladesh. Fortunately for Prime Minister Hasina, her *bête noire* does not count much these days, particularly after Khalida Zia had started boycotting elections in recent times. Now there is a split in her party too, and the BNP has fallen to No. 3 position in the country.

Khaleda is known to have exploited religion for her electoral gains though she has refuted the charges. Yet both fundamentalist organisations, the Jamiat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote, are her electoral allies. "I have more freedom fighters in our party than the Awami League," Hasina told me once. But there is no doubt that the anti-liberation forces are proliferating on her side.

It is generally taken for granted that if Khaleda returns to power, the extremists and pro-Pakistan forces would come to the fore. This prospect is not good for India which is bound to be hurt, particularly when Pakistan's ISI uses Bangladesh as a conduit to foment trouble in the India's northeast. Liberal forces in Bangladesh will also be hurt because they do not want the anti-liberation elements and fundamentalists to be strengthened. In a way, the liberals and India sail in the same boat.

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Defective Kettle and Dead Sabarmati

Sandeep Pandey

When Narendra Modi was to contest the election to become the Prime Minister of India, after being the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014, it was revealed to the country that he used to sell tea in his young days - to project his meteoric rise from a modest position. Vadnagar railway station was identified as the location where he used to sell tea. The government is spending money on this railway station to convert it into a tourist location.

In reality Modi took over the management of his uncle's canteen for sometime at the State Transport depot at Geeta Mandir in Ahmedabad when he was a teenager.

At a major traffic junction in Ahmedabad, Akhbar Nagar circle, which fell in the assembly constituency of Modi's protegee Amit Shah when he was a Member of Legislative Assembly, now the second most powerful person in this country, model of a kettle was built by the Silveroak Institute of Engineering and Technology in 2012. At first appearance the kettle looks impressive. The problem with its design is, if observed carefully that the handle is so connected that the kettle cannot be tilted to pour the tea. Howsoever much you may tilt the handle, the body of the kettle will remain stationary in a horizontal position. The design is a telling description of the capability of our engineering institutions and quality of their products.

This defective kettle model is

symbolic of the Narendra Modi brand of politics. It is a bold display of a model which doesn't work. Actually, it is useless. Initially it gives you an appearance of real. But if you take a close look at it, you realise that you've been cheated. It looks so real that you almost believe that it'll deliver tea. But one keeps waiting in expectation and in the end it doesn't benefit anybody. It is only for show off. People pass by it everyday without making a comment. It is unclear whether they prefer to ignore it or they are unaware of the defect? One wonders whether the creator of the model considered people as fools and worried little about what they would say when they would become aware of the flaw in design. Question is can he fool all the people for all time to come? Or someday people will feel embarrassed enough to consider the kettle model as a blot on their intellect and pull it down or at least try to rectify the defect by placing the handle at the right position?

That there was no truth in the story of Modi having been a tea seller in the past was clear from the way real tea vendors serving the patients and their attendants outside the Banaras Hindu University hospital in Lanka market were treated when Modi used to arrive in his parliamentary constituency. As his helicopter used to land inside the University campus all the tea vendors were bundled away days in advance and were treated as security threat to him. The President of the vendors' association Chintamani Seth handed over a

memorandum detailing the loss the tea vendors had suffered during Modi's numerous visits to Varanasi and claimed compensation from the local office of Narendra Modi. Vendors were denied of their livelihood so long as their representative was in town. Could a real past tea seller have been so insensitive to his co-vendors? His office did not choose to respond to the above memorandum. The police was more repressive next time vendors were to be removed. Usually they would re-establish their shops once Modi left Varanasi. But since Yogi Adityanath became the CM life became more difficult for vendors. Once removed they were not allowed to return. It took an agitation before they could set up shop again. The future of these vendors is uncertain in the PM's constituency. The Modi-Yogi rule has left them more vulnerable than before.

Modi also made an election promise in Varanasi in 2014 that he would clean Ganga the way he cleaned Sabarmati in Ahmedabad. Three and half years have passed. The sewer treated and untreated both flows into Ganga unhindered. Nitin Gadkari has recently made a foreign visit to raise money for the clean Ganga project.

Upstream of Ahmedabad Sabarmati is a dried river with not a single drop of water present. There is no governmental effort seen to revive the river. Only in rainy season some pools are visible. An unplanned

(Continued on Page 13)

Who Killed Sohrabuddin? Debate Around Judge's Death Puts Focus Back on Murders by Gujarat Police

Harsh Mander explains why he challenged a court decision to discharge BJP leader Amit Shah from a case involving the extra-judicial killings of three people.

Harsh Mander

On November 26, 2005, a man in his thirties named Sohrabuddin Sheikh was gunned down by a team of the Gujarat police. The police claimed that Sheikh was an operative of the Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorist organisation and that he was, along with Pakistan's ISI intelligence agency, planning a high-profile assassination of a senior leader in Gujarat - presumably Narendra Modi. The Rajasthan police had tipped off their Gujarat counterparts about the conspiracy, and came to Gujarat to help catch the terrorist. A police party was said to have spotted Sheikh riding a motorcycle on a highway at Vishala Circle near Ahmedabad. They challenged him, but he refused to halt. As he desperately tried to escape, he shot at the policemen. The police said that they fired back in self-defence and killed him.

In the wake of the Gujarat carnage of 2002, sensational reports frequently flashed on the front pages of newspapers and on television screens about men and women gunned down in encounters with the state police. The police mostly claimed that these men and women were dreaded terrorists who intended to assassinate Chief Minister Narendra Modi. But in each case, the authorities had been able to gather advance information of their plans and apprehend the terrorists almost miraculously (or with the utmost professionalism) just

in time. The official story on every occasion was that the men and women had been killed because they tried to shoot at the police while attempting to escape.

In reply to a question in the legislative assembly, the Gujarat government conceded that as many as 21 people had been killed by the state police in what are popularly known as "encounters" between just 2003 and 2006. But the names of Sohrabuddin Sheikh and his wife Kauser Bi did not figure in the Gujarat government's response.

"Encounters" are extra-judicial killings of people in the custody - legal or illegal - of the police. The stories given by the police about the circumstances of many of these encounter deaths in Gujarat, however, were mostly clumsy and unconvincing. Six of the people killed were officially in police custody when they died. It was incredible that they could possess firearms in custody to warrant the police killing them in self-defence. It was claimed in all cases that the persons killed by the police were dreaded terrorists, with plans to assassinate Modi or other senior leaders, or launch terror strikes, but there was rarely any convincing evidence to establish these allegations. No postmortem followed the killings, or statutory magisterial enquiry.

The story of how Sohrabuddin

Sheikh, his wife Kauser Bi, and a year later his associate Tulsiram Prajapati were killed may never have come to light, like numerous other encounter killings buried in the dusty files of official malfeasance. But the shadowy truth of these encounters was exposed by a combination of chance, the unconventional investigation techniques of a maverick journalist, the dogged pursuit of justice by human rights workers and the families of those killed, and above all public officials who displayed unexpected sterling courage and fairness. The pursuit of these cases uncovered the brazen way that people had been killed by the Gujarat police and how these custodial murders were dressed up as acts of self-defence. Subsequently, many senior police persons and Amit Shah, who was Gujarat's home minister at the time, were jailed on extremely grave charges of extra-judicial murder.

A brother's plea

In the case of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, two events intervened. In December 2005, Sheikh's brother, Rubabuddin, wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of India that he was not convinced about the police version of how his brother died, and was worried about his sister-in-law Kauser Bi, who had also gone missing at the same time as Sohrabuddin's murder. The Supreme

Court ordered the Gujarat police to investigate how he had been killed and what had happened to Kausar Bi.

Matters may still never have surfaced, except for a discussion over drinks of a few police inspectors with a journalist with a colourful history Prashant Dayal, who worked with the widely circulated newspaper, Divya Bhaskar. Dayal had been employed in a garage and then drove an auto-rickshaw before he established his credentials as an investigative reporter. He often plied police officers with liquor to extract "inside" news in a state that officially has a policy of prohibition. That evening, with much liquor in their bloodstreams, the officers bragged about how they had eliminated "anti-national elements".

The journalist investigated further, and his enquiries confirmed that two men and a burqa-clad woman had been confined in a farm house. In November 2006, he finally broke the sensational story of the killing of Sohrabuddin Sheikh and his wife Kausar Bi. (In 2008, he was soon charged with sedition by the Gujarat police. It took until 2013 for him to be acquitted.) Dayal's report sparked a series of developments that led ultimately to the arrest of senior police officials like DG Vanzara and Rajkumar Pandian of the Gujarat police, and MN Dinesh Kumar of the Rajasthan police, for the murder of Sheikh and others.

The investigation ordered by the Supreme Court into Sheikh's killing was initially supervised by Inspector General of Police Geetha Johri. Her investigation established quickly that the police story was a criminal fabrication, and that Sheikh had been deliberately murdered by the Gujarat

police without any provocation. The motorcycle that the police claimed Sheikh had been riding actually belonged to the cousin of a constable of the Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad. The Gujarat state government counsel was forced to admit to the Supreme Court that this was indeed a fake encounter.

It became clear that a police team had taken Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kausar Bi and associate Tulsiram Prajapati into custody on November 22, 2005, as they were travelling in a luxury bus from Hyderabad to Sangli. The group of policemen who abducted them were from Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and were led by a senior IPS officer from Gujarat, Rajkumar Pandyan. The police team initially apprehended only Sheikh and Prajapati, but Kausar Bi refused to let them take away her husband without her. All three were pulled out of the bus by the police. After they reached Gujarat, though, a protesting Kausar Bi was taken to a separate farmhouse. Prajapati was later handed over to the Rajasthan Police and subsequently sent to jail. Sohrabuddin Sheikh was killed by the police team on November 26, 2005.

A gruesome killing

Investigations established that Kausar Bi was killed and her body was burnt on or around November 29, 2005. The police had never announced her killing, nor claimed that she was a terrorist. Human rights lawyer Mukul Sinha pieced together what perhaps happened based on statements by police witnesses to the Central Bureau of Investigation: "Kausar Bi was confined in a farmhouse known as Arham farm from 26th to 28th November, 2005... One PSI Chaube was given the job to guard her...

Ravindra Makwana ASI ... on 25.8.2010, stated before the CBI that ... 'Choube the then PSI who was deputed to look after Smt Kausar Bi, raped her in farmhouse.' The last journey of Kausar Bi was of course the most brutal. On 29th November around 12.30 p.m, she was taken to the ATS office at Shahibaug by PSI Choube. DG Vanzara, DIG and Rajkumar Pandyan, SP, tried to buy peace with her and offered her a huge sum of money for her silence but she refused. On being told about the death of Sohrabuddin, she turned hysteric. Narendra Amin, Dy SP Crime Branch Ahmedabad, who was earlier a doctor by profession, was summoned by Vanzara around 4 pm. Kausar Bi was drugged and killed in that very office."

When Sheikh's associate Prajapati realised that Kausar Bi had been killed, he immediately surmised that she had been eliminated because she was a witness to the abduction. Now that he was the only remaining witness, he was terrified that he would meet the same fate. He spoke of his fears to many people, including some undertrials with whom he was detained in prison, and to his lawyer. He wrote desperately to the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, praying that it intervene to save his life. He feared that he would be killed while he was taken out of jail to attend the court cases pending against him. When the police transported him to other places, he would ask members of his family to try to travel on the same train. He was prescient.

Despite his many pleas, he was killed in yet another purported encounter. The Rajasthan Police brought Prajapati to Ahmedabad by train on December 26, 2006, and boarded the night train to Udaipur

from Ahmedabad station. Early on the morning on December 28, Prajapati was shot dead by the Gujarat Police near the Gujarat-Rajasthan border highway, close to a village called Chhapri. The police claimed that he had fled en route to the court. The claimed encounter took place in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, to which accused IPS officer DG Vanzara had been transferred just 13 days before the murder. The chargesheet filed later by the Central Bureau of Investigation said that Prajapati had been abducted in Ahmedabad. The encounter took place under the direction of Vanzara and another IPS officer, Vipul Aggarwal, the agency said.

Police officer's testimony

Prajapati was killed at a crucial point in the Sohrabuddin and Kausar Bi murder investigation, when the Investigating Officer, VL Solanki had sought permission to interrogate him. According to a statement by police officer GC Raiger to the CBI later, Home Minister Amit Shah called a meeting in the second last week of December 2006. Raiger testified that he attended this meeting with Geetha Johri, the Inspector General of the state Criminal Investigation Department who was supervising the Sohrabuddin enquiry, and Director General of Police PC Pande. (Both were later listed as accused in this case.) According to Raiger's testimony, Shah "scolded us for not being able to tame Solanki, who wanted to drag the matter further in his enquiry by way of examining Tulsiram Prajapati for which he had sought permission. He told us to wrap up the matter."

According to Raiger, Shah specifically directed that Prajapati should not be interrogated and that Solanki should be stopped from his

investigation. The investigating officer Solanki also told the CBI that Johri, the senior police officer who was supervising his investigations, instructed him to change the case papers in order to delete evidence against Amit Shah. This, she told him, was on Shah's instructions. Solanki refused. Rajendra Acharya, who was Geetha Johri's personal assistant, confirmed this conversation.

In March 2007, the investigation was handed to Deputy Inspector General of Police, Rajnish Rai. When Rai was entrusted with this task, it was expected that he would protect the state police and political establishment. Instead he stunned his peers and seniors by arresting IPS officers Vanzara, Pandyan and Dinesh MN in April 2007 for the Sohrabuddin fake encounter. Pandyan was Rajnish Rai's batch-mate, and they had been close friends but he was convinced that a great wrong had been committed and that he had to stand firmly on the side of truth and fairness. Rai alleged that Amit Shah and the police officers loyal to him were making every effort to cover up the fake encounter. He also maintained that the Prajapati murder was also part of this conspiracy.

In January 2010, the Supreme Court finally transferred the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation. In April 2010, senior Gujarat police officer Abhay Chudasama was charged with extortion in partnership with Sohrabuddin Sheikh. After Chudasama's arrest, the CBI also charged the Amit Shah with collusion, based on 331 phone calls by the politician to the concerned police officers that had been deleted from the records.

The murky story that emerged

from the CBI investigation was that Sohrabuddin Sheikh was a member of a criminal gang. This gang was encouraged and patronised by some Gujarat police officers and political leaders, and operated an extortion racket in Rajasthan. However, matters came to a head after Sheikh's gang threatened some well-connected marble businessmen in Udaipur. His political and police masters felt that Sheikh was not amenable to control, and should be eliminated. They could not take the risk of charging him formally for his crimes, because he would expose his powerful mentors and partners in crime.

According to the CBI charge-sheet, the killing was orchestrated by senior police officers on the orders of Gujarat Home Minister Amit Shah and former Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria, who was also a senior BJP leader. A supplementary charge-sheet filed by CBI on May 6, 2013, alleged that Vimal Patni, the owner of RK Marbles and Gulab Chand Kataria conspired to kill Sohrabuddin Sheikh as he was allegedly trying to extort money from RK Marbles. The CBI further charged that the killing was outsourced to the Gujarat Police in consultation with Amit Shah, the Minister of State for Home of Gujarat.

It was after the investigation by the CBI that Amit Shah was charged as an accused in these extra-judicial murders, and he was jailed along with more than 10 police officers. The CBI further charged that Shah was also involved in criminal extortion activities.

Vanzara's role

Dahyaji Gobarji Vanzara, who headed Gujarat's Anti-Terrorist

Squad, was in jail from 2007 to until he got bail in 2015 on charges of having conducted a series of extra-judicial killings. In addition to being accused of killing Sohrabuddin Sheikh, Kauser Bi and Prajapati, he was also charged with the murder of Sameer Khan (killed in October 2002), Mumbai college student IshratJahan and three others (shot dead on June 15, 2004) and Sadik Jamal (killed in 2003). It is reported that in September 2013, there were 32 police officers, including six Gujarat IPS officers, who were serving time in jail for their involvement in fake encounters. Most of them had worked under Vanzara.

From jail, he wrote a letter of resignation, in which he was entirely unrepentant. "The CID/CBI arrested my officers and me holding us responsible for carrying out allegedly fake encounters," he wrote. "If that is true, then the CBI investigating officers for all four cases have to arrest the policy formulators too as we, being field officers, have simply implemented the policy of this government, which was inspiring, guiding and monitoring our actions from very close quarters." He described himself as a "nationalist Hindu", spoke of NarendraModi as "god", yet he felt abandoned and disgruntled. Vanzara was released on bail in February, 2015, and returned home to a hero's welcome.

Change of fortunes

The winds had changed course once the BharatiyaJanata Party government led by NarendraModi took charge of the government in Delhi in May 2014. The fortunes of Shah and the indicted police officers changed dramatically. There were some initial hiccups, but these quickly

remedied. The trial judge JT Utpat pulled up Amit Shah on June 6, 2014, for failing to appear in court in person. He ordered Shah to present himself in court on June 26, 2014. But only a day before this scheduled hearing, Utpat was transferred to another court, and replaced by another judge BH Loya. Judge Loya also expressed concerns over Shah's failure to appear before the court. But this judge died on the night of November 30 or in the early hours of December 1, 2014, in circumstances that his family claims were suspicious. In an article published this week, they detailed their misgivings to The Caravan magazine.

Within weeks of Judge Loya's death, on December 30, 2014, the third judge to hear the case, MB Gosavi, discharged Amit Shah from the Sohrabudin Sheikh fake encounter case. Gosavi said he saw no evidence against Shah, and instead said he "found substance" in his main defence that the CBI had framed him "for political reasons". In so doing, Gosavi ignored crucial pieces of evidence such as police officer Raiger's categorical statement that Amit Shah had instructed obstruction of the investigation, and his phone records.

One by one, the court also discharged Rajasthan former Home Minister GulabchandKataria, Rajasthan-based businessman VimalPatni, former Gujarat Police chief PC Pande, Additional Director General of Police Geeta Johri, Gujarat Police officers Abhay Chudasama, Rajkumar Pandian and N Amin from the case. So too were Yashpal Chudasama and Ajay Patel, both senior office-bearers at the Ahmedabad District Co-Operative Bank. Gosavi discharged Pandyan on the flimsy technical ground that

there was no permission to prosecute him and hence he could not be prosecuted, ignoring that such permission is not necessary when an officer is charged with murder. All the serving officers have been reinstated and promoted.

PP Pandey was released on bail in February 2015 and, in three days, was reinstated and given charge of an investigation against Satish Verma, the police officer whose Special Investigative Team inquiry had led to Pandey's indictment in the first place. In April 2016, he was appointed the acting Director General, Police, Gujarat - the first time in India that a police officer on bail for murder was given this high responsibility. Respected police officer Julio Ribeiro unsuccessfully challenged his promotion and appointment. "The police force of a state can't be headed by a person accused of extremely serious offence of murder of four persons, especially, when the trials are yet to begin," Ribeiro said. In time, seven indicted police officers were granted bail. Three retired, the remainder were promoted.

By contrast, police officer RajnishRai, whose brave and fearless investigations led ultimately to the charge-sheeting and arrest of Amit Shah and several senior police officers, has been consistently punished. Since 2007, Rai was then not posted even once to the same location as his wife, an IAS officer. A number of false charges were levelled against him, his confidential reports sullied, and he was superseded. But he is unbroken, accepting stoically the personal and professional costs of doing what they believed was right.

RajnishRai said to me that for him the highest satisfaction is that after

the investigations undertaken by him and Satish Verma (in the IshratJahan matter), extra-judicial killings came to an abrupt and absolute halt in Gujarat. This would not have happened if these two officers had not demolished the long-sustained tradition of impunity from any criminal investigation for custodial killings by police persons. This alone makes all that they have suffered and lost in their careers worthwhile for them.

Meanwhile, after Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014, he picked Amit Shah to head the BJP, vaulting him over the heads of many senior leaders. Shah is widely perceived to be the second most powerful person in Modi's India. It mattered for nothing for Modi that Shah had been charged and jailed for his alleged role in conspiring and directing the extra-judicial killings of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kauser Bi and Tulsiram Prajapati in 2005, and in other extra-judicial killings such as of the teenaged IshratJahan.

It is very rare for the CBI to fail to appeal against the discharge of its own chargesheet in any criminal case, because this would amount to admitting that its own investigation and chargesheet was flawed. But in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh case, the CBI has chosen not to appeal against the discharge of Amit Shah and other police officers by the trial court. It was Sohrabuddin's brother, Rubabuddin Shaikh, who challenged Amit Shah's discharge in the Bombay High Court. But after a few hearings, he withdrew his challenge. He went on record in later press interviews that he did so under pressure, fearing for his life.

I felt that this was too important

a matter to pass unchallenged, therefore I filed an appeal against the order in the Mumbai High Court, with the assistance of my friends, senior lawyers Indira Jaising and Anand Grover. I did not claim that Shah or the Gujarat police officers were definitely guilty (I have no basis to do so), only that since the CBI had filed a chargesheet against them, it was in the public interest that the evidence against the former home minister should be heard and evaluated fairly.

However, the Mumbai High Court dismissed my application on the grounds of locus, or in other words maintaining that since I am unrelated to the person killed, I have no right to intervene. I am convinced however that this was not a matter of the private grief and loss of Sohrabuddin's brother, Rubabuddin Sheikh. Since the grave charges of multiple murders were against a person who held the high office of home minister of Gujarat, and is now the national president of the ruling party, I and the people of India have the right to know whether he, or the police officers under his command, had anything to do with the killings of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, Kauserbi and Tulsiram.

I challenged the High Court rejection in an appeal to the Supreme Court. Kapil Sibal, my lawyer, pleaded before the judges that there are any number of rulings of the higher courts, both to support my right to raise this question before the courts, and for the evidence against the accused persons who have been chargesheeted to be tested in a court of law. He spoke of the imperative for the courts to demonstrate that that there is only one law in the land for all people, not one for the

powerful and one for ordinary citizens. The court dismissed my appeal as well without giving reasons.

But the CBI's unwillingness to have this order examined by the higher courts speaks volumes about the pressures it faces, or its willing (and culpable) partisanship. The discharge orders of the trial court freeing Amit Shah and the police officers from facing trial for the murder of Sohrabuddin have not been approved or upheld by either the High Court or the Supreme Court. Many news reports have since claimed that a clean chit has been given to Amit Shah by the High Court and the Supreme Court. This is not correct. The High Court and the Supreme Court have merely denied one petitioner the chance to challenge these orders on technical grounds. Shah, as of date, has received no such clean chit from any of the constitutional courts of the country.

On November 29, the special CBI court will begin the trial in the Sohrabuddin fake encounter case, hearing evidence against 22 other people against whom charges of murder, abduction and destruction of evidence have been framed, as well as offences under the Arms Act.

In one of his election speeches in Gujarat, Modi declared defiantly, "Congressmen say that Modi is indulging in [illegal police] encounter[s], saying that Modi has killed Sohrabuddin. Friends from Congress, you have a government at the centre, if you have the guts send Modi to [the] gallows." When he asked the crowds what to do with Sohrabuddin Sheikh, the crowd responded, "Kill him! Kill him!"

Courtesy : Scroll.in

Rampage around Film Padmavati: Power of Historical Fiction

Ram Puniyani

Nearly a year ago multiple rowdy protests took place when the film Padmavati was being shot in Rajasthan. Sanjay Leela Bhansali had to interrupt the shooting for some time. This time around, more intense opposition has been witnessed as the film was due to be released. On the basis of its trailer, the Karni Sena demanded that the film should not be released. Crores of rupees were on offer from BJP leaders for cutting the nose of Deepika Padukone, the actress doing the role of Padmavati, and for the head of Bhansali, the director of the film. Bhansali was also interrogated by the Parliamentary committee. The assertion from Karni Sena was that the film distorts history and is an insult to Rajput honor. An intense intolerance to the artistic freedom of the director has been on display, with the State looking the other way, in a way giving silent support to the violence and attempt to suppress the freedom of expression. The Chief Ministers of five BJP-ruled states have already proclaimed that the film will not be released in their states and a Congress Chief Minister too has talked against the film.

What is the story line of the film? The story line is basically drawn from the classic novel of Malik Muhammad Jayasi, with modifications as per the film makers. Jayasi in his novel tells the story of Allauddin Khilji, the 13-14th century ruler of Delhi. As per this fictional tale he is smitten by the immense beauty of Padmavati and attacks Chittor to get her. As he lays the siege of Chittor, Padmavati along

with many valiant Rajput women commit jauhar (self immolation) and kill themselves, depriving Khilji from getting Padmavati.

The objectionable part of the film for the likes of Karni Sena and the BJP is a probable dream sequence of romance between Khilji and Padmavati. The film makers are denying such a sequence. As such Jayasi's narrative is a metaphor for the futility of power and aspiration of the soul for liberation. Historians like Rajat Datta ("Rani Padmini: Classic Case of How Love Tale was Inserted into History", *The Wire*, <https://thewire.in>) tell us that Padmavati or Padmini is not a historical character. Khilji did lay the siege of Chittor in 1303. The novel Padmavati was written in 1540, more than two centuries later. The books which were written between these two periods do not mention Padmavati at all. After Padmavati appeared, many bards picked up this tale and made it a part of popular folklore. Its communal distortion only took place after British ethnography-historiography began which was aimed at the demonising the Muslim rulers. While the accounts of the bards underplayed the Muslim aspect, the British writer James Tod's work, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, that he wrote in 1829, transformed the whole story, giving the narration an anti-Muslim slant. This was an artificial insertion into history, which has come to life over a period of time.

There are two major types of presentations relating to Rajput

women and Muslim men. One is that which shows the valour of Rajput women who commit self immolation rather than yielding to the Muslim kings. The other one is where there is interaction and alliance of Muslim rulers and Rajput families, with intermarriage being a part of the relationship. Over the years, the understanding has been promoted that the 'giving away' of Rajput daughters to Muslims was a surrender, a weakness of Rajputs. This understanding falls into the category of 'our women' being given away to the 'others'; it is a patriarchal presentation of events and is interpreted as a matter of shame for Rajputs! It is interesting to note that when there is an obverse incident, like that shown in the film *Bajirao Mastani*, the reaction is totally different from this.

While the film is yet to be seen in full, what one can glean from the trailer of the film is that Khilji is shown to be a cruel, barbaric person. His army carries a flag that looks like that of Pakistan. The present stereotypes about Muslims seem to be embodied in Khilji. This creation of 'Muslim as evil' has its roots in the British accounts of Indian history. British colonial powers followed the policy of 'divide and rule'. The British officers/historians followed their masters and gave a tilt to past events where the image of Muslim kings was tarnished. Kings have their own characteristics and religion is not the only marker for their nature and character. Kings cutting across religions had traits which can be attributed to their power. They also

had their specificities. The historical accounts don't present Khilji as a particularly cruel ruler. What is recorded is that he expanded his Delhi empire, and fought against the Mongols and saved Delhi from their invasion.

Because of the growing atmosphere of intolerance in the country, these types of films are getting a hostile reception. We first had *Mughal-E-Azam*, one of the great films from India, a fiction nevertheless, where Jodha bai, a Rajput princess, is married to Akbar. The reception of the film was extraordinarily positive, and the alliance was not questioned. This was few decades ago when communalisation of society was not so intense. A few years ago we had another film *Jodha Akbar* on the same theme. This time there were some protests, but film was screened in theatres. Now with *Padmavati* the protests are horrifying. History has been distorted here for sure, but what part of history and in which way? *Padmavati* is a fictional reality, how has it been depicted needs to be seen. But the fear of a Hindu girl romancing a Muslim is what is agitating the Senas and the CMs of BJP-ruled states in particular. Here actually the film distorts Khilji, presenting him as an embodiment of the currently prevalent negative perceptions about Muslims. But the entire debate is taking place around the character of the fictional *Padmavati*, with it coming to haunt the present as a real character, and Khilji being painted in the biases of present reflected in the past. Nevertheless, filmmakers should have their liberty and the film must be seen, appreciated and criticised on the grounds of its strengths and weaknesses.

Love, Marriage and Religion

J. L. Jawahar

That appears to be the problem in the case of *Hadiya* now. But we should not ignore facts. In almost all these cases of love and conversion, it is the boy from a minority community that takes a girl from the majority Hindu community. We do not come across any case or an insignificant number of cases, in the reverse direction. It cannot be said that the media is not reporting such cases as they are always anxious to report any such thing. That it is always the Hindu girl that is asked or voluntarily comes to convert to the other religion. This naturally causes great angst for the orthodox Hindutva group. Moreover, the conversion is almost always followed by marriage. Whether it is marriage that follows conversion or the conversion that follows marriage is not clear. It is like the question raised by *Draupadi*.

In order to minimise the effect of this tendency, Hindu groups started *GharWapasimovement* to take back the converted people into the religious fold. But at that time there was a big hue raised in the parliament against it - not by the minority communities, but by the so-called secular parties. (It is no doubt foolish to expect any party in India to be secular). The conversion in one direction was going on for centuries in India. Nobody objected to it. But when the Hindus tried to get back their flock, there were all sorts of allegations of communalism. That discrimination naturally gave a handle to the RSS and VHP. At that time the central government offered to bring in an Act to forbid religious

conversions. But none of the political parties agreed to it. Of course, the Act against conversion of political parties was supported enthusiastically! That is how our secularism is being practiced.

Obviously, there is a conflict between love and religion in practice. Religion is coming in the way of lovers wanting to consummate their love. There is Special Marriages Act to overcome religious objections. But they do not dare to avail of it. Why? Religion is more important than love to at least one of them. Strictly speaking, if you are honest and if religion is more important to you than love, it was never difficult for you to get a spouse from out of your own religion. But you chose a person from another religion, cultivated love over some time patiently and when the question of marriage comes you suddenly make a demand that the lover should convert to your own religion and discard her own religion. What kind of love is this? "Love knows no boundaries of caste, class, religion or nationality," they say. In fact there are many cases to illustrate the truth of it. It would be wise to understand at this point how important love really is for both the partners. Perhaps it would be sensible to call the bluff, and get out of it. But various factors are brought to bear on that person to weaken the capacity to take a drastic decision at that stage. That is what can be called coercion to justify cancellation of both conversion and marriage. Perhaps the Hon'ble Kerala High Court might have found some such evidence to nullify the marriage.

If conversion is really based on appreciation of religious tenets of the new religion, it requires fresh thinking. Before you want to change your religion, if the change is really based on religious considerations, you must have sufficient knowledge of the spiritual values of your original religion. Then you must have sufficient knowledge of the other religion also and find it sufficiently attractive to change. You can be rest assured that it is not the case with most of those who are converting now from one religion to another. Obviously, the considerations are not spiritual and so it is not covered by freedom of religious practice.

One dangerous tendency is that the problem of gender inequality is being clubbed with the problem of religious conversion. "With the clouds of communal divisiveness coming up on the horizon, patriarchal notions and attempts to control the lives of women have become stronger," it is stated. By clubbing the two problems we are losing the advantage of clear vision of both the problems which are separate and distinct and quite serious in their own way. We fail to solve both of them by clubbing them together. Let us not do that mistake just for the sake of rhetoric. By doing so, in fact, you are admitting that the present problem is of controlling the Hindu girl and not of spurious religious conversions. Whether it is love jihad or not, certainly there is dubious process of conversion involved in it. Let nobody think that I support Hindutva here. I condemn all the religions with equal vehemence. Particularly the recent behavior of Hindutva forces is not only disappointing, but disgusting. But if we condemn this for the wrong reasons, we actually strengthen them, as they are able to point to injustice.

We should not give them that opportunity.

There are many illustrious Muslims who have married Hindu women and have harmonious family lives. They prove inter-religious marriages can lead to communal harmony. We salute those silver screen and political celebrities. They are the hope of a secular society in future which is not with us now. There are also Hindu gentlemen who have married women from other communities and lead peaceful and happy lives. But now love is being played as a game. Religious people are upset they are being exploited. Parents are worried that their wards are being misled and used as pawns in nefarious games. Sociologists are worried that human values are being violated. Secular institutions are being tainted with religious tints.

Why is this happening? We have defined secularism in a wrong way. We have wrapped the Indian society in the religious blanket inevitably leading to conflict and friction. Every human value is being viewed through religious glasses - even love. How did it happen? Our secular constitution gives freedom which is defined in Art.25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion....All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion." A clause is added at the end that it does not include a right to forcible conversion. Our liberal courts have clarified that propaganda is concerned with right to communicate beliefs to another person or to expound the tenets of one's religion. Naturally it is a right protected under freedom of speech. But is the freedom of speech unlimited? Is it

not circumscribed in any way like other rights? Religion consists of certain faiths which are supposed to be personal and the Constitution rightly allows freedom to hold those beliefs. But why should anybody communicate his beliefs to another person of different faith? After all, everybody has his own religion and his own beliefs. Communicating consists of something more than informing. It carries an intention to impress about the merits and superiority of the faith. It is a clear violation of the faith of the other person. Communicating your beliefs to them amounts to violating their beliefs which is not proper. That amounts to propaganda which shall be forbidden or at least restricted. But any such idea is frowned upon by the pseudo secularists. Naturally these frictions arise.

Freedom of speech in the Constitution is meant for expression and propaganda of secular ideas - academic, political and scientific, which will enlighten the people. But religion consists of a dogma which allows no changes and no discussions whatsoever. Then why should it be allowed to be propagated? There would be no friction if that communication is confined to those who are already within that faith. But extending it to people of other faiths involves many frictions unnecessarily. Not only in the past, even now that has become the cause of many quarrels and destructive fights. It can be avoided by circumscribing the right of religious propaganda in some way.

Those who have more resources create more noise and influence people. Now-a-days there is no religion without political agenda involved. Foreign countries are

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Convergence and Mutual Support of Movements of Social Justice and Movements of Spirituality

Can This Possibility Increase To Create A Better World ?

Bharat Dogra

It is very widely agreed that intolerably high levels of economic inequalities and social injustices exist in India and these are a very important cause of distress and deprivation in our country. There are several sincere social movements which have been struggling against these inequalities at various levels. The highly relevant role of those social movements against injustice is widely acknowledged. On the one hand, these movements seek some relief for deprived people and victims of injustice. And on the other hand they seek to create a much more equal and just world, where the possibilities of deprivation and the related distress will be greatly reduced due to equality on a longer-term basis.

India is a land where there have been several sincere spiritual movements in the past. These movements have generally been concerned with the development of high character of individuals (or groups of individuals) and providing them a firm base of value systems so that they can remain free from greed, dishonesty, arrogance, dominance, excess of sensual pleasures, various addictions, overwhelming personal ambition, violence and falsehoods while remaining close to truth, honesty, love, peace, co-operation and inspiring them to lead a simple life based on limited needs. Any movement which helps to create more and more such individuals helps

to create a better world in which distress will be reduced at various levels in various ways.

Thus, at a most basic level, those movements of social justice which are sincere and those movements of spirituality which are sincere have one basic similarity, that they aim to create a better society and reduce distress. It is also most likely that as long as they are sincere both will succeed in achieving this aim to a lesser or greater extent.

However, beyond this very basic commonality, there are many other possibilities of convergence and mutual support which can increase the impact of both movements for creating a better world.

A movement for social and economic justice can succeed in creating a more equal society by making structural changes in the economy, but in order to sustain these gains, society will need spiritual development. If by changing ownership of means of production you create a more equal society for the time being, but people and leaders have the same weaknesses of greed, lust, arrogance, addictions, dishonesty and dominance as afflict society today and no efforts are made to check these, then after some time new problems and tensions including trends towards new forms of inequalities are bound to appear again. Ecological ruin will also increase which in the present

day world is likely to be most harmful.

On the other hand if a movement for social justice after its initial success in creating a more egalitarian society also emphasises spiritual development adequately to inculcate the virtues of truth, honesty, simplicity and limited needs, co-operation and non-violence in people, then the possibilities of maintaining equality, justice and peace as well as ensuring broad-based and sustainable progress based on co-operation of all will be significantly increased.

Furthermore, it is very important for the movement for social justice to maintain the high commitment and dedication of its members over a long period of time. For this too, efforts of spiritual development and an overall environment of spiritual progress influenced by sincere spiritual movements is very useful.

On the other hand, for the movement of spirituality also, the movement for social justice plays a very helpful role as the development of spirituality is much more possible in conditions of justice and equality than in conditions of inequality and injustice.

Imagine a village in which landlords exploit others almost as bonded workers. Then if someone who wants to create a better world goes to bonded workers and without

talking about ending their exploitation talks only about honesty and truth to them, this is going to appear ridiculous to them. On the other hand, if exploitation is also being challenged at the same time, then it makes sense to talk about spiritual development too, both in terms of being important in itself and also as being very helpful for the struggle of workers against exploitation. Similarly, imagine a situation in which exploitation has already been checked to a considerable extent but the gains of betterment have to be stabilised. Here again the role of spiritual development becomes very important to complement and complete the earlier achievement of the movement for social justice.

Thus while the movement for spirituality acquires added strength alongside and in co-operation with the movement for social justice, in isolation the movement loses some of its strength and potential for wider benefits to society. Imagine a big company involved in exploiting farmers and workers which holds meditation classes for its officials to improve their mental health. The question then naturally arises, is the company doing this to improve their mental health so that they can exploit others more?

Such contradictions do not arise when social justice and spirituality work to complement each other. These are essentially two very beautiful branches of a tree, and when they converge and complement each other, the beauty and fragrance of both branches is further enhanced. Sincere people belonging to both these movements need to come closer to each other and explore possibilities of closer co-operation.

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diversion of water from the Narmada canal makes 10-11 km of Sabarmati passing through Ahmedabad city look resplendent. A river has been converted into a longitudinal lake. But downstream of city the water becomes black as all the industrial effluent, with or without going through a treatment plant, is merged with water. Sabarmati cries for help here but there are no plans to clean it.

The kettle and the Sabarmati are symbolic of Modi's Gujarat model of

(Continued from Page 11)

waiting anxiously to pour money into the country in the name of religious functions. When any restrictions and regulations are made to control the same, it is alleged that there is no religious freedom in India and no respect for human rights as if religion is the measure of human rights. Freedom is given to follow your own religion and believe in it. But why should anybody take the trouble and spend money to expand his faith into the realm of others? You should not step on the area of other religions as they have a similar right of faith. FCRA and Foreign Currency controls are not able to prevent Naiks and Popes to come and purchase people for their faiths. On the other hand they had the audacity to proclaim that they have a right to get others converted to their religion and India did not object when Pope said it on Indian soil. We pat ourselves on our backs for our pseudo secular ideas and fail to understand the fissiparous tendencies created by that secularism. The immediate necessity is to curb this religious fanaticism and nobody allows any mention of that

development, which has now been thoroughly exposed. After waiting for so many years expecting some miracle to take place now people have decided to question it. The power of youth represented by Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakur and Jignesh Mevani is arrayed against the Bhartiya Janata Party government and Narendra Modi in particular and the BJP doesn't have a face which people find attractive enough this time.

The days of the politics of symbolism seem to be numbered now.

problem, leave alone solving it. We do not have the courage of conviction to go to the bottom of the problem. It is the same with the politicians, intellectuals and pitifully also with the judiciary. Religious fanatics have a field day and they play havoc with peaceful life of gullible people.

(concluded)

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By

B. Vivekanandan

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Press Release

CJAR Statement on the Supreme Court order Dismissing the CJAR Petition and Imposing Unprecedented Costs

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) strongly disagrees with the order of the Supreme Court dismissing the Writ Petition filed by the Campaign to ensure a fair and impartial investigation into the allegations of bribery of judges of the higher judiciary, to obtain favourable orders for medical colleges.

To briefly recap the facts: The CBI registered a FIR in the case of Prasad Education Trust based on evidence gathered, of a criminal conspiracy including preparation and planning to pay large sums as bribes to procure a judgement in favour of the medical college, from the Allahabad High Court and the Supreme Court. As is widely known, the process for granting permission to private medical colleges has been steeped in corruption. In this particular case, the Prasad Education Trust was seeking relief against the decision of the MCI to deny their medical college permission to operate and the decision of the MCI to confiscate the caution money of the trust in view of the flagrant violations of the terms and conditions for operating a medical college. The college was able to secure partial relief in the case.

An investigation by a government controlled agency like the CBI into a case concerning the Judges of the Supreme Court could seriously compromise the independence of the judiciary. In this case, there was particular concern as the matter of the medical college was being heard

by a bench headed by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India himself. Therefore, CJAR filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking that such a sensitive investigation should not be left in the hands of a government controlled agency and should be undertaken by a Special Investigative Team headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and monitored by the Supreme Court itself.

CJAR prayed before the court that the petition should be heard by judges other than those who had served on the bench hearing the matter of the medical college. CJAR requested that the petition be dealt with by the five senior most judges of the Supreme Court, excluding the CJI, so that the monitoring of this investigation would be robust and fair, and to ensure that there was no compromise in the integrity of the investigation. This would be also be in keeping with the fundamental principle that no one should be a judge in their own case.

A related matter was filed by Kamini Jaiswal which was referred by the second senior most Judge of the Supreme Court, to a Constitution Bench comprising the 5 senior most judges of the Court. However, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India intervened and dealt with the petitions on the administrative side as well as the judicial side.

The Code of Conduct formulated in a Conference of all the Chief Justices in the country in 1997 which

has been laid down in the 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life', says in the very first code that:

"1. Justice must not merely be done but it must also be seen to be done. The behaviour and conduct of members of the higher judiciary must reaffirm the people's faith in the impartiality of the judiciary. Accordingly any act of the judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court, whether in official or personal capacity, which erodes the credibility of this perception has to be avoided."

The actions of the Hon'ble Chief Justice in this case clearly violate this salutary Code of Conduct.

The bench comprising of Justice R.K. Agarwal, Justice A. Mishra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar has now passed the order dismissing the CJAR petition by holding it to be mala fide and intended to defame the Supreme Court and the Judiciary and has imposed costs of Rs. 25 lakhs on the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms. As Justice Khanwilkar was also on the bench which heard the medical college case, we believe that he should have recused himself from this bench.

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability And Reforms was set up more than a decade ago and comprises of representatives of many national campaigns and social movements and citizens from all walks of life who have come together to campaign for the

accountability of the higher Judiciary and reforms in the judiciary. Contrary to the charge against the campaign that this was a mala fide petition intended to defame the Judiciary, CJAR had approached the court with the intention to protect the independence, integrity and reputation of the Supreme Court and the judiciary in general. CJAR was not making any allegations. It was only seeking a court monitored independent investigation into the issues recorded in the FIR filed by the CBI.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has held that approaching the court to seek a court monitored investigation into serious charges of conspiracy, preparation and planning to bribe the Judges of the Supreme Court in a case before the court, is an attempt to defame the court. The court has also said that this FIR does not involve any judges. We believe that such a statement cannot be made when the FIR clearly states that there was a conspiracy to procure a favourable judgement from the Supreme Court by paying large bribes. Obviously bribes to procure a favourable judgement from the Supreme Court, cannot be paid to any other officials except to the judges themselves. Only an independent investigation could have cleared this allegation.

It has also come to light that the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has reportedly denied permission to CBI to register an FIR against a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court allegedly involved in this matter. The reported denial by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and the judgement of the Supreme Court in the matter, has in effect ensured that there will be no investigation of sitting judges

in this matter.

The Campaign has taken up many cases of judicial corruption and has made several complaints to various Chief Justices under the in-house mechanism, for investigating charges of misconduct against judges. We believe that the unprecedented order imposing costs of Rs 25 lakh on CJAR is a case of "costs in terrorem" in an attempt to intimidate the Campaign into not taking up cases of judicial misconduct and corruption and deter it from demanding accountability of the judiciary. Further, the order is in violation of the principles of natural justice, as CJAR was not given any notice of the court's intention to impose costs and further, it was not given an opportunity to contest the decision to impose costs.

The refusal of the court to allow an independent probe into the allegations of corruption (as recorded in the CBI's FIR) and through its conduct in this case, the Supreme Court has itself brought down the esteem of the judiciary in the public's eyes – especially those who look up on it as the most important constitutional guardian of the rights of the people against executive and legislative excesses.

However, this order of the Supreme Court and its decision to impose costs of Rs 25 lakh will not deter CJAR. We will challenge the order and fight it tooth and nail through every legal channel and remedy. In the coming few days, we will be filing a review petition. This judgement is only going to strengthen the Campaign and energise us to carry forward our efforts and campaigns. We will also put forth our demand for an independent probe

into the allegations of conspiracy and corruption through all available forums. Since the pronouncement of the judgement, several groups and citizens from all across India have sent in messages of support urging CJAR to carry forward its work.

We believe that the people of this country are the real stakeholders in the institution of the Judiciary and in the judicial system. They are groaning under a system which has enormous problems and requires serious reforms of all kinds including a robust and credible system for investigating complaints against judges and holding them accountable for their misconduct and corruption. The actions of the Supreme Court in this case will now be judged by the people's court which is the ultimate court in the country.

–Campaign for Judicial
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**Time for the Intelligentsia
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Neha Dabhade

Jolt on Jerusalem
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Women Representation in Parliament and States Legislatures

Rajindar Sachar

Rahul Gandhi in his latest interview has emphasised that the first priority would be to give representation to women in Parliament. Similar determination has also been echoed the by BJP. But the reality on this subject belies the promises made by both the parties.

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?

Reservation Bill in the Rajya Sabha. The bill's journey began on September 12, 1996, when it was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the United Front Government of Deve Gowda. The bill called for reserving 33% of the seats in the Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies for women. As per the draft, the seats were to be reserved for women on a rotation basis and would be determined by draw of lots, in such a way that a seat would be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

Everyone expected the legislation to be passed immediately. The bill, however, failed to get the approval of the house then and was instead referred to a joint parliamentary committee. The committee submitted its report to the Lok Sabha two months later. But nothing further happened. After I.K. Gujral became the Prime Minister in April 1997, he promised that it would be his topmost priority to pass this Bill. But again nothing concrete happened.

During Vajpayee's premiership, the bill was reintroduced in

It was the passing of the Women's

Parliament in 1998. The Congress and the Left were heard openly pledging support for the Bill; therefore, had it been put to vote, it would have easily passed; but it was not done and the bill was allowed to lapse. The NDA Government again introduced the bill in 1999, 2002 and 2003, but never put it to vote.

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 women activists that the Bill, which had been so proudly projected as a commitment to gender equality, had been quietly buried, and was not likely to be revived in the conceivable future.

In 2008, the Manmohan Singh led UPA Government introduced the bill in the Rajya Sabha. After two years, 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 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 held propaganda in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat 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 manifestos. 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 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 at least on this issue they should unite. 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'—no more of continuing this injustice of not passing the Women's Reservation Bill, otherwise we shall join hands and will fight unitedly and openly. They should also request Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati to join hands with them on the issue of Women's Reservation Bill.

Let me recall that Dr Ram Manohar 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 all the women will see through the Women's Reservation Bill.

Time for the Intelligentsia to Reflect on its Support to the BJP

Sandeep Pandey

It has been over three and a half years since Narendra Modi's Bhartiya Janata Party came to power at the centre in India. It was the favourite party of the educated middle class, especially upper caste people. People had high expectations. It was hoped that caste based politics will end and corruption will be curbed. Politics of nationalism also held an appeal for the youth. It was believed that nation would become strong by bringing back the glory of past. Narendra Modi was going to be the hero of such a resurgent India.

What has changed in this period? In addition to routine crimes and reasons for death of people like farmers' suicides or malnourishment related deaths, several new issues have come to seriously affect the nation. Now, if a person is suspected of having consumed beef, is seen carrying cattles for whatever purpose, decides to enter into an inter-caste or inter-religious marital alliance, especially the marriage of a Muslim boy with a Hindu girl, holds a contrarian point of view to that of Hindutva, defecates outside as there is no toilet at home, refuses to raise the slogans *bharat mata ki jai*, *vande matram* or *jai shree ram*, there is good possibility that he could be beaten up by some gang of lumpen elements claiming to represent one of the several Hindutva organisations that have sprung up, or may even get killed by assailants coming on motorcycles. India is not the same inclusive country as it was before 2014 when it was considered to represent a

culture of unity in diversity. Its dominant religion Hinduism was considered a religion of tolerance. Now it has come to symbolise an assertive, arrogant religion ready to produce violent reaction at the slightest provocation, either real or made up. In the name of going back to a glorious past, it is legitimising a mob culture of executing summary punishment to anyone perceived guilty. Worst aspect of this is the studied silence of top BJP leadership on these crimes.

The quality of educational institutions which was not very good to begin with is being further compromised by appointment of mediocre people with no independent thinking. Bhartiya Janata Party is supposed to represent the interests of the educated class, but it is a major contradiction that educational qualifications of some of its top leaders like Narendra Modi, Smriti Irani and Manohar Lal Khattar are suspect. It is not clear whether they have obtained their degrees in a genuine manner.

In spite of making numerous trips abroad, India's international standing has suffered because the unilateral focus of our Prime Minister was to isolate Pakistan at international fora by raising the bogey of terrorism. The world views Pakistan not as a perpetrator but as victim of terrorism. Most of India's neighbours—Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar—have moved closer to China and entered into long term partnerships with it. From the perspective of these

smaller countries, India has been found to be non-trustworthy compared to China. What can be a bigger failure of India's foreign policy than this?

Demonetisation was not honest. Even bigger denomination notes of Rs 2000 were soon brought into circulation, thus defeating the very purpose of checking corruption by making it inconvenient to carry large cash. All those who had black money as cash were able to regularise it, and so very little was eliminated. No serious effort has been made by the government to check those who have hoarded their black incomes as wealth. Sustenance of electoral politics on black money is an important source of corruption in this country but not a single office of any major political party or politician was raided. Similarly no industrialists or other big hoarders of black wealth were touched. Narendra Modi seems to have helped the corrupt. The honest suffered as their income dropped and they had to stand in long queues. In any case Narendra Modi has been discovered to be more of a buddy of Adani and Ambani than that of common people.

Goods and Services Tax was implemented as if something akin to independence of the country was taking place. Midnight Parliament was called. The fact that both after implementation of demonetisation and GST, the government had to frequently modify its decisions shows that not enough thought was put behind them. Both these decisions broke the backbone of the

economy. A large number of businesses closed shop. Hence instead of creating jobs as every government is expected to do, the Modi Government took them away. It is a good example of how the government has been operating far removed from reality.

Soon after Modi became the PM, every Member of Parliament was required to choose one village in his/her constituency and make efforts to develop it and showcase it as model of development. Smart cities were identified for further development. Even if we leave aside the problems with the 'Smart City' model, it has all turned out to be mere propaganda. Nothing special has happened in any of the chosen villages and cities. Even assuming that these chosen cities had indeed developed, what about the villages and cities which were left out? Is this the way a government goes about developing the nation – by doling out largesse to a chosen few?

BJP government has taken a decision to sell Air India. It is not averse to even a foreign carrier buying it. Indian Railways may be the next in line. This government has not created any asset worth the name, but is ready to sell things created by past governments of whom it is very critical. The test of any government is its ability to turn around things rather than take the easy option out.

Narendra Modi dedicated the Sardar Sarovar dam built by previous governments to the nation on his birthday without addressing the problem of people displaced due to the dam and the protests held by Medha Patkar prior to and on the day of the inauguration at a different location. Similarly, the Chief Minister

of Madhya Pradesh Shivraj Singh Chouhan did the parikrama of Narmada with much fanfare, without even once inquiring about the displaced from the various dams built on the Narmada.

CM of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath's priority seems to be building of a temple in Ayodhya rather than looking into the issue of children dying from Japanese encephalitis in the Baba Raghav Das Medical College and Hospital very close to his Gorakhnath Math. He has publicly declared that 'secularism' is the biggest lie in the Indian Constitution.

Rather than provide alternative to the politics of caste, the BJP seems to have provoked the worst feelings

of caste and religion among people. Hate crimes based on religion, and caste based groups protesting the screening of *Padmavati* have further made people conscious of the boundaries of segregation in society. The Dalits and backwards at least have a reason to mobilise on caste lines —to fight the discrimination against them. But under the BJP rule, the upper caste groups are also mobilising and indulging in mindless acts some of which are turning violent. It is sickening to see people associated with the 'peaceful' religion of Hinduism derive vicarious pleasure watching or hearing about these violent incidents. The whole world is watching with horror India's transformation to a hypocritical nation.

(Continued on Page 10)

Remembering Kakori Martyrs on their 90th Death Anniversary

Bharat Dogra

In December 2017 the nation is observing the 90th death anniversary of four martyrs of the Kakori case which is regarded as an important event of our freedom movement. All four of them were hanged to death between December 17 to 20, 1927. These four freedom fighters, renowned for their great courage and firm resolve, were Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajendra Nath Lahiri and Roshan Singh.

Ramprasad and Ashfaqullah have also won widespread acclaim for their poetry. Some of their poetry was widely used in the freedom struggle. Both of them were very good friends, always willing to undergo great hardships to help each other.

The legendary friendship of Ashfaqullah Khan and Ramprasad Bismil has become a symbol of communal harmony. Just before their martyrdom both of them issued statements calling for Hindu-Muslim unity. Bismil in fact said that this is his last will that Hindi-Muslim unity should be established. Similarly Ashfaqullah appealed to Hindus and Muslims to avoid quarrels and work unitedly for the sake of their country.

All the four martyrs conducted themselves with exemplary courage in the middle of great difficulties after their arrest. They remain a source of inspiration right up to this day and will continue to be so for a very long time.

Sonia Gandhi kept the Congress Party United

Kuldip Nayar

In the rumble-tumble of election, the role of Congress president Sonia Gandhi has not been recognized. No doubt, the contest was between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi but the real rivalry was between the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). And here Sonia Gandhi was relevant.

All pollsters predicted victory for the BJP in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. And this has come true. The Congress won 80 seats and BJP 99. There has been no surprise except the margin of victory. What has been noted is the improvement in the Congress tally. The party which has been in the wilderness in the last few years has come to be relevant again. The gap between the two has narrowed. It looks that Rahul Gandhi will give Prime Minister Narendra Modi a meaningful fight. The credit for this should go to Sonia Gandhi, who once again put life into the party.

I vividly remember the scene in the Central Hall of Parliament after she won the general election in 2004. Members unanimously wanted her to head the government. But she was reluctant to do so. Probably, in her mind was the pernicious propaganda that she hailed from Italy. On her part, she was conscious that the tag of being Italian might adversely affect her son, Rahul.

She deliberately put Dr. Manmohan Singh in the chair of Prime Ministership because he had no politics and no ambition. His

tenure of Prime Ministership for ten years was eventless. Important files of Government of India would go to her place for processing and then to Manmohan Singh for mere signatures. Her political adviser Ahmad Patel took all the decisions. Sanjaya Baru, Media Advisor confirms this in his book "The Accidental Prime Minister".

Sonia Gandhi knew the charge which was made against her. But if she had to keep the seat warm for her son, Rahul Gandhi, there was no other way. Manmohan Singh does not, however, accept the allegation. Even when asked to comment on the criticism, he merely said: Posterity will judge.

True, today's Congress party has the stamp of her mother-in-law, Indira Gandhi. But Sonia Gandhi 'is the one who kept the party united. Otherwise it would have split into many groups. To her credit, she had come to be recognized by all the groups as the leader in the party. She was, in fact, the meeting point for all the segments. There was no challenge to her in the party.

The ease with which she has put her son, Rahul Gandhi in her seat shows that she is in fact the party. Rahul is conscious of dynastic charge. He has said openly that there should be a better way to select a person for Congress presidentship. In any case, the dynastic rule ends with Rahul Gandhi.

The problem with the Congress

party today is that it has not gone beyond the dynastic dependence. And, somehow, the people are not enamoured of the dynasty anymore. Rahul Gandhi doesn't sell although he passionately and honestly pursues the Congress principles laid down by his great grandfather Nehru. Priyanka, Sonia Gandhi's daughter, goes down well with the masses. This is probably because she reminds them of Indira Gandhi, who still enjoys pre-eminence in their thoughts.

All this are true, yet the Congress has lost its relevance and the party has to work hard to make people believe that it can provide an alternative. Prime Minister Modi is still acceptable in spite of the steps like demonetization of currency. People believe that it was all for their good even though they have to face inconvenience.

It is a long haul for the Congress to push out the BJP from power. The biggest problem is that secularism is not a concept as attractive as it used to be once. The people themselves have been influenced by Hindutva thoughts. In fact, there is a soft-Hindutva in the country today. How to resell the idea of India, that is democratic and secular polity, is the arduous task which the Congress is facing today.

That may influence the parliamentary election in 2019 and give direction to the country, including the Congress. The party's problem is that it has not won any

election since Modi has come into power. In Gujrat BJP has been able to retain power. This should worry the secular, liberal forces. The BJP is entrenching itself and the Congress loosing the importance in once had.

During the election, Rahul Gandhi went all over the country and faced the crowds all by himself. Sonia Gandhi was not there. This means that the people have accepted Rahul

Gandhi as a representative of the Congress. He too has gained confidence and addresses the people as if he has arrived. Sonia Gandhi can congratulate herself that when she put her in the *gaddi* of president, there was general acceptance. True, the badge of dynasty was there but the decision did not look dictatorial. Rahul Gandhi had worked with the party's cadre. He went to many places in the country where he sat on the ground with the ordinary

members to discuss the challenges that the party faced.

Rahul may not have faced privations which the party men do. But he has got the feel of the values that the party has preserved for the last 150 years. This will stand him in good stead when he directs the Congress as its president. It is an arduous journey but he will have to cover it if he has to make the top.

Why the Honduras Crisis Matters to Me

Rick Sterling

For seven months in 1969, I hitch-hiked around the US, Mexico and Central America with my best friend from high school. Some class-mates from our school in Vancouver Canada saved their money and travelled to Europe or Australia, but Ollie and I headed south. It was an eye-opening experience for two middle-class Canadians. We had a lot of learning experiences in the US, but today I want to talk about Honduras because it is in crisis as I write this: the Honduran election took place on 26 November 2017, yet the results are still in contention. Will the current right-wing government manage to retain power?

When we visited the capital Tegucigalpa in 1969, we went to the university campus to meet and hang out with young Hondurans. They told us about the recent visit of President Richard Nixon who had taken office a few months before and then travelled to Latin America. The Vietnam war was still raging in 1969, and people protested against the war and Nixon wherever he went. The young Hondurans told us that when

Nixon visited Tegucigalpa, there had been a massive protest. Several students who had been protesting from the top of a university building had been shot dead. It made an impression as did the warm and friendly people we met, some living in shacks along the banks of the Choluteca River running through the capital.

In Nicaragua, we heard more eye-opening stories from the youth there. They told us about the Somoza family dictatorship, how corrupt it was, and how they came to power through US Marines. They also told us about the death of Cesar Sandino who fought for Nicaraguan independence but was killed by Somoza's National Guard in 1934. The Nicaraguan youth told us that when the US asked for proof of Sandino's death, Somoza shipped Sandino's head in a box to Washington.

Those and many other experiences changed my life. Over the coming decades, I kept an interest in Central America.

In 1979, when Nicaraguans overthrew the Somoza dictatorship, it seemed like a good thing. But President Ronald Reagan did not like an independent Nicaragua. Violating international law, the US organised a mercenary army called the "Contras" to destabilise and upend the Sandinista government. The mercenaries were trained in Honduras with US funding, supplies and weapons. The US Ambassador to Honduras, John Negroponte, oversaw the mercenary army attacking Nicaragua and the emergence of death squads in El Salvador. Tens of thousands of peasants and opposition activists were killed with impunity. In Honduras itself, there was widespread repression and murder of those challenging the status quo.

In 1998 Honduras was hit by Hurricane Mitch. The second worst Atlantic hurricane ever recorded caused huge destruction and death, especially in poor communities with weak infrastructure. The shacks and modest dwellings along the river bank in Tegucigalpa were all ripped

and washed away. Over 7,000 Hondurans died, including people we had met three decades before.

Six years later, in 2004, I was again reminded of the US role in Honduras when the same John Negroponte who had overseen the Contra operations went to Baghdad to take over management of the Iraq occupation. *Newsweek* magazine said he was going with a new strategy, which they dubbed the 'Salvador option'. Over the next year, sectarian death squads emerged to provoke sectarian bloodshed. Negroponte's right-hand man in Iraq, Robert S. Ford, was later appointed as US Ambassador to Syria in 2010 where he helped fuel the uprisings in that country. Thus there is a direct connection between US interference and aggression in Central America and the Middle East.

For decades Honduras was alternately ruled by two political parties representing different branches of their oligarchy. They traded power back and forth, efficiently preventing alternative perspectives.

But things began to change in Honduras in 2006. President Manuel Zelaya came from the oligarchy but started to initiate changes benefiting the poor. He called for real land reform, raised the minimum wage and questioned the need for US military bases. That was too much. In June 2009 President Zelaya was kidnapped in the middle of the night and flown from the capital to the US military airbase called Soto Cano, only 48 miles away. Hillary Clinton had been in Honduras just weeks before. She disapproved of Zelaya and his policies. The coup went ahead.

After the 2009 coup, conditions in Honduras deteriorated rapidly. Tegucigalpa became the homicide capital of the world. Tens of thousands of youth fled the country as it was wracked by drug wars, corruption, and police or paramilitary repression. Alongside this, there was widespread popular resistance.

In 2011, I returned to Honduras to see the conditions first hand. With a delegation organised by Alliance for Global Justice and Task Force on the Americas, I visited peasants in the fertile Aguan Valley, indigenous communities in the mountains and workers and church activists in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. We talked with a hard-working activist named Berta Caceres and others in her indigenous organization COPINH. We learned that these communities were still actively resisting the coup and forming a new political party to challenge the right wing coup government not with guns but with votes. In 2015 Berta Caceres was recognised internationally with a prestigious award, yet she was murdered in her home last year.

In 2013 I returned again to Honduras, this time as an election observer. In the contest, the new LIBRE party surpassed the traditional Liberal Party and made a strong challenge to the right-wing National Party. There were many examples of election malfeasance, but Juan Orlando Hernandez of the right-wing National Party was anointed as the new President.

Since then, social and economic conditions have not changed. The Hernandez regime governs to the benefit of rich Hondurans and international corporations. He has a strong military alliance with the US

military and is very friendly with President Trump's Chief of Staff General Kelly.

That has set the stage for the most recent events. Days before the election *The Economist* ran an article describing a National Party training session in cheating techniques. The election was held on Sunday, 26 November. On election night, with 57% of the votes counted, the opposition challenger was ahead by over 5%. Then strange things began to happen. The election commission stopped updating the vote tally for 36 hours. On Monday, the head of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal said 6,000 tally sheets were still missing from different polling places. A few hours later, he said they were missing 7500 tally sheets. When counting resumed on Tuesday, suddenly the existing President Hernandez started gaining votes, cutting the opposition lead and then winning. It all looks very fishy, even to the OAS monitors.

The situation is rapidly coming to a head. At this moment, it is not known what will happen. Initially, the opposition demanded a full and complete review of all the 18,000 tally sheets. Now they are calling for the annulment of the election and a new election under international supervision.

The Honduran government is either stonewalling or is paralysed. Hundreds of thousands of Hondurans have protested in the streets, with over twelve protesters killed. In a dramatic change, the elite paramilitary COBRA security forces have started to refuse orders, saying their job is not to repress their own communities.

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No Country for Women- Love and Rights in Troubled Times

Neha Dabhade

Recently in Rajsamand, Rajasthan, one Shambul Raigar brutally hacked Mohammad Afzarul, a migrant from Malda, West Bengal to death with his own tools and set fire to his body. This ghastly act was captured on camera by Raigar's 14 year old nephew who then circulated the video on social media. Raigar on the video justified his act by arguing that he was "saving" Hindu women from love jihad and similar consequences would follow for Muslim men if they indulged in 'Love Jihad' (Indian Express, 2017). Investigations found that the 48 year old victim hadn't married a Hindu girl. Though this brutal act foregrounds important questions regarding targeting of Muslims, spreading hatred against them and infringement of their rights with steadfast impunity, the act also necessitates discussion on so called 'Love Jihad' which has dominated the public discourse.

"Love Jihad" is a term coined by Hindu supremacists who allege that Muslim men "trap" Hindu women and convert them into Islam. Rajsamand case is not isolated in its bid to spread hatred against Muslims. There is a systematic campaign to malign and target the Muslim community under this campaign since a few years. Such targeting of any community is condemnable but there is also a need to locate women in this campaign and its implications on their rights and agency. The vitriolic campaign the Hindu supremacists would have us believe is to expose the libidinal vices of the Muslim men. What this smokescreen

really covers is the attitudinal violence which manifests in different forms – honour killings at the behest of KhapPanchayats, beating up of women in public spaces when seen with a man, portraying them to be objects of procreation with no agency of their own when they are asked to reproduce certain number of children for the 'nation'.

While literature on women's movement and communalism is replete with discourse of how women's bodies are sites of community honour during communal riots at the time of partition and subsequent riots and violence in order to dehumanize the 'other' community during communal violence, it is imperative to reiterate that violence against women is not limited to communal violence alone especially today when the trend of communal violence is changing. For example, there are no large scale riots where of substantial number of innocents from one community is targeted. Communal violence today relies more on creating a discourse which justifies targeting of a community and strengthening structures of inequality. The Hindu supremacists have deployed ways and strategies to subjugate women – not only women from 'other' community but women from their own community and perpetuate violence against them. This is achieved by imposing and naturalizing a discourse which draws boundaries around them restricting their liberties and controlling their choices. 'Love jihad' is one such way. 'Love jihad' is part of a larger

communalized discourse where women's agency is appropriated by fundamentalists and multiple patriarchies are reproduced in insidious ways. Today the Hindu supremacists with the tacit and sometimes overt support of the State are deepening unequal power structures and patriarchy through vicious campaigns and propaganda which they claim is to protect the Hindu women. All these campaigns strengthen their masculinized and exclusivist discourse which undermine women's liberties.

Two points are particularly important and worth emphasis. Though the right has always entrenched inequality and discrimination against women, what is so different now in campaigns like 'love jihad' or the broader narrative on women in India today? Firstly the legitimacy that this fabricated campaign is gaining owing to the judgments like Kerela judgments and very little or no condemnation by the State is having a normalizing effect on this appropriation of women's agencies and choices. Not only is there no condemnation, but the State takes no action against vigilantes and forms squads like 'anti Romeo squads' which have been given a free hand to indulge in moral policing. Though there has always been a bid to control women's bodies and the paranoia around their sexuality, such acts of controls were not institutionalized or form the dominant discourse enjoying legitimacy in that sense.

Secondly the structures of control

were more rigid in rural areas and some degree of loosening of this structure took place in the middle and upper middle class in urban areas where the women negotiated for their right to work, mobility and to some extent sexuality or choosing a partner (inter-caste marriages even today have severe consequences and honor killings are not limited to rural areas alone). Change was also largely due to the women's movement which challenged patriarchy and asserted women's liberties and equalities. But this limited space that was created is also threatened with this attempt to entrench traditional discriminatory gender norms by Hindu right wing politics. Right wing politics and fundamentalism naturalizes and sacralises the family and sexuality and secludes women from public sphere. Right wing politics manipulates women's issues which results in disempowering women. This trend is a definite setback to the women's movement. This marks a shift in discourse which was dominated with sexual violence against women during communal riots to everyday violence through different social structures when one tries to understand the impact of right politics on women.

The case of Hadiya is a case in point. Hadiya, earlier Akhila Ashokan is a 24 year old homeopathy student in Kerala. Her story sums up perfectly the issue at hand. She converted to Islam out of her own free will and married a man of her choice. However as pointed out by authors like Janaki Nair and others, different sections of the society completely infantilized her and her choices. The Kerala High Court annulled her marriage with Shafin Jahan, a Muslim man and gave her custody to her parents. Her

parents virtually kept her locked inside the house with Hadiya begging for her freedom and wanting to live with her husband. The Supreme Court allowed her to go to college and continue her education but appointed the principle of the college as her guardian as if she was a chattel and not an adult full citizen of the country! The case of her marriage will be heard later by the Supreme Court thus prolonging her agony and injustice. All this is abhorrent to the notion of full citizenship rights of a woman. An adult woman who is a citizen of India we would have liked to believe is entitled to exercise her fundamental rights of right to religion and right to life. They are violated with impunity though women activists have been protesting and demanding justice for Hadiya.

There is analytical literature available to understand how women gravitate towards the right wing politics and how women become perpetrators as well as victims of violence reproducing hyper masculinized nationalism and end up strengthening patriarchal structures. But not much is said about the power mechanism at work in campaigns like love jihad. Here the centrality of women's body in communalized discourse is the focus. The agenda is reclaiming Hindu women and mobilizing them against the Muslims in turn reproducing multiple patriarchies at different levels- police, judiciary, families, community. Women have to pitch their fight for liberties at all these levels making it all the more arduous for them. This is what makes such campaigns so detrimental to the rights of the women and lays down ideological underpinnings of Hindutva.

The control of women's bodily

autonomy and the policing of strict gender norms is a hallmark of fundamentalist ideology that transcends all religious and geographical boundaries. In Hitler's Germany, "Aryan women" were encouraged to have more children while even before the holocaust there were large scale sterilizations of Jewish women. In India for instance, a five day fair was organized the Hindu Spiritual and Service Foundation (HSSF) in Jaipur in November, 2017. Focus was to address issues like family and human values, women's honour, patriotism, environment, ecology and pollution. It's noteworthy that it was made compulsory from government schools to attend it by the Rajasthan government. At the fair, Bajrang Dal was freely distributing manuals on "love jihad" which detail the ways in which Muslim men supposedly trap Hindu women – "friendship in school, bike ride, hanging out in restaurants, chatting on mobile, addressing their parents with respect and blackmailing through obscene pictures". It also prescribes remedies and precautions to the 'affected' Hindu family – "frequently check the female's belongings, call and SMS details, warn the Muslim boy if found with a Hindu girl, call Muslims as disgusting/terrorist/smuggler/traitor/Pakistan supporter in front of females at home" (Jain, 2017). If one has to interpret this, outlining such ways don't only spew hatred against Muslims and but also undermines many decisions a woman is entitled to take as a free citizen of the country – whom to interact with/ make friends with, who to share public space with and ensuring public spaces are equally accessible to women, freedom to choose what kind of relationship they want to have with the opposite sex or even same sex! The Hindu

supremacists also seek to deepen their idea of a patriarchal family which rests on the hierarchies and authority where women are considered property and honor of the family. Thus any amount of control and restrictions are justified as seen in the case of Hadiya's parents and the reasoning of the Kerala High court.

'Beti Bachao Baholao' campaign by the Hindu Jagran Manch is a form of 'reverse love jihad'. In this case, encouragement is given to Hindu men to marry Muslim women by giving them social and financial security. The target is to get 2100 Muslim women into the 'Hindu' fold in six months. The group has initiated a campaign in Uttar Pradesh in 2016, "save Hindu girls" by distributing pamphlets openly to educate the girls and their families (Verma, 2017). This step is vicious and exposes the attitude of the Hindu supremacists which view women as commodities. This brings the focus back on the overt nature of such campaigns and points towards the support it has of the State. The state and the Hindu supremacists that it supports naturalize this control and oppression by garbing it under 'Indian culture' and revivalism of the 'glorious past'. It puts women's choice and control especially over their bodies in jeopardy. The recent rule by the Home ministry to ban condom ads from 6am and 10pm can be seen in the same context. While women's movement has been fighting for women's reproductive rights, the State is undermining the process by again portraying such ads as not according to culture and in effect undermining the liberty and choice of women.

As outlined above, Hindu supremacist and the state are placing

a formidable challenge before the women's movement in India and women's lives as a whole. Their status as free citizens is systematically undermined by a regressive discourse which is used also to fan communal tensions and stigmatizing vulnerable communities. It will be immensely timely if such campaigns can be seen in the larger framework of oppression of women and deepening of patriarchal structures. The location of women in national agenda has to be critically examined and debated by all sections of the society. The control on women's agency and liberties under the patronizing pretext of "saving" should not be allowed to be used for undermining their own rights and spreading hatred against other communities. Instead the State must be questioned and made accountable

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In less than four years, all the warnings given by those who understand the dangers posed by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of BJP, have come true. It is time the educated people and intellectuals who supported BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha election and in various states must reflect on

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Just as the 2009 coup in Honduras was a setback for all Latin America, the outcome of the current crisis will have consequences far beyond Honduras. The US foreign policy establishment clearly wants the continuation of the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Despite all the indications of electoral malfeasance and human rights abuses, the Trump Administration has praised the

for the policies which affect women's real issues like livelihoods, healthcare, education, equal laws etc. to ensure they truly are citizenship rights in reality and not just in the Constitution. It is not surprising that India fares poorly when it comes to human development indicators related to women even in comparison to countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Different sections of the society, which has uncritically internalized the need of control over women since they are portrayed as bearers of 'honour', must be made aware of the agenda of such campaigns. This means creating a different vocabulary of rights for women, a narrative which emphasizes on equality and nonviolence. Else women stand to lose the hard earned space and rights they have after struggling for so long.

what kind of country we want? The ideology which is responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's murder and demolition of Babri masjid, which invited the problem of terrorism to India, is undoing whatever progress India has made in the direction of a progressive modern nation based on Constitutional values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

Hernandez government. Meanwhile, North American reporters, analysts and activists are doing what they can to support Honduran popular forces and stop the theft of the Honduran election. The coming days may be momentous. I have explained why it matters to me. But this is more important than a personal connection. It should matter to anyone concerned with progress, justice, respect and international law.

Courtesy : teleSUR News

Indian Struggles in 1917: on the eve of the Russian Revolution

Anil Nauriya

Seldom in history do things happen suddenly; they are often years in the making. It is known that during his South Africa years Mahatma Gandhi had corresponded with Leo Tolstoy, described by Lenin in 1908 as the mirror of the Russian Revolution. This correspondence was three or four years prior to Gandhi's last major agitation in South Africa, in which tens of thousands of Indian mine workers and plantation workers and other indentured workers struck work.

By the time the Russian Revolution took place in 1917, Gandhi had already been back in India for two years, barely a month before the death of one of two leading statesmen who had guided Gandhi's politics in his South African life, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The other, Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, would pass away shortly in the midst of the coming struggle in Champaran, Bihar.

The Marxist Socialist Narendra Deva, a keen student of Lenin's life and writings, would observe that the Bolshevik Revolution placed the masses at the centre-stage of history for the first time.

In India, too, 1917 was a curtain-raiser to events two years later that would mark the beginning of mass involvement in the movement for freedom. As Gandhi's critic M N Roy acknowledged in his memoirs, Lenin looked upon Gandhi "as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement" and "a revolutionary".

But what is significant is that while 1917 saw Gandhi devising methods of struggle to bring about institutional changes that would also lead to self-government, or swaraj, each of the four struggles preceded the climax of the Russian Revolution was connected with the peasantry as well as labour.

The Indentured Ultimatum

One of Gandhi's earliest ultimatums to the Government was to end indentured emigration from India. Recruitment of indentured labour for South Africa's Natal province had ended in 1911, but continued for Fiji and some other places. In 1915, Viceroy Charles Hardinge had himself urged abolition, but the authorities in London were reluctant. They wanted the Colonies utilizing such labour "(to have) reasonable time to adjust themselves to the change", hoping to delay the inevitable as long as possible.

On February 26, 1917, Gandhi gave an ultimatum to end indentured recruitment by May 31, failing which he would advise a passive resistance struggle. If the request was not acceded to, he said, "all practical steps should be taken to prevent Indians from leaving the country for labour in Fiji." The pressure had its effect. Recruitment of indentured labour from India was stopped on March 12, 1917.

Champaran

His confidence in passive resistance strengthened, Gandhi now

turned his attention to the grievances of peasants in Champaran. By April 15, he had reached Bankipore, Patna and from there, later the same day set out for Motihari in Champaran district.

India and Russia were moving, almost step for step, even if they were to different beats. Gandhi's country was under colonial rule, while in independent Russia the Tsarist monarchy had abdicated more than a month ago. The day after Gandhi reached Champaran, Lenin, who had been in Switzerland till then, reached Petrograd, (now St Petersburg). On April 16, 1917, Gandhi sent instructions that his Kaiser-i-Hind medal be returned to the British regime; an order to leave the district, meanwhile, had been served on Gandhi and he had refused to obey. He had been arrested on his way to a village to inquire into the condition of indigo workers.

After struggles, surveys, and enquiries in the district, the Champaran Agrarian Act followed. The legislation abolished the Tinkathia system under which ryots had to set apart a certain proportion of their best land for the landlord's crops.

In retrospect, some historians have argued that the amendments then made did not go far enough. This somewhat Trotsky-like criticism may well be valid; yet the relevant question to ask would be what, if anything, the later Kisan Sabhas that emerged in Bihar in the decades before India's independence and

which are believed to have been active and radical, did to take the Champaran struggle forward.

Fact is, Champaran initiated a wider engagement of the national movement with peasant struggles. It did not come about entirely as a matter of chance. When Gandhi was still in South Africa in 1908 there had been indigo-related disturbances in Champaran. This had revived memories of similar struggles in some Bengal districts from the 1860s. On January 8, 1910, Gandhi's South African journal *Indian Opinion* had devoted its entire front page to an account from the Calcutta press on this 19th century struggle which referred to the courage and self-sacrifice of the indigo ryots of Bengal as being without parallel in the world. Gandhi's journal had described that struggle as "thrilling" and commented that passive resistance "can have no better illustration". It had thus become an inspiration for and vindication of the passive resistance then being conducted in South Africa.

Internments in the Home Rule agitation

In the year following Gandhi's return to India, two Home Rule Leagues had been founded by Annie Besant and BalGangadharTilak, respectively. In June 1917 Annie Besant and some of her associates were interned in Ootacamund. At this juncture Gandhi, who was in Motihari, Champaran, again advised passive resistance. In a letter at the end of June to J B Petit of Bombay, an early supporter from his South Africa days, Gandhi wrote: "The descent at the present moment upon the villages by you, Mr Jinnah and such other leaders cannot but end in arrests. This propaganda must be

carried on in spite of Government prohibition and to that extent it may be considered illegal but for a passive resister not unlawful. There are various other methods which I am unwilling to advise until passive resistance in its present form has soaked into us a bit."

There are two noteworthy features about Gandhi's advice to J B Petit from Champaran. Firstly: go to the villages. In this attempt to reach out to the peasantry, Gandhi seems to anticipate the later emphasis on the peasantry within international Marxism which would come with Dimitrov in Bulgaria and Mao in China; he was reflecting also an obvious compulsion of India's social formation of the time, in that the peasant-based population was overlaid with a further layer of a full-blown foreign colonialism.

In the two scenarios, Lenin had gravitated towards the workers and soldiers. Gandhi moved toward the peasantry, which was drawn to the national movement as never before. Secondly, there is in Gandhi's communication to Petit evidence of an attempt at some planning of the sequence of the moments of passive resistance.

There were countrywide protests against the internments leading to withdrawal of the orders against Annie Besant and her associates by September 1917.

The Social Struggles of 1917

Perhaps the most fascinating of the four major Indian struggles of 1917 was the one against untouchability and the way this was reflected in the political and social conferences held in Godhra, Gujarat, from November 3, 1917, some four

days before the climax of the Russian Revolution. The political conference was attended also by BalGangadharTilak, whose trial and sentence had been followed and commented on by Lenin in 1908.

Echoing the underlying message of the other struggles embarked on during the year, in his presidential address, Gandhi told the Political Conference on November 3, "We have to demand swaraj from our own people. Our appeal must be to them. When the peasantry of India understands what swaraj is, the demand will become irresistible."

He called for the entire law on indenture to be repealed: "It is no part of our duty to look to the convenience of the Colonies." The inter-religious question and the social inequalities prevailing in India had characteristics not known in many other countries, including Russia. Repeatedly, in 1917, Gandhi spoke for Hindu-Muslim accord. In the Godhra conferences he lashed out against the practice of untouchability. At least since September 1915, when he had taken in a Dalit and his family into his settlement in Ahmedabad and encountered some resistance over it, he had been considering "the efficacy of passive resistance in social questions" such that this would "embrace swaraj."

The Social Conference at Godhra, which was presided over by Gandhi, on November 5, 1917 included persons from the so-called untouchable communities and was attended by, among others, Abbas Tyabji and Vithalbhai Patel. "Do not suppose", Gandhi told his listeners, "that that community belongs to a lower status; let the fusion take place between you and that community,

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Jolt on Jerusalem

J. L. Jawahar

Zionists chose to settle in Palestine claiming it as the land given to them by God. Both before and after getting mandate over Palestine, Britain took upon itself all responsibility to ensure formation of the state of Israel. But even before the formation of Israel, they washed off their hands as Israel Jews were not faithful to them and also rebelled against their officers. The Jews got themselves declared as an independent sovereign state under the name Israel in 1948 and obtained recognition from the almighty government of the United States of America. Since then there was no President of America that dared to question whatever Israel did. The Muslim countries around Israel opened their eyes and tried to wage a war against Israel. But they failed miserably as there was no unity. There were many more unsuccessful attempts. It gave an excuse for Israel to occupy the land beyond its declared borders. Millions of the people were rendered refugees and they fled to neighboring countries. They live on the mercy of the United Nations Organisation in refugee camps for generations without any hope of returning to their homeland. The occupants declared generously that the land belongs to Palestine and they hold it only as a lever to force peace on the Palestinians.

But there is a powerful right wing within Israel who did not agree to cede any part of the occupied land under any circumstances as it all belongs to them as a gift given by God. The western powers are Christian nations and they believe in

the Holy Bible and did not think of questioning the validity of a spiritual sanction in a temporal world. The government of Israel faced a problem. They could have gladly accepted the demand to annex all the area of West Bank as part of Israel as demanded by the right wing. But the people there are mostly Muslims and they are more in number than all the Jews settled in Israel. If the area is annexed all of them would become citizens of Israel and it ceases to be a Jewish state. At the same time they could not surrender the area, as it is required to settle the Jews that are coming to Israel from other countries. As a solution they held the area under military rule without annexation, with all consequences of military occupation. That is, the local people are virtually under military occupation.

The rightists started occupying the West Bank area and construct settlements, initially without consent of their government, to make it difficult to surrender it at a later date. The government did not dare or not willing to question the settlements. In course of time a stage is reached where the government made it a policy to help the settlers by offering all help to construct settlements and protection of the army against harassment by the local people. Step by step, as time passed on, Israeli occupation of the West Bank area of Palestine has become a *fait accompli* and the world got habituated to it as if it is something natural.

It naturally creates friction with local people. But might is right. The local people are treated as if they are the occupants over the land belonging to Jews. Their houses are demolished and crops uprooted to make way for the settlements. Any form of resistance is met with disproportionate punishments and their life was made unbearable. The resistance is labelled as 'terrorism' with full support of America and all western powers so that they do not deserve any mercy or human consideration.

Some of the countries try to raise the issue in the Security Council to censure Israel for the inhuman treatment meted out to the Palestinians. But America was there to veto any such resolution. And there is no record to show that Israel ever showed any respect for international opinions. There was no need as long as American support is there. Anwar Sadat, the only Arab leader who dared to visit Israel for peace talks, declared that the trump cards for peace in the Middle East are in the hands of United States of America. It is a fact.

Jerusalem is the heart of Palestine. It is the holy place for all the religions of the Book – Christians, Jews and Muslims. Christians are not asking for a share in the city, for whatever reasons we do not know. Perhaps they are convinced they will not be objected whoever is in charge of the city. But both the Jews and Muslims want to possess the city particularly as it is the seat of holy centers. While occupying the

Western Bank Israel settled with the western part of Jerusalem leaving the Eastern part under the control of Jordan at that time. But the rightists in Israel declared that they would never leave the city again. They extended their hold to the Eastern part as well and declared the undivided city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Settlements are established within the city of Jerusalem and also around it.

It was not accepted by the foreign powers. The occupation of West Bank by Israel itself was under dispute. Taking the entire city of Jerusalem was considered serious violation of international law. None of the foreign powers agreed to shift their embassies to Jerusalem in spite of it being the capital city. They stayed with Tel Aviv where they settled earlier. Even America, that was in support of whatever Israel does, did not agree to shift their embassy. Perhaps they felt shy, as it would be an open support for defiance of international law.

Every now and then there will be an announcement that negotiations will be held between Israel and Palestinians. It is all a drama. None of them are serious about it. They do not stop construction of settlements at least during the negotiations. What could be the matters that could be discussed and settled by negotiations? Even when the negotiations start, Israel makes unilateral proposals and America supports it and prevails on Palestinian representatives to accept it. Naturally negotiations fail and the entire media shouts that Palestinians do not want peace. Any act of revolt is readily labelled 'terrorism' and condemned.

The Presidents of America

continue to support Israel out of internal compulsions. It makes no difference whether the President is a democrat or a republican. They know what they are doing is wrong. Now and then they grumble a bit louder and then shut their mouths. George W. Bush asked the then Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon to stop construction of settlements. He was told that constructions were not started with permission of America and they will not be stopped at their instance. That, in spite of the fact that Israel cannot thrive as a modern state without help from America. President Obama pleaded with Netanyahu, the present Prime Minister of Israel, to stop construction of new settlements and got a rebuff. He did not *tell* him; he pleaded. At the end of his regime he took the courage to see that America did not apply veto against a resolution of the Security Council censuring Israel. He did it only to embarrass his successor. Obama waited until the last hour of his tenure as President to release the grants for Palestinian Authority. Why did he wait till then? Is it a genuine intention? Naturally the successor, Donald Trump, stopped the flow of grants applying his prerogative. Even this outspoken successor states that "the construction of new settlements may not be helpful in achieving Israel-Palestinian peace." He did not tell them not to construct new settlements. He took care to see no mention is made of Palestine State. The signs are clear that the US will never prevail on Israel to stop construction of new settlements, leave alone telling them to vacate the settlements. Without support from US other nations or the UNO will not be able to do anything. Meanwhile Israel developed confidence even to defy America, their only supporter. The occupation

stays. Construction of settlements goes on uninterrupted. The land on the West Bank of Jordan River, meant for the so-called state of Palestine, gets nibbled gradually. Any delay in formation of the state of Palestine is in favour of Israel as they use the time to extend settlements and consolidate their hold on land by creating rights on land. It becomes part of Israel, *de facto* if not *de jure*. And who needs *de jure* possession when the *de facto* possession is not questioned by anyone?

That is the status quo. Now and then we hear that America is trying to bring peace by starting negotiations between Palestine and Israel authorities. They expect Palestine authorities to accept whatever Israel proposes. Naturally talks do not start. Palestinians are blamed. Meanwhile occupations go on increasing. Nobody raises any objection. And even if there is any objection Israel never had the habit of paying attention to that. They go on doing what they want. They have the support of the sole super power. Any delay in peace process is to the advantage of Israel as they can go on expanding settlements so that it would be more difficult to remove them. Palestine state has become a dream, a vain dream never possible to materialize. But every leader says that they want peace by establishing two states – Palestine by the side of Israel. In the heart of hearts they know pretty well that it is an impossibility in the present situation. Israel is entrenched so strongly on the West Bank, the land expected to be that of Palestine state, that it is impossible to root out them.

That is the situation when the President of United States, Donald Trump declared that he wants to

accept Jerusalem as the legal capital of the state of Israel and shift his embassy there. It caused such a commotion as if he is making a fresh declaration regarding occupation by Israel. The situation was the same for decades. Nothing was done to bring peace to the area of Middle East. Now that Trump has announced his recognition of Jerusalem as the *de jure* capital of Israel everybody starts shouting as if the possibility of two states is made

impossible by that. Palestinians led by Abbas were literally begging to settle peace by establishing the two states. Nobody did anything towards that end for decades. But everybody blames Trump for saying what he said. Whether good or bad, Trump says whatever he feels undiplomatically. In this case it has resulted in precipitating the problem so that the urgency to solve it is being felt. If those who are blaming Trump are really serious to solve the

problem and bring in the two state theory, this is the time for it. Pious statements do not serve any practical purpose. UNO is rendered ineffective by applying veto and there is no other organisation to represent international law. It is the law of jungle that is prevailing in the international field now. Might is right. Let them have the day. That reflects the civilisation of the civilised world in the twenty-first century.

Dharma Yajna at Banaras in 1943— A Shameful Affair

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

In a Facebook post on 8-12-2017 my friend Faisal Khan, National Convener, Khudai Khidmatgars, sarcastically referred to two slogans *Dharma ki jai ho* and *Adharma ka naash ho* in the context of the burning and killing of a Muslim labourer from Malda (WB) in Rajsamand District of Rajasthan. I wish to mention here another incident that I witnessed as a young boy where also these two slogans were raised, along with two others, *Praaniyon men sadbhavanaa ho* and *Vishwa ka kalyaan ho*. I was present at the Dharma Yajna on the banks of the Ganga at Varanasi in 1943 as a young curious boy when this jamboree was organised by Swami Karpatriji in the august presence of Maharaja Cossim Bazar, Dr M.S. Aney, Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherji and Sri L.B. Bhopatkar (who later became President of All India Hindu Mahasabha), among others. This yajna was actually performed to pray for the victory of British forces against the Axis powers in the Second World War and was financed by the colonial British Government. It is during this yajna

that they gave these slogans. What is important is to remember that while hundreds of maunds of wheat, barley and ghee were being put to fire (swaahaa) in this yajna, the Bengal of these two worthies Maharaja of Cossim Bazar and Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherji was going through one of the greatest human tragedies—the terrible Bengal

famine of 1943 in which more than 40 million starved to death, mainly because of hoarding and blackmarketing by middle class Hindu traders who were incidentally the main financiers of the RSS during those days. Raising the slogan ‘Dharma ki jai ho’ while committing such an irreligious act —was it not blasphemy then too?

(Continued from Page 12)

and then you will be fit for swaraj.”

Two days after the extraordinary Social Conference held at Godhra, precisely a century ago, the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd and inaugurated the Russian Revolution that would affect the course of history by creating a state that became for more than 70 years a countervailing force to the old colonial powers.

Along with the forces of nationalism that swept across the world in the 20th century, the new countervailing power too contributed, even by its mere existence, to the

demise of colonialism. At the same time it also unleashed forces which both strengthened and through premature zeal, weakened the nationalist movements and sometimes even contributed to dividing them.

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Gujarat Elections

Rajindar Sachar

Now that Modi has won Gujarat elections, though with a much smaller margin, will he reflect on how much he lowered politics when he made the wild charge that there was a conspiracy and that Congress and elements in Pakistan may be working in cahoots to prevent BJP victory in Gujarat. All because a dinner was held at Mani Shankar Aiyar's house, where Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister, and high ranking former Indian diplomats were present along with the High Commissioner of Pakistan. There is a certain amount of decorum and decency which are never crossed in politics. But this charge without any proof has hit the lowest.

In politics, there certainly takes place banter and a serious dig at the competency of political rivals, but never untrue charges. The banter between Gladstone and Disraeli are classic; the later once said: "If Gladstone fell in the Thames, that would be a misfortune. But if someone fished him out again, that would be a calamity."

Previously such type of low level was never crossed even amongst sworn political rivals in India. It is

well known that Dr Lohia after coming back from Germany had worked in the Central Congress office with Pandit Nehru who was then the President of the Congress Party. When our Socialist Party walked out of the Congress in 1946, Dr Lohia had become the bitterest opponent of Nehru. But their relations never became low.

In May 1949, the Socialist Party under Dr Lohia's leadership held a demonstration before the Nepal embassy at Barakhamba Road, New Delhi to protest against the takeover of the Nepal government by the Rana that forced the King to flee. About 50 of us were arrested, including Dr Lohia, for violating Section 144 CrPC. and we remained in jail for over a month. During that period Nehru sent a basket of mangoes to Dr Lohia in jail. Sardar Patel was very annoyed by this and wrote to Nehru that while the government had arrested Dr Lohia, he was sending mangoes to him. To this Nehru wrote back politely that we should not mix personal relations with politics.

In 1951, Lohia visited the USA. Before that, he came to Delhi. I

remember that we were in the sitting room when someone told him that there was a phone call for him. Dr Lohia went to the other room. When he came back I asked whose phone was it. He said Pt. Nehru. What did he say, I asked. Dr. Lohia in half banter and annoyance repeated the conversation thus:

Nehru: "Ram Manohar, I hear you are going to USA."

Dr Lohia: "Yes."

There was a pause. Then again Nehru asked, "When?"

Dr Lohia: "Next week."

A pause again, and then Pt. Nehru said, "Alright," and switched off.

It was a curious talk and I asked Dr. Lohia what was Nehru's purpose in phoning him. Dr Lohia in half anger said – you know he wanted to tell me, "Ram Manohar, you are going abroad – do not criticise the government when abroad", but did not have the guts to tell me. And then Dr Lohia in a half annoyance said, "What strange behaviour – does he think that I will talk ill of the government when abroad." Such was their closeness, and yet they were so apart.

However when Dr Lohia met Einstein, he could not restrain himself and in answer to the latter's questions, remarked that "politicians are liars". Einstein was all sobriety personified, but he still added warmly "that they were criminals". Would Einstein have been able to find adequate words for the politicians today – I doubt it.

One day before filling the election papers against Nehru in the General

Elections of 1962, Dr Lohia wrote a letter to Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru:

Dear President,

You would be surprised to read this letter. When I left the office of the Congress Committee forever I paid regards to that building Aruna was with me. That was our last meeting. In these elections, your victory is certain. But if the certainty is turned into uncertainty and ultimately to your defeat, then I would be extremely happy and it would also be beneficial for the country. Then you would get the opportunity to improve yourself and become a better person. In the end, I pray for your long life so that I may get the opportunity to reform you.

Yours truly,
Ram Manohar Lohia.

To which Nehru replied the following:

Dear Ram Manohar,

Received your letter without date and address. I am sending the reply at the address of the Socialist Party, Allahabad.

I am happy that a sober person like you is opposing me in the elections. I think in this election the discussion would be centred on political programmes. Be cautious and ensure that the personal discussion is curtailed. On my part I promise that I would not visit my constituency even for a single day.

Yours,
Jawahar Lal Nehru.

In 1964-65, Dr Lohia was elected to the Parliament. Nehru made it a point to be present in the Parliament on the day when Lohia was sworn in as member. Though Dr Lohia and

Nehru continued to exchange lot of harsh words, it was only on policy matters.

Modi should ruminate seriously the alienation of Muslims. The BP did not put up a single Muslim candidate, even though their population in Gujarat is over 8%.

Can one expect that Prime Minister Modi who took the oath of office to respect the Constitution will treat all communities equally? Is he in agreement with the statement made by Bhagwat, the RSS boss, that "All people born in India are Hindus", which is deliberately provocative and harmful to harmony in the country, or does he believe in the truth of Swami Vivekanand's exhortation that Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expression of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best: "I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body."

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Brutal Attack by Modi-Yogi Governments on Tea Vendors of Varanasi

Sandeep Pandey

The previous central government brought a Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 for protection of livelihood rights and social security of street vendors. A government press release quoting the Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation at that time said, 'Vendors try to solve their livelihood issues through their own meagre resources and sweat equity.' It was provided that no street vendor will be evicted until a survey of has been completed and a certificate of vending has been issued to vendors. A Town Vending Committee, comprising of at least 40% vendors, was to carry out the survey and allocate space for vending to vendors. Relocation was to be exercised as the last option only if there was urgent need for the land in question. If the vendors were to be evicted their livelihood and standard of living should improve after eviction compared to their pre-eviction level. The Act was supposed to protect street vendors from harassment by police and ensure they carry on their business without the fear of harassment by the authorities under any other law. No zone was to be declared no-vending zone until such time as the survey had been carried out and a plan for street vending had been formulated. The Act was to create a conducive atmosphere for vendors to do their business with dignity.

Yet on December 23, 2017, in the Prime Minister's constituency, immediately outside the Banaras

Hindu University, which is PM's favourite landing spot on his visits to his constituency, about 45 vendors in Lanka market were brutally assaulted by the police which swooped down unannounced with JCB machines and destroyed the trolleys, material items and other belongings of vendors who sell tea and other food items to patients admitted to Sir Sunder Lal Hospital and their attendants inside the University campus on the other side of the boundary wall. The vendors used to set up their trolleys on cement slabs covering a drain which goes along the boundary wall of the University. The University used to charge a fee from them for using the space long time back. The vendors have preserved the receipts. So, it is clearly not a land belonging to the Municipal Corporation or the District Administration.

In violation of all the nice provisions of the 2014 Street Vendors Act, the police of Varanasi District Administration bundled out the vendors causing them physical damage, monetary loss and public humiliation. The stoves were broken and wooden carts were burned. This is not the first time that the police has taken such an action. Whenever the PM, who considers it a matter of pride to declare himself a former tea vendor, is in Varanasi, the vendors are told to clear the area. But after PM's visit they were allowed to set up shops again. The brutality of the December 23 attack is inexplicable. It has brought out the anti-poor nature of Bhartiya Janata

Party governments once again and raises questions over PM's claims of ever having sold tea. The action of the local administration is clearly illegal. A number of complaints have been made to the PM's office about the hostile behaviour of the local administration towards vendors but to no avail.

As soon as the vendors were removed the space was occupied by the autorickshaws which take passengers from BHU to Diesel Locomotive Works, a unit of Indian Railways, or Manduhai Railway Station. There is a flourishing extortion racket in Varanasi (and in other cities as well) where about Rs. 18 crores per month is collected from autorickshaws and vehicles which carry patients from nearby areas to the BHU hospital and back to their homes. The actual tender for autorickshaw stands given out by Varanasi Municipal Corporation for different spots in the city is only for Rs. 30 lakhs per month. Huge amount of illegal money is shared among officials, politicians and middlemen. At the BHU stand the contractor for the stand is supposed to take only Rs. 5 per day from an autorickshaw but the actual rate being charged is Rs. 15.

The vendors, more aware about their rights and willing to struggle for them, had refused to pay any extortion money to the police. The contractors managing the autorickshaw stands are too happy to grease their palms. Hence the police carried out the operation

against the vendors with vengeance and has clearly taken the side of autorickshaw operators. A reply from Municipal Corporation under the Right to Information Act says that only ten autorickshaws are allowed to be parked in either direction outside BHU main gate at any time. However, hundreds of them are seen to be stationed there waiting for their passengers. Hence the message is clear. Even in the PM's constituency, who is hailed as possessing zero tolerance for corruption, the local administration will protect the interests of those who pay bribe. It is willing to go to the extent of even flouting a national Act for this purpose. The Modi-Yogi governments, in spite of their tall claims, have not even made a dent on the systemic corruption. If anything the system of favours and commissions has only strengthened, with the rates gone up.

The President of the Vendors' Welfare Association at Lanka, Chintamani Seth, who is also in court against the government and administration related to previous such eviction many years ago, says he has never felt so humiliated in his life. Chintamani has valiantly fought against the police on previous occasions and has even been to jail. He is a tea vendor himself, without any ambition to become the Prime Minister of this country. He merely expects that he be treated with dignity as the President of his vendors' association. During Akhilesh Yadav's regime as Chief Minister he was made a member of the Town Vending Committee of Varanasi. The Committee was wound up as Yogi Government came to power. He not only lost his position but also the respect which is accorded to a citizen in a democracy.

Why Biometric Aadhaar Database Project Should Be Abandoned

Dr. Gopal Krishna

Biometric databases have given birth to gnawing present and future civil liberties and civil rights concerns. Biometric identification exercise has been in use at least since 19th century. History of biometric profiling is a history of violence and repression. A stolen password can be changed but stolen fingerprints cannot be changed.

Biometric identification is an invitation to violence. A motorist in Germany had a finger chopped off by thieves seeking to steal his exotic car, which used a fingerprint reader instead of a conventional door lock. This has been reported in the October 2010 issue of *The Economist*. Under its science and technology section, it wrote about the fallibility of biometric identification under the title *The Difference Engine: Dubious Security*. It inferred that "Keeping evildoers out is no simple screening matter", contrary to the belief of the proponents of Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR) of 12-digit biometric Unique Identification (UID)/Aadhaar numbers.

As per Section 2 (g) of Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, "biometric information" means photograph, finger print, Iris scan, or such other biological attributes of an individual as may be specified by regulations." The reference to "such other biological attributes" makes it clear that voice sample and DNA profiling is included under its ambit. It is noteworthy that the Human DNA Profiling Bill, 2015 is aimed at

regulating the use of Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA) analysis of human body substances profiles and establishing a National DNA Data Bank. The definition of biometric information in the Aadhaar Act seems to make the proposed Human DNA Profiling Bill redundant.

It is germane to recall the role of 'Task Force for preparation of Policy Document on Identity and Access Management' under the National e-Governance Programme (NeGP). It submitted a report in April 2007 that revealed that Project Unique ID (UID) whose aim was "to create a central database of resident information and assign a Unique Identification number to each such resident (Citizens and Persons of Indian Origin) in the country" was already under implementation long before the arrival of Nandan Nilekani in July 2009 as Chairman of Unique Identification Authority of India. This report defines biometrics. The report of this Task Force probably makes one of the earliest references to "Biometric authentication".

Biometric identification and authentication is the foundation on which the entire CIDR of UID/Aadhaar project has been erected. The proponents of the project feign ignorance about a five-year study, *Biometric Recognition: Challenges and Opportunities* published on 24 September 24, 2010 by the National Research Council in Washington, DC. This study concluded that biometric identification and recognition is "inherently fallible" like the discredited science of Eugenics.

Indians under US surveillance

J Satyanarayana, the former IT secretary who is currently part-time Chairman of UIDAI since September 6, 2016 was a member of the above mentioned Task Force. There were 34 other members of the Task Force. These members included 11 Technology Solutions Providers, namely, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, Computer Associates, Novell, Honeywell, HP, Red Hat, ILANTUS Technologies, Mphasis and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Satyanarayana finds mention at page number 46-47 of the report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology that examined the work of Department of Electronics and Information Technology (currently named Ministry of Communications and Information Technology). He was asked by this Parliamentary Committee about surveillance by the National Security Agency (NSA) of the US. He informed that, "We have been assured that whatever data has been gathered by them for surveillance relates only to the metadata. It has been reiterated and stated at the highest level of the US President that only the metadata has been accessed, which is, the origin of the message and the receiving point, the destination and the route through which it has gone, but not the actual content itself. This has been reiterated by them, but we expressed that any incursion into the content will not be tolerated and is not tolerable from Indian stand and point of view. That has been mentioned very clearly and firmly by our Government."

In effect, the Government of India has formally communicated to the Government of the USA that India has no problem if they conduct surveillance for metadata. In fact, it

is acceptable and tolerable, but "incursion into the content will not be tolerated and is not tolerable." It must be remembered that the idea of UID was incubated in this very Department. It is evident that Satyanarayana and this Department has no problem in sharing metadata of Indians with foreign agencies.

Contract agreements accessed through RTI reveal unequivocally that personal sensitive data of Indians have been handed over to transnational private enterprises like Accenture, Safran Group and Ernst & Young. It has come to light that companies like 23andMe, a privately held personal genomics and biotechnology company based in California, and Ancestry.com, a US online genealogy company, collect and store DNA data, and that such data can be sold or accessed by third parties. Notably, Election Commission of India on its website has provided an answer to a question about the "system of numbering EVMs", wherein it reveals that "Each Control Unit has a unique ID Number (UID)." The proponents of world's biggest citizen identification scheme aim to converge electoral photo-identity card (EPIC) numbers of our electoral database and the UID/Aadhaar number database called CIDR. Thus, it can subvert the democratic process.

If these provisions are read with Section 23 (2) (g) it is clear that the powers and functions of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology include the power of "omitting and deactivating of an Aadhaar number and information relating thereto in such manner as may be specified by regulations" through subordinate legislation as and when they deem it appropriate. It means that Aadhaar Act is worse than the overruled

verdict in ADM Jabalpur case because it has empowered the Central Government to cause the civil death of anyone it does not like and has deprived citizens the right to file a compliant as was done by ADM Jabalpur in pursuance of the Presidential Order dated 27 June, 1975 under Article 359(1). The order had "declared that the right of any person (including a foreigner) to move any court for the enforcement of the rights conferred by Articles 14, 21 and 22 of the Constitution and all proceedings pending in any court for the enforcement of the above mentioned rights shall remain suspended."

As per Section 47 (1) of the Aadhaar Act 2016, "No court shall take cognisance of any offence punishable under this Act, save on a complaint made by the Authority or any officer or person authorised by it." This takes away the right of the "residents" and citizens to move any court for the enforcement of the rights conferred by Articles 14, 21 and 22 of the Constitution.

Given the fact that biological information of Indians is being colonised by these countries, it is likely to have implications for these "embodied subjects" in international relations because they end up creating biometric borders restricting their mobility.

Human body in India came under assault as a result of forced sterilisation of thousands of men under the infamous family planning initiative of Sanjay Gandhi during the Internal Emergency. Human body is once again under attack through indiscriminate biometric profiling seemingly under patronage of the Prime Minister. Such a project which is aimed at creating an unlimited government not limited by the Constitution must be abandoned in supreme public interest.

Hinduism, Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra

Ram Puniyani

One recalls that way back in 1966 in a case involving Satsangis, who were asking for status of a separate religion, the court had given the opinion that Hinduism is a way of life, so where is the question of Satsangis being given the status of a separate religion? In December 2015 a three Judge Supreme Court bench ruled that “The court came to the conclusion that the words “Hinduism” or “Hindutva” are not necessarily to be understood and construed narrowly, confined only to the strict Hindu religious practices unrelated to the culture and ethos of the People of India depicting the way of life of the Indian people. Unless the context of a speech indicates a contrary meaning or use, in the abstract, these terms are indicative more of a way of life of the Indian people. Unless the context of a speech indicates a contrary meaning or use, in the abstract, these terms are indicative more of a way of life of the Indian people and are not confined merely to describe persons practicing the Hindu religion as a faith” (Emphasis supplied). This clearly means that, by itself, the word “Hinduism” or “Hindutva” indicates the culture of the people of India as a whole, irrespective of whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews etc.”¹ Currently the word Hindu nation is being given lot of respectability and Hindutva is many times confused with Hindu religion.

These three major decisions from court seem to have been inspired by Dr. Radhakrishana’s formulation.² Trying to follow the definition of Radhakrishnan, Justice P. B.

Gajendragadkar in Satsangi case pointed out that Hinduism is difficult to define, and so ‘way of life’ seems to be closest definition one can opt for. Again following the lead from the philosopher President he sought to find a subtle indescribable unity within the divergence of Hinduism. As per him the differences amongst Hindu sects are merely on surface and Hindus were a “distinct cultural unit, with common history, a common literature and a common civilization” (Quoted in TOI Ronojoy Sen, June 1, 2005) On slightly parallel but distinct lines Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, in discovery of India writes “Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the word, in its present form, and even in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other.”³

Hinduism

At surface these definitions seem to be describing the phenomenon in an appealing way. Defining Hinduism in such a way is far from accurate. The reason for the need to refer such matters to the courts seems to be, one, Hinduism is not a prophet based religion, it has no single founder and two, religions developing in this part of the world have been lumped together as Hinduism and three there are so many diversities in the practices of Hinduism that all streams cannot be painted with a single brush. Most of

the judgments delivered by the courts are the ones which do not see caste as the core defining point of Hinduism. Surely Justice Varma while conflating Hinduism and Hindutva displays double naivety. One is at loss to understand as to how he could lump the diverse religious traditions of the country as Hinduism and see Hindutva as a synonym of Hinduism, as per him, the “terms are indicative more of a way of life of the Indian people and are not confined merely to describe persons practicing the Hindu religion as a faith.” This did go against the exclusionary Savarkar/ RSS definition of Hindutva. As such this is the definition which is currently prevalent. Despite that RSS was quick enough to appropriate the same court ruling to buttress its ideology. RSS/BJP started presenting its own politics in the new words, the one’s provided by Justice Varma. Just to recall, Justice Varma’s judgement exonerated the BJP-Shiv Sena candidates whose elections were challenged on the ground of their using corrupt electoral practices. These candidates had used Hindutva and Hindu Rajya in their election speeches and so their elections were challenged.

BJP picked up from where RSS had shown the way and in the vision document released before the 2004 elections, it stated, “Contrary to what its detractors say, and as the Supreme court itself has decreed Hindutva is not a religious or exclusivist concept. It is inclusive, integrative and abhors any kind of discrimination against any

section of people of India on the basis of their faith.”⁴

Where is the problem? Does RSS/BJP concept of Hindusim, Hindutva and so the Hindu- nation, correctly describe the phenomenon? Does Radhakrishnan-Nehru-the popular discourse on Hinduism/Hindutva correctly describe these terms? Something is seriously amiss in the whole gamut of expressions and definitions as put forward by the giants of the Indian politics and accepted by the judiciary. We have witnessed in practice that since the time the notions, words Hindutva/Hindu rashtra came up as assertive phenomenon in the political scene during the decade of 1980s the divisiveness has gone up by leaps and bounds and the polarization of communities has gone up. The religious minorities have been intimidated around this politics and they have taken a mortal fear of Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra. Their intimidation has a lot to do with the politics of RSS/BJP under the flag of Hindutva, Hindu Rashtra. While Radhakrishnan/Nehru/Judiciary have in simple-mindedness tried to project the diversity of Hindu sects, the understanding of Savarkar/RSS/BJP politics of Hindutva is based on a particular version of Hinduism which is exclusionary to the core, and serves the political goals of an elite section of society. The Hindu stream they pick up for constructing Hindutva is the Brahmanical stream of Hinduism.

Before we deal with the definition of Hinduism it is important to note that there are particular markers, which characterise any religion. The religions are associated with particular sentiment and emotions. Holy books, communitarian functions, rituals, ethical norms and

authority of clergy are the major visible symbols of a religion.⁵ We have to see whether what is called Hinduism has these traits or not. At another level, way of life is a very broad term; it encompasses not only religion but other factors related to region, language, food habits, literary and cultural aspects of life, which may not have anything to do with religion. In a way the ‘way of life’ characterization of Hinduism-Hindutva is a fatigued response because of its diversity. It is an attempt to avoid the bother to oneself of understanding the definitive religious aspect of this phenomenon, Hinduism. It tries to define the phenomenon without going into its genesis and role in society. Can a religion be called as ‘way of life’ just because it is too diverse? On the other hand there may be people with narrow and monolithic way of life and calling it as religion. The litmus test for a religion is the existence of the parameters listed above. Does Hinduism have these parameters or not? Are emotions associated with holy deities, holy books, present in Hinduism or not?

The emotive content and other factors listed above are crucial markers for a religion. In that sense right in the beginning we can say that Hinduism with its multiple streams is a religion without any doubt. Reducing all facets of life, the meaning, which is communicated by the phrase ‘way of life’, the multiple dimensions of human social life to religion, is invalid in itself. Religion is not and cannot be the sole content of the phrase ‘way of life’.

Two major points of departure for Hinduism are the absence of a founding prophet and the presence of the imprint of caste system on major aspects of what is regarded

as Hinduism today that is Brahmanism. The religious sanctity for social inequality, caste system is the soul of its scriptures and practices. The conditions under which the terms came into being also tell a lot about the real meaning of those terms. Aryans who came in a series of migrations were pastorals and were polytheists. During the early period we see the coming into being of Vedas, which give the glimpse of value system of that period and also the number of gods with diverse portfolios, the prevalence of polytheism. Laws of Manu were the guiding principles of society. This Vedic phase merged into Brahmanic phase. During this phase elite of the society remained insulated from the all and sundry. At this point of time caste system provided a mechanism for this insulation of elite. Buddhism’s challenge to caste system forced Brahmanism to come up with a phase, which can be called Hinduism.⁶ During this phase the cultic practices were broadened and public ceremonies and rituals were devised to influence the broad masses to wean them away from Buddhism.

The Word Hindu

It is interesting to note that till 8th century the so called Hindu texts do not have the word Hindu itself. This word came into being with the Arabs and Middle East Muslims coming to this side.⁷ They called the people living on this side of Sindhu as Hindus. The word Hindu began as a geographical category. It was a bit later that religions developing in this part started being called as Hindu religions. Due to caste system there was no question of proselytization. On the contrary the victims of caste system made all the efforts to

convert to other religions, Buddhism, Islam and partly Christianity and later to Sikhism.

Within Hindu religion two streams ran parallel, Brahmanism and Shramanism. Shramans defied the Brahminical control and rejected caste system. While Brahmanism remained dominant, other streams of Hinduism also prevailed at social level, Tantra, Bhakti, Shaiva, Siddhanta etc. Shramans did not conform to the Vedic norms and values. Brahmanism categorized religious practices by caste while Shramanism rejected caste distinctions. Brahminical Hinduism was the most dominant tendency as it was associated with rulers. Sidetracking the traditions of lower castes, Brahmanism came to be recognised as Hinduism in due course of time. "This phenomenon began with Magadh-Mauryan Empire after subjugating Buddhism and Jainism in particular. Later with coming of British who were trying to understand Indian society, Hindu identity, based on Brahmanical norms was constructed for all non Muslims and non Christians. Vedas and other Brahminical texts were projected as the Hindu texts. Thus the diversity of Hinduism was put under the carpet and Brahmanism came to be recognized as Hinduism.⁸ So Hinduism as understood as a religion is based on Brahminical rituals, texts and authority of Brahmins.

The victory of Brahmanism over the Shramanic traditions is visible all through as Brahmanism was associated with social ruling classes the Landlord-traders. This was reaffirmed in not very distant past when Dr. Bhimrao Babsaheb Ambedkar tried to get an equal place in Hindu fold. He led the agitations for public drinking water for dalits

(Chavdar talab), temple entry (Kalaram Mandir) and saw both these being beaten back by the traditional Hindu society. Its' due to Brahminical domination of Hinduism, which made him realize that Hinduism is basically Brahminic theology, based on Manusmriti. That's what led to his decision to burn Manusmriti and to decide to convert away from Hinduism.

Hindutva

In the political changes which occurred during the British rule, modern education and industrialization, the landlord and priestly classes felt threatened and resorted to religion as a savior for their declining dominance as social power. In parallel to the Muslim declining classes, who used Islam for their politics, Hindu landlords/kings resorted to the use of Hindu religion for their political goals. It is from here that the concept of Hindutva started taking shape and later came to be articulated by Savarkar in his book, 'Hindutva or who is a Hindu'. Since there was no uniform marker for Hindus and since politically 'foreign born religions', Islam and Christianity were to be opposed, a new definition of Hindu came into being which was based on exclusion, as per this definition all those who regard this land from Sindhu to seas as their holy land and father land are Hindus.

This was a strange mix of religion and politics. Like the political elaboration of Muslim League, Savarkar's formulations were meant to oppose the values of freedom movement and that of Indian National Congress, those of Gandhi, in particular, "Mere geographical independence of the bit of earth called India should not be confused

with real 'swarajya'. To the Hindus, the independence of Hindustan could only be worth having if it ensured 'their Hindutva-their religious, racial and cultural identity'. Swarajya to the Hindus must mean only that 'Rajya' in which their 'Swatva', their Hindutva could assert itself without being overloaded by non-Hindu people, whether they be Indian territorial or extra territorials..." He summarized his Hindutva and Hindu nation in one of his presidential speeches at Hindu Mahasabha, "Yes, we Hindus are a nation by ourselves, because religious, racial, cultural and historical affinities bind us intimately into a homogenous nation and added to it we are most pre eminently gifted with a territorial unity as well. Our racial being is identified with India-our beloved fatherland and our holy land above all and irrespective of it all we Hindus will to be a nation, and therefore we are a Nation".⁹

The first confusion occurs when the term Hindu's origin as a geographical meaning are considered. Hindus are those who live on this side of Sindhu! This is how M.M. Joshi called Muslims as Ahmadiya Hindus and Christians as Christi Hindus¹⁰. Sudarshan also goes on to subscribe to this assertive trick. In this the first step is Hindu because they live here; in the second step since they are Hindus they must worship Lord Ram, cow and Vedas. The second confusion is that all non Christian-non Muslims are Hindus. VHP has been opposing Jains being given minority status on the ground that Jainism is not a separate religion. Also RSS chief Sudarshan's statement that Sikhism is a mere sect of Hinduism created huge opposition from amongst Sikhs all over. The Jains have struggled against Hindutva forces to get minority status for themselves, as an

independent religion and not just a sect of Hinduism. Sudarshan's 'Sikhism as sect of Hindu religion' was thoroughly opposed. The third point pertains to Hinduism not being a religion per se. What-ever the historical origins of the word Hindu, Brahmanism is Hinduism of the day. It has Brahmanical rituals, holy books, holy deities (Lord Ram+ others). The Ram Temple movement was propped up by using the emotive aspect related to a religious deity. Even now the campaign for cow slaughter ban is revived when the time permits, despite the fact that many of those who are dictated to be Hindus eat beef as a part of way of life.

Than what is Hindutva, is it a synonym of Hinduism? No way. Hindutva is a synthesis of religion and politics. It is a politics opposed to the values, which came to be associated with India's freedom movement, the secular democratic principles. It is the parallel and supplement to Islamism, the politics of Muslim League. Both these are based on similar principles. Both these are subtly opposed to the transformation of social relations, both these did not participate in freedom movement and were not the subject of wrath by the British. Both these spread hatred against the people of other religions and sowed the seeds of divisiveness. Both these are exclusionary and so both these were rejected by the Indian people at the electoral level in pre-independence India time and over again. Both these are against the concept of gender and caste class equality in subtle and not so subtle form. And interestingly these formulations began with Nawabs-Rajas (kings) and were later on joined by the ideologues. While national movement had the

participation of all religions, castes and both genders, these had mainly elite males of their community as the members of their politics. They both claimed to be representatives of their religious communities but were rejected thoroughly at electoral level. When time permitted they did collaborate with each other in forming Governments in Sindh and Bengal and were mortally opposed to land reforms.

Hinduism as it prevails today is religion in all sense of the sociological characteristics. That it is dominated by Brahmanism is another matter. Hindutva is the politics based on the values of Brahmanism. One wonders as to why repeatedly judiciary has to fall back on 'way of life' formulation. One also wonders why RSS etc. are opposed to Satsangis or Jains or Sikhs to have a full status of religion. One wonders a bit more how this 'way of life', which can be very libratory, can be 'successfully' used for the opposite end, as witnessed currently. Nothing can be worse than the fact that 'way of life' formulation has been picked up by the most orthodox elements, who dictate and assert a particular way as *the* way, a particular book as *the* book and a particular deity as *the* deity.

Hindu Nation

During freedom movement while the majority of the people who subscribed to the concept of India, participated in the freedom movement, the followers of Hindutva (and also Muslim League) kept aloof from it as they followed the politics of Religious nationalism. Hindutva strove for Hindu Nation, Hindu Rashtra. The freedom movement was based on the concept of Indian Nationalism, India as a nation in the

making. The concept of Hindu nation was parallel to Islamic Nationalism, and was based on the political ideology of Hindutva. While Indian nationalism had been all inclusive of different religions, castes Hindu nationalism holds that this is Hindu nation, where Christians and Muslims are foreigners, and so should be treated accordingly. RSS ideologue Golwalkar points out, "From this stand point sanctioned by experience of shrew old nations, the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of Hindu nation i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age old traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in this country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights."¹¹

The vehicle of Hindu Nationalism currently is RSS, which through its multiple progeny, like BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and a large number of offshoots formed by RSS, its Pracharaks (propagators). At the same time many swayamsevak (the volunteer of RSS, trained in ideology of Hindu nationalism) are working in different facets of society, education, media, police bureaucracy are trying to work for the goal of Hindu nation.

Their major loyalty is to the concept of Hindu nationalism, in contrast to the Indian nationalism, the

nationalism which emerged through freedom movement and is inherent in Indian Constitution. True to its ideology the RSS trained Narendra Modi recently declared in 2014 that he is a Hindu Nationalist.¹² This is the hidden agenda of RSS combine, popularly known as Sangh Parivar. Religious nationalism, in any garb is opposed to the values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It uses the cover of religion for brining in the values of birth based inequality.

Summing Up

The confusion in the terms Hindu and Hindutva is the root of many misunderstandings about the politics of Hindu Rashtra, Hindu nationalism. Word Hindu began as a geographical category and later all the religious tradition prevalent in subcontinent were lumped under the umbrella of Hinduism. In this the Brahminical stream remained a dominant one. The term Hindutva began in the late 19th century, and was brought to

forefront by Savarkar in early 20th century. This term stands for politics based on Aryan race, language and culture. This became the political ideology of Hindu landlords, upper caste, who were opposed to the social changes accompanying the freedom movement. This section of people opposed the emerging Indian nationalism and projected Hindu Nationalism as their goal. Currently 'RSS-BJP-Modi' combine is the main proponent of this variety of Nationalism.

Footnotes :

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Letter to the Editor

A \$500,000,000 house in L.A.

Sir,

At the close of the year 2017 the New York Times on December 24, 2017 brought out 11 top stories of best weekend reads. The 10th story is about a house in Los Angeles costing \$500,000,000 (**INR 32,00,00,00,000**). This in a country that boasts of democracy. Compared to this mind-boggling figure the money spent by poor MukeshAmbani, the bosom friend of our blessed Prime Minister NarendraModi, on his 27-storey mansion in Mumbai seems to be peanuts. Ambani did not live even for one night in this mansion because some joker vaastushastri told him that this mansion did not conform to the principles of the mumbo—jumbo that goes by the name of vaastushastra and so it would prove inauspicious for Ambani and his family. India too claims to be a democratic country.

How long do the rulers and the nexus between crooked politicians and their capitalist exploitative chums expect the toiling masses of India to tolerate such vulgar display of wealth? Enough of sham socialism, sham democracy and sham Hindutva.

– C. B. Tripathi

Intolerance through the Years: 1934 to 1975 to 2015

Anil Nauriya

I. Day Against Fascist Intolerance: June 25, 2015

The 25th and 26th of June mark the declaration of internal Emergency at the behest of the Indira Gandhi regime in 1975. June 25 is also the day in 1934 when a lethal bomb was aimed at Mahatma Gandhi and his cavalcade by Hindu conservative and orthodox elements in Pune when he was on his anti-untouchability tour. For some years after 1977, June 25 was observed as a day of protest against the Emergency of 1975-77. It was sometimes formulated as a constitutional transgression which it certainly was. Yet it was more than that. It reflected a tendency towards authoritarianism and political intolerance. A former Deputy Prime Minister some time ago registered his apprehensions regarding the possibility of the Emergency being imposed again. He was referring to the constitutional phenomenon only. But if we were to see the issue in its wider generic terms, he might see the connection between the Emergency and such events as the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984, the Meerut-Maliana-Hashimpura massacre of 1987, the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, the Gujarat massacres of 2002, the Muzaffarnagar events of 2014 and the Ballabhgarh events of 2015.

Constitutional excesses, political intolerance and social fascism mutate seamlessly from one to the other. The connection between the bombs aimed at Gandhi during his anti-untouchability tour of 1934 and many of the phenomena listed above

becomes clearer when we move from considering political intolerance to social intolerance, from the political fascist tendency to the social fascist tendency.

Some political parties are brazenly laying down the law for who may reside where, making nonsense of the constitutional right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India as we have known it over the years. Feeding into the support base of many of these political parties are rural cabals like khap panchayats and urban mafiosi on which the electoral machine of several political parties, both national and regional, now appears to run. Emboldened by political patronage, these cabals and mafiosi then lay down the law for their rural and urban communities, intruding into the individual and social rights of the common people.

The Emergency of 1975-77 saw the imposition of press censorship. Today this has advanced to the increasingly frequent targeted killing of journalists, especially in the smaller towns, to say nothing of the widespread harassment of those exercising their right of expression. Such killings are as sure an indicator of creeping fascism as the advance notice of a coming plague by the fauna that it devours. Such killings of members of the intelligentsia had become common in the Italy of the 1920s where fascism first arose in its classical form.

It is this persistent and growing tendency towards intolerance, of which the Emergency was only a constitutionally crystallised form, that

needs to be combated. Therefore, it is important to observe June 25 as a Day Against Intolerance, and observe it nationwide. Indeed, it ought to be observed as a Day against Political and Social Fascism.

II. Role of Capital

The growth of financial and industrial capital is ordinarily expected to have a modernising role. It is expected to promote the dissemination of liberal ideas, and the elimination of such endemic features as child labour.

In the early years when the public sector was being built up, the constant refrain of Indian capital was that it wished to be free of state restraints such as licensing. It favoured the opening up of the economy. However, when this started happening from the 1980s onwards, it was non-entrepreneurial capital that took the centre-stage. Since then, Indian capital has tended, in its short-sightedness, to support the growth of the forces that have bred intolerance. Non-entrepreneurial capital depends not on research and development but on state concessions, especially transfer of natural resources to it at concessional rates, purchase of profitable public sector assets at nominal rates, and the appropriate bending of rules when desired.

Indian capital today has a peculiar concept of freedom. It claims to stand for a free economy but is not prepared for an extension of this concept to land. Here it wants the state to continue the colonial system

of the state acquiring land and handing it over to it at nominal rates. With some modifications, it wants the same colonial concessionaire system to continue in respect of mining leases for coal, iron ore, zinc and other such natural resources. The idea that these resources belong to the entire people, including the poor, is anathema to it.

Indian capital has developed a similar notion with respect to finance capital. Today, it believes that it has the first right on the financial resources of the country available in the banking system. When, therefore, a national level statutory rural employment generation scheme in the form of MGNREGA came up as a competing charge on the banking resources, neither Indian capital nor the media owned by it took kindly to it.

With the primary concern of Indian capital today being to seize control over India's land and financial resources, and reverse or dilute all laws that obstruct this, the growth of intolerance and social fascism has been of little concern to it.

Eighty-one years separate June 25, 1934 and June 25, 2015. But social fascism has remained; though weakened in certain respects, it has tended to reappear and often assume new and virulent forms.

III. Learning from Experience

There is yet another aspect of June observance that requires attention. The internal Emergency of 1975-77 was preceded by various significant events, including the Navnirman movement in Gujarat in 1973 and thereafter the JP-led movement against corruption. After

that there have been two other movements which have focused on corruption in the polity, the V.P. Singh-led Jan Morcha in the late 1980s and the recent Anna Hazare movement in the years immediately preceding the Lok Sabha elections of 2014.

It is important that we go beyond the June observance and try to derive some lessons from the JP movement and the later movements and the political cycles which the country has undergone as a result. Anti-corruption movements in India have suffered from an incomplete understanding of the meaning and implications of corruption.

In India the main internal issues that need to be grappled with are:

- a) the need to eradicate corruption;
- b) the prevention of religion-based and caste-based sectarianism; and
- c) the need to provide for the basic needs of the people, that is, food security, health, education, and cultivable land for those progressively or arbitrarily deprived of it.

The Indian experience is that issue (a) has been by movements only as a means for coming to come to power. After coming to power, they did little about issues (b) and (c). These movements, whether led by JP or by V.P. Singh, or as organised in recent months by Hazare, have been marked by a narrow understanding of corruption. Even though JP personally may well have had a wider understanding, he did not seek to build an independent cadre of volunteers or pay adequate attention to their ideological training. He was not sufficiently cognisant of the dangers posed by sectarian

forces like the RSS which played a major role in his movement. In fact, he argued erroneously that these forces had changed their character. That the issue around which his movement had been built was not a straightforward one of totalitarianism versus "democratic" forces became subsequently even clearer. For during the Emergency, and particularly after the Turkman Gate firing in April 1976, the RSS and the then Prime Minister's younger son even appeared to arrive at a rapprochement. The shortcomings that characterised JP's movement were repeated in some or the other form by the later movements.

Corruption is simply a subset of the wider issue of abuse of political and social power and authority. Recent anti-corruption movements have understood corruption primarily in financial and monetary terms. But corruption is not limited to bribery-related conduct. A studied and deliberate withdrawal on the part of the state authorities and of dominant political parties from the performance of their duty to protect the lives and property of citizens is also corruption. It is in fact a grave form of malfeasance that seems to cut across political parties and regimes. In recent memory such malfeasance has been reflected, for example, in the role of the state in the face of violence against Sikhs in Delhi, Muslims in Ahmedabad, Christians in Odisha, non-Maharashtrians in Maharashtra and Dalits in Haryana. Anti-corruption movements that not only do not raise such issues but appear instead to offer good conduct certificates to certain delinquent forces and regimes cannot inspire as much confidence as they might otherwise do. The ideological stance here cannot be concealed: such

movements would go after a police constable for, say, taking a traffic-challan-related bribe (indeed in the last round of the Lok Pal movement its major focus was on subordinate government employees), but wink at a senior police official or a Minister for organising a pogrom or looking the other way while human beings are killed or beaten up as part of a concerted and inbuilt bias against a community or a section of the people. Thus the struggle against corruption and the struggle against intolerance cannot be separated.

Constitutional excesses, political and social intolerance, and corruption need to be fought together as part of national renewal and of a re-affirmation of the highest values of our struggle for freedom that are also enshrined in our Constitution. Though every movement will have its specific and particular focus, these issues cannot be dealt with by a method of pick and choose that leaves the worst traits in our politics and society untouched and in fact strengthened by opportunistic non-condemnation, direct certification or affirmation by association.

Appendix 1: Mahatma Gandhi's Statement on Bomb Incident¹ (Harijan, 29 June 1934)

I have had so many narrow escapes in my life that this newest one does not surprise me. God be thanked that no one was fatally injured by the bomb, and I hope that those who were more or less seriously injured, will be soon discharged from hospital.²

I cannot believe that any sane sanatanist could ever encourage the insane act that was perpetrated this evening. But I would like sanatanist friends to control the language that

is being used by speakers and writers claiming to speak on their behalf. The sorrowful incident has undoubtedly advanced the Harijan cause. It is easy to see that causes prosper by the martyrdom of those who stand for them. I am not aching for martyrdom, but if it comes in my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in defence of the faith I hold in common with millions of Hindus, I shall have well earned it, and it will be possible for the historian of the future to say that the vow I had taken before Harijans that I would, if need be, die in the attempt to remove untouchability was literally fulfilled.

Let those who grudge me what yet remains to me of this earthly existence know that it is the easiest thing to do away with my body. Why then put in jeopardy many innocent lives in order to take mine which they hold to be sinful? What would the world have said of us if the bomb had dropped on me and the party, which included my wife and three girls, who are as dear to me as daughters and are entrusted to me by their parents? I am sure that no harm to them could have been intended by the bomb-thrower.

I have nothing but deep pity for the unknown thrower of the bomb. If I had my way and if the bomb-thrower was known, I should certainly ask for his discharge, even as I did in South Africa in the case of those who successfully assaulted me.³ Let the reformers not be incensed against the bomb-thrower or those who may be behind him. What I should like them to do is to redouble their efforts to rid the country of the deadly evil of untouchability.

References:

1. A bomb was thrown on what the assailant believed was the car carrying Gandhiji on his way to the Municipal Building. Gandhiji arrived at 7.30 p.m. little knowing what had occurred. When informed of the incident, he received the news calmly and agreed to the suggestion that the programme should be carried out. Accordingly the address was presented and Gandhiji left the hall at 8.30 p.m. This appeared under the title "Providence Again".
2. This paragraph has been reproduced from *The Hindu*, 26-6-1934.
3. *Vide* "My Reward".

Appendix 2: Thoughts upon the Conclusion of National Week (April 6 -13), by Anil Nauriya, 13 April 2017

The week April 6-13 used to be observed in the course of India's freedom movement and for many years thereafter as National Week in memory of the nationwide protest hartal on April 6, 1919 against the draconian colonial Rowlatt legislation and in memory of the massacre of unarmed people that occurred a week later at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. The hartal on April 6, 1919 marked the first all-India level protest on a democratic rights issue. Mahatma Gandhi had looked upon April 6 to 13 as the week of India's awakening. It is to be hoped that the country would not forget the continuing significance of this occasion, not least for its caution against the arbitrary use and abuse of state power.

As intellectual critiques of the notion of nation grew, it became increasingly unfashionable for opinion-leaders to engage in defining the nation. Yet when non-sectarian forces or civil society lose interest in defining the nation, the field is left free for a narrow-minded understanding of nation to grow and to spread. It appears that this process has been underway for some years now. Almost every year after 1919, Gandhi had reminded the country during National Week of how several persons belonging to diverse communities and vocations had died together in the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. He stressed the importance of the incident in educating the people and uniting them in a common nationhood. Maulana Mohamed Ali referred to the massacre to stress that Hindus and Muslims and others had come together in a common nationhood which would “fear no

man on earth”. The incident has acquired the same decisive importance in India’s history as the Easter Rising of 1916 in Ireland, although the two are not, strictly speaking, comparable. April 6-13 was observed as National Week right up to the 1960s in Indian schools and colleges. Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi traditionally observed Qaumi Hafta (National Week) at least until Dr Zakir Husain and Prof Mujeeb remained actively associated with the University. Old Jamia hands still remember how National Week was an occasion jointly to take over and perform civic service in classrooms, bathrooms, latrines and the villages around Jamia, shed distinctions of high and low, break barriers of caste and religion and inculcate a sense of dignity of labour. At several places in the country the week would be observed to encourage hand-craft, mass plying of the charkha and the performance of other kinds of

manual work. It was, as Gandhi saw it, an occasion for all to introspect, shed hatred, carry out constructive activities, spin, promote the sale of hand-spun cloth (Khadi), and perhaps occasionally even to fast jointly. National Week united Indians across communities and across classes. Why, then, has National Week (April 6 to 13) been virtually forgotten? Gradually, as a composite culture and a secular understanding of Indian nationhood came to be taken for granted in independent India by the end of the 1960s, National Week began to pass without much notice and was even forgotten. Yet it remains a defining moment for India, certainly a moment of awakening; an occasion to reassert India’s composite nationhood; and a salutary reminder in independent India of the critique which Indian nationalists had made of violations of the democratic rights of the people.

Invitation

National Campaign to Create Awareness About the Indian Constitution

National Meeting of Activists Interested in this Campaign

Date: January 20, 2018, Venue: Mumbai

It was after a long struggle, in which the vast multitudes of our country participated and made innumerable sacrifices, that the country won freedom in 1947. The Indian Constitution embodies the dreams and values that inspired our people in this heroic fight. The drafting of the Constitution was done by the leaders of our freedom struggle, and included some of the finest minds of that time, including Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, who was the chairperson of the drafting committee, Jawaharlal Nehru,

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, to name a few. It took them as many as 2 years, 11 months and 18 days to finalise the Constitution. It was unanimously adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, and came into effect on January 26, 1950. The Constitution declares India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. It grants to people the fundamental right to equality, freedom, freedom of religion, as well as cultural and educational rights.

The Supreme Court has ruled that these basic features of our Constitution are inalienable, and cannot be altered or destroyed even by the Parliament of India.

Article 51A of the Constitution calls upon all citizens to cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired India’s freedom struggle and are enshrined in the Constitution. It exhorts citizens to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious,

linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; and also asks them to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture. It asks people to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. It thus defines what are the values that constitute true nationalism.

The Constitution also outlines in unambiguous terms the orientation of economic policies that future governments should pursue. This is contained in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. Dr Ambedkar made it very clear that these Principles are to be fundamental to governance, and that all future governments have to strive to implement them. The Directive Principles direct the State to ensure that there is no concentration of wealth in the country. The ownership and control of the country's resources should be such that they benefit the common good, implying that they should not be used for private enrichment. They call upon the State to strive to make available education, healthcare and nutrition to all people of the country. They say that the State should direct its policy to secure for all people an adequate means of livelihood. It should endeavour to secure the right to work, and ensure that people get a decent wage that enables them to have a decent standard of living and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.

Unfortunately, today, these principles contained in the Constitution are being violated with impunity. A false nationalism is being propagated, that attacks the very conception of India as a socialist, secular and democratic republic. Minorities are being attacked and even killed; atrocities on Dalits are increasing by the day; crime against

women is increasing. The fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution are themselves under threat. The economic policies are leading to an enormous concentration of wealth in a very few hands; and on the other hand, there are simply no jobs for the youth. Agriculture has been pushed into such deep crisis that more than 3.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide in the last two decades – something which did not happen even during the days of the British Raj. Our natural resources, including land, forests and even water, as well as the mineral wealth of the country, are being transferred to corporate houses for their naked profiteering. Despite the dismal state of our essential services such as education, health and ration system, the government is making sharp cuts in allocations for these public services, because of which they are in serious crisis. And all those who are questioning this deliberate trashing of our Constitution are being attacked as anti-nationals.

Friends, our country is passing through deep crisis. At such a critical time, it is important to reach out to the common people and educate them about our Constitution – its principles, its values, about the true concept of nationalism enshrined in it, about the Constitutional directive that all future governments should strive to guarantee to all citizens all the basic necessities required for people to live like human beings— healthy food, best possible health care, invigorating education, decent shelter, security in old age and clean pollution-free environment.

We are proposing to launch a nationwide campaign to educate the people regarding the Constitution. To launch this campaign, we propose

that a series of seminars be organised across the country where eminent speakers give talks on the various issues outlined above. For each of these seminars, all the local activist groups working in that area should be invited, which will create an atmosphere for this campaign to be launched in that area.

We would like to invite all those activists who are interested in launching this campaign in their respective areas, and for that, are willing to organise an initial seminar in their area, to join us for a meeting in Mumbai on January 20, 2018. In this meeting, we can plan out the details of how to take this campaign ahead. After this meeting, you can launch this campaign in your area for the next three months. We are then proposing to organise a national seminar in Pune on April 22, 2018 where you can present a report of the campaign in your area, and we can then plan together how to advance this campaign further.

If you would like to join us for this meeting, do contact us at the phone number below.

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