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Trumping up a New Warning

Kuldip Nayar

THERE may be a grain of truth in the statement by US President Donald Trump that his country has "foolishly" given \$33 billion in aid to Pakistan in the last 15 years. But he is wrong when he says that America has not got anything in return. Understandably, Pakistan could not repay in dollars. Nor did Washington expect that. But Pakistan offered bases in its country for the US to operate militarily.

President Trump is unnecessarily harsh when he says that his country got nothing in return except lies and deceit and also referred to leaders as fools. During the cold war when the world was divided into two blocs, Pakistan was on the side of America. Rawalpindi was a part of Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), a least successful alliance made up of unlikely allies like Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom in 1955.

The purpose of CENTO was similar to that of the much better known and far more successful North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), mainly to contain the Soviet Union and prevent its expansion into the Middle East. Treaty members had

to agree to mutual cooperation and protection. But, perhaps most interestingly, given the then political situation many of these countries found themselves in, they also had to agree not to interfere in each other's internal affairs.

As the group's original name the Baghdad Pact suggests its first headquarters were in Baghdad. However, an Iraqi military coup in 1958 resulted in Iraq's withdrawal from the group, which in turn resulted in a name change to CENTO and the headquarters shifted to Ankara, a less fundamentalist Turkey. The organization stayed out of the Six-Day and the Yom Kippur wars, although Iraq was an active belligerent in the former and provided combat support in the latter. However, it had pulled out of the organization at that time.

CENTO also did not intervene in the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 or 1971, claiming that it was an anti-Soviet pact, not an anti-India one. The organisation was finally disbanded in 1979 after it was unable to prevent the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 or the Iranian Islamic revolution.

Justifiably, Pakistan could not accept Trump's tweet and it immediately reacted when Foreign Minister Khwaja M. Asif tweeted: "We will respond to President's Trump's tweet shortly Inshalla...will let the world know the truth...difference between facts and fiction." Soon after, the Pakistan's foreign ministry issued a statement, saying, "Pakistan rejects such unfounded accusations that belie facts on ground and trivialize Pakistan's efforts for fighting terrorism and our unmatched sacrifices to promote peace and stability in the region."

China, who had long been waiting in the wings, made most of the situation and stepped in to defend Pakistan by saying that the world community should acknowledge its all-weather ally's "outstanding contribution" to counter terrorism, a day after the US President lashed out at Islamabad for providing safe havens to militants.

China, showering praises on Pakistan, said that Islamabad has made enormous efforts and sacrifices for the fight against terrorism and has made very outstanding contribution to the global cause of counter terrorism. "The international community should acknowledge that," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman GengShuang said in Beijing when asked about Trump's criticism of Pakistan. He also added that China was glad to see Pakistan engaging in international cooperation, including counter terrorism, on the basis of mutual respect so as to contribute to regional peace and stability.

"China and Pakistan are all-weather partners. We stand ready to promote and deepen our all-round

cooperation so as to bring benefits to the two sides," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman. It was expected because China is currently investing heavily in Pakistan as part of the \$50 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) over which India has raised objections as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. During the first ever trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan last week, Beijing had announced plans to extend the CPEC to Afghanistan which shares close ties with India.

However, former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai, has welcomed Trump's outburst, while calling for establishing a joint US-regional coalition to pressure the Pakistani military establishment to bring peace to not just Afghanistan but the entire region. Afghanistan, too, had accused Pakistan of sheltering Taliban militants, leading to a long running spat between the two countries. China is seeking to mediate between the two neighbours through the trilateral mechanism.

Yet, the analysts point out that the US was mounting pressure on Pakistan as it has firmed up an alliance with Beijing by allowing heavy Chinese investments in the strategic CPEC corridor providing China access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

But with common interests, it was natural for China and Pakistan and lately Afghanistan, to enhance communication and exchanges. After all, China believes that Pakistan and Afghanistan are closely linked geographically. Understandably, the three reached consensus on several issues, including enhancing cooperation on counter terrorism

and fighting against terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

It was expected that India would welcome US President's tough message to Pakistan on terrorism. "The Trump administration decision has abundantly vindicated India's stand as far as terror is concerned, as far as the role of Pakistan is concerned in perpetrating terrorism because end of the day terrorist is a terrorist... terror is terror and it does not spare any single nation, any single country, any single region," Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh said.

It is apparent that President Trump is unfolding a new American policy. This is far-right as compared to President Clinton's left-of-the-center. The old values are no longer relevant. And Donald Trump is taking Washington back to the conservative era. India may have to oppose the US President because its left-of-the-centre policy comes into conflict with what Trump is advocating.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen whether or not Pakistan can sustain itself without the US aid. Islamabad has said that it is computing the total aid received from the US so as to return the amount. But it is obvious that Pakistan cannot.

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**JANATA WEEKLY
WISHES**

*Its readers A Happy
& Prosperous
New Year 2018*

A brief report of the

All India Socialist Women's Conference (AISWC), Pune December 2-3, 2017

By Manisha Gupte, on behalf of the Organising Committee of the AISWC

'Hum Samajwadi' (We, the Socialists), a national platform of socialist institutions with a membership of 40 organisations, was formed through the initiative of Dr. G.G. Parikh, Bhai Vaidya, Dr. Sunilam and Medha Patkar among others in order to strengthen socialist values and to resist fascism, casteism, communalism, neo-liberal capitalism and patriarchy. As a part of the numerous activities being organised by Hum Samajwadi to bring together the socialist groups all over the country, the platform decided to organise an All India Socialist Women's Conference (Akhil Bharatiya Samajwadi Mahila Sammelan) in Pune in December 2017. The responsibility of organising this was given to the convenors of Hum Samajwadi, namely Dr G.G. Parikh (on behalf of Yusuf Meherally Centre), Guddi (on behalf of Janata Trust) and Neeraj Jain (on behalf of Lokayat).

The Hum Samajwadi convenors delegated the responsibility of organising the conference to a committee composed of women representatives from six organisations, Janata Trust (represented by Guddi), Yusuf Meherally Centre (represented by Vijaya Chauhan), S.M. Joshi Socialist Foundation (represented by Manisha Gupte), Socialist Mahila Sabha and Abhivyakti (represented by Alka Joshi, Sayali, Neelima and Shraddha), Janamukti Sangharsh Vahini (represented by Razia Patel)

and National Alliance of People's Movements (represented by Suniti S.R.).

Around 470 participants from 10 states (Odisha, Bihar, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra) participated in the two-day conference organised on December 2-3. The S. M. Joshi Socialist Foundation, offered its premises for the conference; holding the AISWC in a space that espouses socialist ideology, included in its name, rendered a unique importance and meaning to this vibrant gathering.

As a gesture of gratitude to women who espoused the socialist cause, the auditorium was named after Dr. Sulabha Brahme. Similarly, the first day was dedicated to the memory of Pramila Dandavate and the second day, commemorated Mrinal Gore. Their contribution was read out on both mornings by those who had had the opportunity to work closely with them—Vijaya Chauhan and Surekha Dalvi.

The conference, open to people of all genders who yearn for the constitutional values of democracy, secularism, equality, social justice and socialism, was a judicious mix of intellect and passion. Group discussions, display and sale of books, aesthetic cultural expressions (music, songs, dances and skits presented by the talented Lokayat

team as well as participants from various states), poster exhibitions, nutritious food, a rally through the streets of Pune and active participation by people of all ages generated immense hope and camaraderie among participants. Animated discussions continued over meals and in late evening after the sessions ended, continuing well beyond midnight hours. Especially heartening was the visible and able leadership of younger women activists who played a key role in organising the conference, especially Guddi, Shraddha, Sayali and Neelima.

A central theme of the conference, reiterated by most speakers, was the need to cherish and strengthen the Indian constitution to fight against growing fascist forces. During the inaugural session, Alka Joshi presented the broad framework of the conference within the current political context. Bhai Vaidya, the veteran socialist leader, cautioned that the current government was not of the BJP but of the RSS, which has its roots in cultural and religious nationalism. Prof. Pushpa Bhawe and Medha Patkar also graced the inaugural session. They stressed this issue further, highlighting the worsening deplorable situation of working class people, and the fact that women, in spite of leading struggles of people's movements through democratic means were the worst sufferers in the era of neo-liberal globalisation

and hate politics. They also acknowledged the immense resilience of women in asserting a life of dignity at the individual and collective levels in spite of class, caste and patriarchal challenges in the existing development model. At the end of the inaugural session, a book was released, written and published by Lokayat,, The Unemployment Crisis: Reasons and Solutions.

The first session of the Conference was taken by Dr. Manisha Gupte. She spoke on MOVING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY. In her one hour talk, she emphasised that the artificial divide between the public and private domain had to be resisted and violence in both spheres had to be challenged and eliminated. She affirmed that socialist feminism, which believes in an intersectional approach, uniting women from all walks of life, and which calls for a redistribution of power and resources inside and outside the home, could offer alternatives while dealing with multiple patriarchies in our country. The session concluded with a very interesting question and answer session.

After lunch, Kalyani Menon-Sen from Delhi spoke on GROWING FASCISM AND WOMEN. Her chilling reminder of India becoming a fascist state was a sombre awakening for everyone. To prove her point of how a spectre of fascims was hanging over the country, she used a template of indicators of fascism, ranging from symbolic pseudo-nationalism to suppression of working class and protection of corporate interests, patriarchal controls over women, anti-intellectualism, disdain for human rights, suppression of media and freedom of expression, identification

of 'enemies' as an unifying strategy, over-glorification of army and militarisation and divisive hate politics, among others. Each one of these early warning signs of fascism actually exist in the current context in India. The growing influence of intolerance and fascism is evident in the way in which the judiciary and media have grossly violated 24-year-old Hadiya's right to practice her desired faith and choice of partner.

During the next session, Razia Patel and Manimala took this discussion further, stressing the fact that women from any minority or subordinated group suffer in multiple ways because they are a minority within minorities. Razia Patel spoke on PROBLEMS FACING MINORITY WOMEN, and the well-known journalist-activist from Delhi, Manimala, spoke on PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS AND DALIT WOMEN. They stressed upon the need to understand the caste system both within Hinduism as well as in minority religions in India, since the impact of multiple historical discriminations renders women from these communities vulnerable and without access to basic needs and rights.

The last session during the first day was Group Discussion. The participants broke up into groups for group discussion. Apart from talking about their work, and giving suggestions on what can be done after the conference to further the unity among the various groups and individuals who attended the conference, and what can of common activities can be taken ahead, the participants also discussed several theoretical issues facing the socialist women's movement. These included the issues of legal entitlements and the right to life with dignity for marginalised women,

including LGBT women, sex workers and women living with disabilities. Gender equality based on rights, freedoms, love and companionship among men and women was considered essential for women to enjoy constitutional and human rights. The vision for gender just laws was presented by Swatiya of Forum Against Oppression of Women; this presentation called for a secular framework that was not hindered by religion, culture or majoritarian politics and one that transcended marriage and heteronormativity.

The second day began spectacularly, with representatives from various people's movements working through a democratic socialist and constitutional framework sharing information about their work and strategies. Christina from Jai Kisan Andolan (Tamil Nadu) explained how the problems faced by farmers not only results in severe malnutrition and hunger for their families but also adversely affects the food security of all citizens. In spite of continuous agitation by farmers and filing of PILs, their efforts have not yielded any meaningful results because of State apathy. Anupama from KSWF (Karnataka) drew a parallel between attacks on women in a pub and communal attacks in the state. The assassinations of Prof Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh have not weakened but strengthened joint campaigns in which intellectuals, artists, academicians, theatre groups, and socialist/left organisations working on rights of women and Dalits have actively participated. Jaya from Prachestha (Odisha) spoke of their collaboration with national workers' unions, their interventions related to vocational training and the threats they receive while fighting for rights of domestic workers. Vaishali Patil

of Konkan Vinashkari Prakalp Virodhi Samiti (Maharashtra) narrated the emotional experience of their activists when they visited the museum of the gas disaster in Bhopal. “If this can happen after a gas leak, what will happen to us if a nuclear plant leaks in our neighbourhood” was their shocked response. The valiant struggle in Raigad district has resulted in rejecting the SEZ of Ambani. Women have actively participated in the 14 year long struggle against the Jaitapur nuclear plant and have led a non-violent protest for the past six years. The struggle in the Lavasa region (Maharashtra) was a similar one, but Leelatai from the Lavasa Prakalp Grast Movement talked about women’s adamant position that land, forest and water belong to people who live there, and not to outsiders who covet these resources. Women would not be afraid to challenge and change a government that allowed projects to start without due legal process, she asserted. Jamila from Mumbai Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao campaign shared her anguish of seeing her home being demolished along with 9000 others, because of which five lakh people, mostly Dalits, Adivasis and migrants from minority religions were rendered homeless, and 14 children died in the process. “When we migrate to other states or big cities, we come with small dreams. Even those are trampled upon by the government in their effort to convert Mumbai into Singapore”. Affirming her commitment to fighting for a just cause and to collective action by local people, she went on to say that since a woman’s pain has no borders, she hopes for a world that has no dividing lines. Suniti S.R. summed up this empowering yet humbling session by saying that democratic socialism in India affirms the struggles of people’s movements who have been

collectivising local people to demand for an alternative and sustainable development model. When natural resources are snatched away from local inhabitants in the guise of mega projects, their right and access to water, land, forests, minerals and livestock are violated. Women are most adversely affected, and they are also the ones who are relentlessly fighting and leading peaceful struggles against anti-people projects in rural and urban settings, be they SEZs, POSCO, Vedanta, Enron, Sardar Sarovar, Nandigram-Singur, Lavasa or Vang-Marathwadi.

This was followed by a presentation by Surekha Dalvi on WOMEN’S STRUGGLES FOR CONTROL OVER RESOURCES. She reminded the gathering that we were currently living in an undeclared Emergency, where rights, people’s struggles and freedom of expression—even through peaceful and constitutional means—are being blatantly suppressed. Gandhi had said that democracy lies in the minds of the people. He also believed that agricultural production should first provide for the needs of the tiller and local population, but land, which was a source of revenue for the State at one point has now become a source for corporate investment. India is an agricultural country only on paper, and increasing capitalist and imperialist control over land has resulted in women being marginalised from agriculture.

Thereafter, Neeraj Jain spoke on ECONOMIC ROOTS OF FASCISM. He started with giving facts about the cuts made in allocation for women in the four budgets presented by Arun Jaitley so far, and explained that this was not because the government had no money, but was a part of the

neoliberal policies being implemented in the country as a part of the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank on India due to India’s huge foreign debt. It was in consequence of these conditionalities that the government was running the economy solely for the benefit of giant foreign and Indian corporations. On the one hand, the government was desperately trying to invite foreign investment into the country, and for this was even implementing the most absurd and destructive projects. Simultaneously, it was doling out lakhs of crores of rupees as subsidies to the rich. And on the other hand, it was making sharp cuts in its social sector expenditures, such as food, education and healthcare. This had led to a huge increase in the wealth of the rich, while leading to a huge increase in poverty and unemployment in the country. The growth of fascist forces in the country is a consequence of this growing economic crisis.

The importance of the Indian constitution which extols values of equality, social justice, democracy, socialism and secularism was emphasised by Prof Nitish Navsagare in his talk on CONSTITUTION AND WOMEN. Juxtaposing this document which respects the human rights of all people against the patriarchal and casteist Manu Smriti, he cautioned the audience about the possibility of the present egalitarian constitution being replaced by a theocratic and hierarchal one. This presentation set the tone for the future action plan of the AISWC, presented by Manisha Gupte on behalf of the organising committee in the final valedictory session.

Prof Subhash Ware and Comrade Shanta Ranade were the main speakers in this concluding session.

Prof Subhash Ware's shared his experience about his efforts to spread awareness about the Indian constitution all over Maharashtra. He stated that he had got excellent response and support everywhere, which was reassuring for all participants. The need to resurrect the values of the freedom movement and to hold the State accountable in fulfilling the promises made to the citizens of our country was underscored by Comrade Shanta Ranade of the National Federation of Indian Women, affiliated to the CPI. She reiterated the urgent need for all progressive organisations to expose the hypocrisy of the RSS and its affiliates, and to be wary of their tactics of appropriating Ambedkar and Gandhi on the one hand and dismantling the social welfare policies of the Nehruvian era on the other.

The two-day conference concluded with an energising rally taken out through the streets of Pune, accompanied by drums and songs and slogans.

FUTURE ISSUES AND PROGRAMMES ARISING OUT OF THE ALL INDIA SOCIALIST WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Small group discussions of 20-25 people each, held on the evening of 2nd December helped not only in identifying the current social, economic, political and cultural challenges, but also in thinking of ways to move forward.

Based on the suggestions received from the various participants during these group discussions, the organising committee of the AISWC drafted a proposal for future activities. The highlights of the same

are presented below:

a) Strengthening the alternative narrative through the Constitution of India:

The values of the freedom struggle, namely democracy, equality, secularism and gender concerns are enshrined in the Constitutional duties section of the Indian Constitution. This section of the Constitution helps us reiterate an alternative definition of nationalism that goes beyond symbols and popular rhetoric that targets minorities, Dalits, women and the poor.

The exhortation to rise above caste, religious, regional and other dividing lines in the real spirit of brotherhood / sisterhood can be an effective call to young people who can reclaim the Constitution to make India inclusive.

The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution give an economic agenda (such as education, health care, employment, housing and so on) for the country, and emphasise State obligations towards fulfilling the basic needs of the people so that they can lead a life of quality and dignity. In fact, the Directive Principles talk of a decent living wage that includes leisure and recreation. Since the Constitution is binding on any government that comes to power, emphasising the Directive Principles could be built into a campaign, with or without using the term socialism.

The AISWC made it clear that the present government, which has its roots in cultural and religious nationalism, which thrives on divisive and hateful politics, whose agenda is to replace the Indian Constitution

with a religious and theocratic one, and simultaneously was implementing economic policies oriented solely towards the profiteering of giant foreign and Indian corporations, has to be actively countered. It is unfortunate that other political parties in India are soft on issues of democracy, secularism, equality, inclusion and socialism; yet, the conference was hopeful that a minimum agenda of promising to implement the Indian Constitution could become a pressure point for parties as a political campaign in the forthcoming elections. In reality the implementation of the Constitution in letter and spirit is the duty of every elected government.

During the past couple of years, it has been observed that people, especially youth are interested in learning about the Indian Constitution. This has been validated through the efforts of Subhash Ware on behalf of the the S.M. Joshi Socialist Foundation. He has given more than 250 talks on the Indian Constitution during the past 3-4 years, and his book on the Constitution has sold more than 18,000 copies. This was also the experience of the campaign initiated in Pune this year by Lokayat and S.M. Joshi Socialist Foundation to spread awareness about the Constitution under the banner of Samvidhan Jaagar Abhiyan; this campaign drew massive public response in Pune, and also spread to many cities and towns of Maharashtra this November.

The organising committee of the AISWC proposed that workshops and campaigns be organised by the various participants all over the country to spread consciousness about the Indian constitution.

The fact that the idea of socialism was becoming more easily acceptable through the constitution renewed hope and optimism towards strengthening an anti-fascist strategy among activists and citizens of the country.

It was heartening to note that participants from Karnataka, Rajasthan and Odisha immediately agreed to explore the possibility of organising such workshops / seminars in their respective states.

b) Helping Various Groups with Resources:

All participants of the AISWC would be added to the mailing list of the Yuva Samajwadi group. The Abhiyakti / Lokayat activists would add all names to the Hum Samajwadi Sansthayein social media group as well. Issue based resource material in the form of films, pamphlets, exhibitions and power point presentations (PPTs) would be uploaded on regular basis, so that everyone has access to relevant information. A recent example was the preparation of a half hour film culled out from three feature films on Ambedkar (for democracy), Gandhi (for secularism) and Bhagat Singh (for socialism).

At this point in time, there was no plan of setting up another Forum. The younger activists have already formed a Yuva Samajwadi forum, this forum would continue to take the initiative in organising activities at the national level to build unity amongst the various socialist groups active all over the country and build a movement against the growth of fascist forces in the country.

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Bits of Coins

J. L. Jawahar

XY Ltd issued fifteen lakh shares of one rupee each at an issue price of ten paise. They wanted the company to be broad based and encourage more investors to purchase their shares. Out of the 15 lakh shares, the promoter, MrX retained five lakh shares for himself and offered the remaining ten lakh shares to the public. Naturally many people applied for them and were allotted the same. About three lakh shareholders entered the company. As the initial offer was made at a heavy discount, some people hesitated and did not apply. But some people thought differently. Even if the company was not a sound one, the risk is too small to be afraid of, they thought and took more number of shares. After all, no investor puts all his eggs in the same basket. They put only a small amount in each company. Those who do not worry about the risk only enter the share market. But once the issue was closed, many people regretted not applying and wanted to get it in the open market. Those who had the shares offered it at double the price they paid. That is, at 20 paise per share. Those who now decided they wanted it, felt even that is small amount to risk and took the shares. Thus the price started to increase gradually over time and finally, after six months the price reached the nominal value of one rupee. It means it became ten times the issue price. Ten times increase in six months! It is fantastic. People started to clamour for it.

Small traders were also watching the developments. If they took shares instead of money for the goods they sold, the increase in the

price of the share would add to their profit. So they offered to sell their wares against shares of the company instead of legal money. Shares acquired the character of money. The demand for the shares increased. So also the price. None of them asked what the company is doing. There was no need. After all, how many companies are there, where the share price depended on performance of the company? It is the reputation that matters. Talk of the town is the measure of reputation.

In fact there is no company. Only the promoter MrX is there. He has substantial number of shares in his name. He was watching the market situation. The price was now Rs10 per share. It was a 100 fold increase. It is tempting, but Mr.X has his own plans. If he wants to encash his holdings, he should unload his shares. If such heavy number of shares are put into the market, the share price would necessarily come down. He won't do it. There would be only ten lakh shares in the market. As demand increases, the price also increases to the benefit of all those who were good enough to take the shares when offered initially. So nobody complains. As each of the shares gets more money now, even the purchasers did not complain.

But why should there be any demand at all? It is because the price is expected to increase. Why is the price bound to increase? Because the demand is there to increase. It is like the dog trying to bite its own tail. That is what the investors want. In fact they are not the investors. They are traders in shares. They do not intend to stick to the company

forever. When the price reaches the expected level they just dispose of the shares, pocket the profit and go away. What is the risk in it? The demand is entirely dependent on the market and not on any intrinsic value of the share. There is nobody to manipulate the price. There are no assets supporting the share. Strictly speaking, what is the asset that is supporting the legal currency? If all those who hold money go to the bank and demand payment, can they pay? It is the same with the shares too. Currency has value as it is accepted by all. But all are bound to accept it as there is law behind it. Legal currency shall not be rejected. But in this case it is just the individuals playing in the market that create the demand. What happens if they stop asking for it? If somebody desists, some other person will come to fill the gap. All the people do not think alike. It is only great people that think alike. All are not great people! MrX is just watching the market. His worth is increasing day-by-day. What is Ponzi scheme? What is money circulation scheme? It runs as long as there are people willing to join. Then why are they banned? Because there would be a stage when there would be no one to join. The last entrants would suffer. How can you say that? Why should you presume that? On the same logic cryptocurrency also should have been banned long time back.

As transactions were increasing, MrX could not cope up with the work. He told the shareholders to get all the shares dematerialised and digitalised. He would keep them in virtual state and maintain the account ledgers for each of the shareholders. It would avoid brokerage charges which they are obliged to pay on each transaction. They were happy and complied. The shares took virtual birth. When the shares are in paper

form, the names of all purchasers are recorded on the back of the certificates. Now the purchasers are given a code name which is entered on each share in the ledger whenever any change of ownership is effected. MrX entrusted the work of maintaining the ledgers to another organization calling it the exchange. Each share is now designated as a token or coin. But it is not physical. It is in the form of encrypted software programme kept under safety key.

As it has become popular, it has become the topic of discussion in the town. Somebody pointed out that the issue itself is not approved by the SEBI and so it is all a fraud. That is the allegation against the Sahara group of companies. But they issued with consent of the government. SEBI said the government is not the authority to permit the issue. So the company is now asked to pay back the amount to all the subscribers. Naturally, the money will not be in the same form for a long time. It is becoming difficult for the management to realise the money. That is a different problem. But MrX did not have the problem. He said that what he issued was not real money share. It is virtual token that he issued and has nothing to do with legal currency. So it is not subject to SEBI laws. As long as it is not a company and as long as it is not a security in the market, SEBI has nothing to do with it. There is no other law that dictates what it is. It is not real. It is virtual. It is a virtual commodity created by him. Those who want can take it. If somebody is using it as currency, it is just a barter deal. It does not make the token money. It is not illegal.

Meanwhile the price rose to Rs 500 per share. Everybody was happy. The share of Maruticompany

reached Rs10,000. Even then the management refused to split it to facilitate transactions. But there were difficulties in using the token as cash for purchases. Investments also were made difficult as it needs more amount to purchase the shares, which are now virtual coins. If the coin is like a share it is indivisible like a share in the company. It cannot be divided. Two or three people may be allowed to hold a share jointly. But they cannot ask for division of the share among themselves.

An atom may be divisible, but not a share in a company. But the coin issued by MrX is not a share. It can be divided, he said. A fraction of the coin is allowed to be transacted. Those who want to invest less amount or those who want to use it as a currency with lower value, they can take a fraction of the coin. If you want just one hundred rupees, you can take 20 per cent of the coin. If you want just fifty rupees, you can take 10 per cent of the coin. The problem is solved. The traders and coin holders were all happy. The demand increased and the circulation as well.

The price of the coin could be brought down by releasing more of the coins into the market. But that is not the intention. The value of the coin has to be maintained. The price of a share in the HiawathaCompany of Warren Buffett is around 4000 dollars (not rupees). He refuses to issue more shares to bring down the price or to split the share. He expects to maintain the status of the share and also of the shareholders of his company. So let the price of the coin increase as long as it can. It is allowed to be traded in bits. It is the Bitcoin. Its value exceeded \$10,000.

Dealers in forbidden goods like drugs found it convenient and

profitable. They can carry on their business without the knowledge of authorities. As and when they want real legal money they can convert the coins into money. As long as that possibility is there, there is nothing to stop the validity of the virtual coin. Then how is it different from black money? The money that is hidden from circulation is called black money. It could be used for any illegal transactions. So it is made an offense. But this coin is allowed to stay. Why? Finally it has to be converted into legal money to enjoy the benefits. Then it can be taxed. Whatever might be the transactions and profits earned, it has to come out as legal at some stage. Then it is subjected to tax. So it is found to be acceptable. But what about the illegal trades? Is it legal to allow a parallel currency running in the economy? Black money is also legal money but runs underground. It is made illegal. But this virtual currency is allowed to stay. Because it is not legal money. It is not competing with the fiat currency. To avoid any complications they called it a commodity. If it is used by some people as money, it amounts to a barter deal which need not be forbidden. The fact that it is not real, not legal and that it can be converted into legal money whenever required gave the coin its life. That is Bitcoin. Many other virtual cryptocurrencies started to come into existence.

It tempts even authorities to digitalise, or virtualize their legal currencies. Even RBI is reported thinking of digitalising the currency. That is, issuing fiat cryptocurrency in place of the real official rupee. Is it an alternative to rupee or a different form of it? Digitalising legal currency is one thing. Legalising digital (virtual) currency is an entirely different thing. What is it that the RBI wants to do? But

once the currency is in virtual form, that is, digitised, it is exposed to the many risks of hacking. There is no guarantee against it. Hackers are intelligent enough to cross the firewalls of software programmes.

We find a tendency to compare this bitcoin to Tulip bubble. But when the Tulip bubble burst there was at least a tulip flower to look at and get satisfied. But when this cryptocurrency bubble bursts there would be nothing to look at. The coin is virtual and not real. The failure of all countries to forbid it has given a spurious legitimacy to it in spite of it being used for illegal transactions. On the other hand there is always a

talk of some country making it legal. As Gita Gopinath, the Harvard Professor has stated, "I don't believe that it will be a medium of exchange or become a currency." Its life depends on the possibility of exchanging it into legitimate currency of some country. It brings the bitcoin into legitimate flow. The moment that possibility is closed, its utility even for clandestine transactions would be lost. It would be like the share certificate of a liquidated or non-existent company.

The more basic question is whether we accept the parallel crypto currency underground.

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Press Release

Do Not Make Triple Talaq a Criminal Offense

The BJP is feeling triumphant that it has got the Instant Triple Talaq Bill passed in Lok Sabha making the practice a criminal offence. In the view of the Socialist Party, it is motivated by BJP's communal approach, especially prejudice against the Muslims of India. It seems that the Modi Government is doing this under mindset of RSS. Mr. Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief, has atrociously said that all persons born in India are Hindu. This mischievous statement by him is anti Muslim and anti Christian and in violation of the Preamble to the Constitution which unambiguously directs that India is a secular country and thus all citizens have the same rights for their religious identity.

The Supreme Court having declared Triple Talaq at one sitting as unconstitutional there is no need to make it criminal. Under Hindu Marriage Act, a Hindu cannot have more than one wife, with the result

that the second marriage is a nullity. This is specially provided by Sec 8(1) of the Act. This has not been made criminal and will only have civil consequences. So also will be the position in law of Triple Talaq at one go after the Supreme Court judgment.

The Pakistan law on this subject is more progressive. It provides that any man seeking to give Talaq to his wife will have to inform the prescribed authority every month for 3 successive months. It is only then that Talaq is recognized as legal. The authority is also directed to fix maintenance for the wife, and other facilities.

Therefore the Socialist Party demands removal of the criminality clause from the law on Triple Talaq.

**–Rajindar Sachar
Senior Member, National Executive
Socialist Party (India)**

Protect Young Minds from Wrong Values and Superstition

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

In a thought-provoking article captioned 'The Dark Side of the Comics that Redefined Hinduism' published elsewhere in this issue of the Janata Shaan Amin, whose father migrated to the US and who was fed on the stories and cartoons of Amar Chitra Katha, has described how this series of Amar Chitra Katha, whose 100 million copies have been sold, wrongly indoctrinates the young minds about the history of India and Hinduism. So the vast network of the Saraswati Bal Mandirs of the RSS throughout India are not the only agency engaged in distorting Indian history, spreading an anti-scientific temper and superstition and, beyond the role of ACK, injecting communal virus into the young minds.

I entirely agree with the views expressed in Shaan Amin's article with admirable restraint. These comics based on the stories passed on from generation to generation by oral tradition and even written texts are full of many dark sides. Here I would like to mention only the naked truth that these scriptures are rabidly anti-Dalit and anti-tribals. Both the Epics are full of instances to prove this. The Brahmanical society was so racially biased that even the important tribal commanders and collaborators of Bhagawan Ram were relegated to sub-human status as monkeys, bears, etc. It is impossible to make not only the villagers but even city-dwellers addicted to watching the Ramleela understand that Hanuman and Sugreeva were not monkeys with regular features of monkeys and tails but were tribals whose totem was monkey. Even today a clan of

the Oraon tribe of Chhota Nagpur which migrated from Karnataka to this area in Jharkhand in historical times treats monkey as its original ancestor and follows totemistic practices. Around 1970 during my tour in the interior tribal region of Visakhapatnam District I discovered that Jambawant (portrayed as a bear) is the original ancestor and totem of the Bhagata tribe. Why should our comic books not educate our young children about these facts? The Aryan idea of racial superiority, a forerunner of Nazism, is too well known to need elaboration here. Our villagers in the Hindi belt fed on the enactment of the Ramleela even in the 21st century believe that Lanka was not inhabited by human beings but by a sub-human species known as Rakshasas. In 1956 I went to Peradeniya University near Kandy in Sri Lanka to represent India at the Sixth International Student Conference being held in Asia for the first time. On my return from Sri Lanka I happened to visit my ancestral village in Basti District of eastern UP. I was surrounded by the villagers whose curiosity made them ask me such questions: Do human beings like us live in Lanka these days or only Rakshasas live there? Are they all black, very tall (10 *haath* or 15 feet high), with big teeth and ferocious looks? I only hope and pray that the utter ignorance and racial prejudice among these people have significantly reduced in the last six decades. There are instances galore in both the Epics testifying to the eating habits of the people and the lecherous character of several sages (rishis). But in the present atmosphere surcharged with a total

misrepresentation of Hinduism it is blasphemous even to hint about such facts if you want to save your head in one piece from the lumpen elements who have NEVER seen a page of our scriptures. It is incumbent upon our writers and artists to present our ancient tales in the light of modern thinking and archaeological evidence - instead of writing about palaces, aeroplanes, TV, etc., existing at a time when the archaeological evidence indicates only presence of mud houses that existed in several old civilisations across the globe in contemporaneous times. But can we really expect such a scientific approach from people like Narendra Modi who misguides the people by saying that in ancient India there was a high degree of cosmetic surgery and as proof he quotes the example of Ganesha. Should he not explain the symbolism of the Ganesha story to the gullible Hindus and not perpetuate superstition? For that matter we must stop projecting Ravana as a ten-headed monster and tell the young children and students that Ravana was a Dravidian devotee of Siva who composed the immortal *Sivamahimnastotra*. Similarly Praveen Togadia should be asked to desist from spreading the myth that Ram was born 7,75,000 years ago. This seemingly uneducated man should know that at that point of time the *homo sapiens* as we see them today did not even exist anywhere in the world. Thus, the battle against false history, mythology, superstition, racial and caste prejudice is very difficult and likely to last long in the conservative Hindu society.

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The Dark Side of the Comics that Redefined Hinduism*

Shaan Amin

Beloved by generations of Indian children like myself, the illustrated-book series Amar Chitra Katha also reinforced many forms of intolerance.

Fifty years ago, a junior executive at the Times of India named Anant Pai watched Indian children on a TV quiz show fail to answer a basic question about the Hindu epic Ramayana. Concerned that young people in his country had lost touch with their cultural heritage, Pai acted. He eventually teamed up with the publisher India Book House to launch an educational comic series that presented kid-friendly Indian religious and historical stories. The comics, titled Amar Chitra Katha (also known as ACK, or Immortal Illustrated Stories), slowly became a massive hit. While schools and shopkeepers initially hesitated to stock the issues, ACK was a household name in India by the late 1970s. Today, the series has sold 100 million-plus copies of more than 400 comics in upwards of 20 languages, primarily English and Hindi.

Pai revolutionised children's entertainment as much as he did religious education. ACK was the first major indigenous comic-book series to sell within India, and its success also heralded the development of a broader domestic comics industry. ACK's first successors were primarily Western-inspired action and adventure series, but by the 1990s Indian institutions like Diamond Comics and Raj Comics were publishing mysteries, funnies, and science-fiction works. Even within this crowded field, ACK

remained beloved and novel for both its edutainment value and its role as the grandfather of an industry.

And yet, since its debut in 1967, ACK has also helped supply impressionable generations of middle-class children a vision of "immortal" Indian identity wedded to prejudiced norms. ACK's writing and illustrative team (led by Pai as the primary "storyteller") constructed a legendary past for India by tying masculinity, Hinduism, fair skin, and high caste to authority, excellence, and virtue. On top of that, his comics often erased non-Hindu subjects from India's historic and religious fabric. Consequently, ACK reinforced many of the most problematic tenets of Hindu nationalism - tenets that partially drive the platform of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, currently under fire domestically and internationally for policies and rhetoric targeting religious minorities and lower castes.

Yet millions of children - myself included - revered "Uncle Pai" for creating a popular avenue to an Indian heritage, however limited. Like many other Indian diaspora kids, my mother brought her own collection when she immigrated to the United States as a 9-year-old in 1973. My family had built a library of some 90 issues by the time I began to read them, tattered from decades of swapping between cousins. When I was a boy growing up in upstate New York, my parents had no Indian friends or nearby relatives. We only spoke in English and ate burritos more often than dal bhat.

The heroes of ACK became my superheroes long before I discovered Spider-Man or the Flash. They also became my first window into a culture I barely knew. I didn't care that the protagonists I was reading about were drawn with white skin. I was unaware of the broader, ongoing effort by Hindu nationalists to define a doctrine devaluing lower castes, women, tribal populations, and religious minorities. I didn't understand how ideals of obedience to authority - something the comics taught - can feed systemic inequality. I was just reading about heroes who made me feel stronger than I was, and who would teach me, I believed, how to be Indian.

ACK defines Indian identity via stories - which naturally appealed to a bookish child like me who constantly escaped into the worlds of Philip Pullman, Garth Nix, and C.S. Lewis. Most histories in the comics feature virtuous Hindus who fight against evil rulers, an encroaching Muslim horde, or arrogant British imperialists. The religious stories are drawn from (usually Hindu) epics, sacred texts, and folktales, and they frequently weave the same gods and heroes among minor vignettes and massive story arcs. Though many ACK issues could stand alone, roughly 30 pages at a time the series constructed a limited and tonally consistent India sanitised through a distinctively Hindu lens.

While many scholars reject the notion of a single Hindu doctrine, they have some opponents. In 2008, Hindu nationalist students at Delhi

University protested the inclusion of A.K. Ramanujan's landmark essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas" in the history syllabus. The protestors alleged that it demeaned Hinduism to imply nonclassical versions of the epic were equally legitimate. Under a renewed wave of dissent in 2011, the university dropped the essay from the syllabus.

But outside the Ivory Tower, ACK's panels bring the power struggles, great feats, and sacrifices of Hindu lore and Indian history to life. With simple brushstrokes, illustrators evoke spare landscape backgrounds or classical architecture. Though light-hearted folktales like Panchatantra or Jataka Tales often tend toward caricature, ACK illustrators typically draw both mythological and historical protagonists in the image of Hindu deities of Indian classical sculpture. With characters' dramatic facial expressions and body postures, the lessons, political scheming, and battles become captivating.

For his part, Pai said "his comics had helped foster the 'integration' of India, which is made up of hundreds of ethnic groups, by teaching children about its history and legends," according to a 2011 New York Times story about the creator's death. Still, these dialogues, plot arcs, and illustrations often erase or negatively portray many groups. ACK largely omits religious minorities, including Christians and Sikhs, from its extensive "Makers of Modern India" collection. Muslims fare the worst among these groups. In the series' medieval histories, adherents of Islam often play the boogymen, a menacing, green-clad horde threatening brave Hindus.

ACK also upholds popular, but

regressive beauty standards by representing nearly all the stories' "good" characters as fair-skinned, lithe women or fair-skinned, muscular men. (Canonically dark-skinned gods are shaded blue.) By contrast, demons, "ruffians," and "ruthless killers" are given dark brown or black skin. In Issue #67 *The Lord of Lanka* (1974), Pai even distinguishes a demonic family's virtuous members from its evil members by shading them white. In Indian culture, where dark skin is frequently associated with lower castes, colourism fuels casteism.

Low-caste and tribal individuals are sometimes valorised in ACK for self-sacrifice with disturbing overtones. In one scene of the epic *Mahabharata*, a boy named Ekalavya who's from a disparaged hill tribe is denied instruction by a teacher of arms. After building a statue to practice in front of, Ekalavya becomes a fearsome archer. When the teacher discovers this, he demands the boy sever his thumbs in payment. Ekalavya's obedience is framed as a model of deference toward elders.

ACK similarly establishes women as collaborators in their own oppression. As Issue #71 *Indra and Shachi* (1974) proclaims from the inside cover, even goddesses cheerfully demonstrate "unselfish subordination of their own selves and service to their husbands." Men receive virginal wives as gifts from other men—or heroically kidnap them. At their most shocking, some ACK comics venerate women's suicide as a means to inspire or defy men. Many heroines choose sati, a long-banned practice in which widows like Padmini and Ranak Devi burn alive on funeral pyres.

Some readers and critics might blame Hinduism as a whole for these inequalities. But Hinduism lacks a central authoritative text like the Bible or Qur'an, and the sprawling canon of Hindu stories means there are many divergent messages on the subject of inequality. Rather than offering a more neutral take on Hinduism, ACK excluded subversive viewpoints from many stories. For instance, ACK's *Valmiki's Ramayana* does not challenge the caste system. By contrast, some folk traditions identify the divine Lord Rama, who spent 14 years cast out of society in the forest, as a symbol of low-caste peasants or tribal groups. In southern states like Tamil Nadu, some narratives lionize Lord Rama's dark-skinned foes as representatives of the Dravidian population.

As an adult returning to the series after many years, I struggle to reconcile ACK's recurrent bigoted portrayals with my enduring affection for the characters whose selflessness and courage left me in awe as a child. I idolised Ekalavya. I wanted to be determined like Dhruva, the child who worshipped so intensely the heavens could not breathe. Most of all, I loved Karna—the adoptive son of a charioteer in the *Mahabharata*. Facing abandonment, insults, emotional blackmail, and two different curses, Karna gave to the world with a generosity it rarely returned. On the eve of the battle that claimed his life, Karna relinquished the armor and earrings that provided him the protection of his divine father, the sun god Surya. Handing the jewelry over, Karna said, "Never let it be said that Karna refused anyone anything."

To ACK's credit, many of its comic issues occasionally

complicated the norms it establishes. For example, Ghatotkacha is a virtuous character with dark skin. In the Issue #89 Ganesha (1975), the goddess Parvati proves to be more powerful than the collective might of all male gods. Though the (Muslim) Mughal emperor Akbar the Great typically plays second fiddle to his Hindu minister Birbal, he is still portrayed favourably. Furthermore, he and several other Mughal rulers are the protagonists of their own comics. Originally christened “the great Mughal” in Issue #200, ACK’s newer Issue #603 praises Akbar as “a visionary monarch.” The series positively profiles the Dalit (or untouchable) leader Bhimrao Ambedkar, as well, although that issue sanitises his anti-Hindu politics to better align with the comics’ platform.

ACK’s form and rhetoric have also evolved since its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s. (Pai died in 2011.) Some classically inspired panels have given way to a dynamic style of illustration resembling Western graphic novels, and the comic series even has its own app. More substantively, the ACK executive editor Reena Puri acknowledged in 2016, “It is so easy to fall into the trap of stereotyping. ... We are changing some of that.” Though several issues have been pulled from circulation entirely, many regressive comics from the old canon (like Padmini and Indra and Shachi) are still published.

Academics, writers, and social-justice advocates have criticised ACK’s myriad prejudices for years. Yet, it remains a hallowed institution in India for providing millions of children a path to their heritage, however fraught. As for my family, my parents have given many of our

comics away to my younger relatives. When I visited one cousin earlier this year, she had just read an issue her father brought from India. Her parents made sure to discuss with her the story’s

dangerous assumptions about colour, caste, gender, and religion. And then, they read the next one.

*The article originally appeared in *The Atlantic*, December 30, 2017

Petition : The Bill Criminalising Instant Triple Talaq is Against Gender Justice

Gender Justice and Minority Rights Citizens Concerned, Mumbai, India

We, citizens concerned with gender justice and minority rights, are deeply disturbed with the manner in which a Bill criminalising instant Triple Talaq, was introduced and passed in the Lok Sabha on 28th December 2017 (The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017).

The Bill aims to protect the rights of Muslim women, but we believe it will cause more harm to them if it is passed in its present form. We urge you to call for consultations from a wide section of people working with Muslim women so that the aim of securing gender justice is truly achieved.

Our concerns with the current Bill:

- a. It has many contradictions and anomalies.
- b. It pushes Muslim women into a new statute which will incarcerate their husbands.
- c. It gives power to a third person to file a criminal charge, which can be extremely dangerous.
- d. It does not specify the time period for the case to be concluded.
- e. It does not specify who will provide sustenance to the woman when her husband is in jail.

Utterance of the words “talaq”

three times has been invalidated by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in August, 2017, which means that her marriage remains intact. Since the marriage is intact, Muslim women, like all other women, have a recourse in law both criminal (S. 498A of IPC – cruelty to wives) and civil (the Protection of Women Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 which secures the rights of all women facing domestic violence to maintenance, residence, protection from violence and to custody of their children). We believe that Muslim women must take recourse to these two laws to protect their rights.

We, the undersigned, urge that the Bill should be sent to a select committee to discuss its pros and cons in the true spirit of democracy.

Adv. Flavia Agnes, Women’s Rights Lawyer, Founder of Majlis
Prof. (Dr) Faizan Mustafa, Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad

Prof. Abusaleh Shariff, Chair, Maulana Azad Urdu University, Hyderabad

Prof. S Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Ms. Uzma Naheed, Director, Iqra Foundation, Vice President, All India Muslim Majlis-e Mushawrat, Former member, Muslim Personal Law Board

Adv. Irfan Engineer, Director,
Centre for Study of Society and
Secularism

Ms. Audrey D'mello, Director,
Majlis Legal Centre

Ms. Sujata Lawhande and Ms.
Mumtaz Shaikh, CORO for Literacy,
Mumbai

Prof. Apooranand, Delhi
University

Dr. Nasreen Fazalbhoj, Retd
Reader, Mumbai University

Prof. Farrukh Waris, Retd. Vice
Principal, Burhani College, Mumbai

Prof. Farida Lambay, Retired,
Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai

Prof. Shahida Murtaza, Women
Education, Maulana Azad Urdu
University, Hyderabad

Dr. Vibhuti Patel, Chairperson &
Professor, Advanced Centre for
Women's Studies, School of
Development Studies, Mumbai

Sr. Noella de Souza, President,

Indian Christian Women's
Movement

Maulana Shoaib Koti, Iqra Darul
Qaza

Mufti Inamullah Mazahiri, Chief
Qazi, Al Hira Darul Qaza

Prof. Tanika Sarkar, Historian,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Prof. Sumit Sarkar, Professor of
History, University of Delhi

Nasiruddin Haider Khan,
Journalist, Lucknow

Gandhi and Roy: The Interaction of Ideologies in India

Dr. Dennis Dalton

Dr. Dennis Dalton has taught at the school of Oriental and African Studies, London, and in the United States, and written on ideology in modern India. The interpretation of Roy's intellectual development vis-à-vis Gandhi offered here may seem controversial, especially to those associates and students of Roy who find the differences between Gandhi and Roy even in the last phase much more fundamental than the similarities, but there is no doubt that the position very ably presented here deserves serious consideration. The essay was originally published in Sibnarayan Ray (ed.), 'Gandhi, India and the World: An International Symposium' (Melbourne, Hawthorn Press; Bombay, Nachiketa Publications; Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1970), and has been slightly shortened by Sibnarayan Ray himself.

Manabendra Nath Roy (1887–1954) was born into a Bengali brahman family in a village outside of Calcutta. Twenty-eight years later, as a terrorist revolutionary, he left India for an adventurous career in the Communist international movement. These initial twenty-eight years in Bengal were decisive for the shaping of his personality and thought. Three components of this early experience deserve mention. First, there was the influence of Roy's brahmanical family background and outlook. This inspired and reinforced his penchant for theory, his elitism, and his strong moral temper. Second, there was Roy's early, intense belief in

Hindusim. His religious frame of mind, like the brahmanical spirit, never left him, but prodded him on in his quest for 'those abiding, permanent values of humanity.' Third, in this first generation of his life, the ideology of Indian nationalism exerted an immense influence on Roy as it did on many of his contemporary Bengali intellectuals and students.

'An ideology', writes Edward Shils, 'is the product of man's need for imposing intellectual order on the world. The need for ideology is an intensification of the need for a cognitive and moral map of the universe . . .' Roy's quest for an

adequate ideology began during his youth in Bengal. It continued throughout his next phase as an orthodox communist and later as a Marxist revisionist. Then, still later, having abandoned Marxism for what he called 'Radical Humanism', his search intensified for 'a cognitive and moral map of the universe'. It ended not in satisfaction, but only with his death in 1954. Yet, in this last phase of his thought, Roy had come closer to the fulfilment of his needs, to realisation of his identity though the construction of an ideology, than he had ever approached in his earlier phases. The outlines of Roy's cognitive and moral map had been determined in

his youth by the combined influences of a brahmanical outlook, a Hindu creed, and the nationalist experience in Bengal. Yet, unlike Gandhi, Roy never came to terms with the demands of his early formative period; unlike Gandhi, he remained alienated until the end from large segments of his own tradition. It is for this reason that the evolution of Roy's thought, which represents a continuing response to the demands of the Indian nationalist tradition, forms an important part of the analysis.

The year 1915 is a key one in the Gandhi–Roy story. In that year, Roy, a terrorist schooled under Jatin Mukherjee and Aurobindo Ghose, left Calcutta on a revolutionary mission to obtain German arms for the struggle against the Raj. In that same year, Mohandas Gandhi returned to India after twenty-one years in South Africa. He soon began his extraordinary rise to power in the Congress. By 1920 he had come to dominate the Indian nationalist movement with a sure sense of leadership that reached a dramatic peak with the Dandi Salt March of 1930. During these fifteen years of Gandhi's eminence, Roy acquired his reputation of being 'undoubtedly the most colourful of all non-Russian Communists in the era of Lenin and Stalin'. From 1915 until December 1930, Roy moved about on various revolutionary missions, Mexico to Moscow to Berlin, and then Paris, Zurich and Tashkent. In Mexico, Roy was converted to Communism and helped form the first Communist Party there. In Moscow, he contributed to revolutionary strategy for communist activity in the colonial areas. In Europe, he rose to a position of authority in the Comintern, published a series of books and

pamphlets on Marxist theory, and edited a communist newspaper. Therefore, the achievements of both Gandhi and Roy during this period were spectacular. Yet, for all their respective achievements, there was never anything like a balance of power between these two figures. It was Gandhi and never Roy who dominated the Indian nationalist movement with his unparalleled genius for mass leadership. Whereas Roy would struggle long and hard to gain a standing in India, Gandhi acquired authority with ease and kept it. While Roy necessarily remained, throughout this fifteen year period, preoccupied with Gandhi's power, the latter never mentions Roy in his writes or speeches. Even after Roy's return to the political scene in the late 1930s, he remained both a cultural and political outsider; Gandhi took scant notice of him. Gandhi, after his return to India in 1915, became rooted in the nationalist tradition and developed a style of political behaviour which gained for him personal confidence as well as political power. On the other hand, Roy, even though he never ceased in his effort to become secure in his surroundings, remained out of touch with his tradition and thus remained aloof. In this sense, a consideration of Roy's view of Gandhi becomes part of a larger problem, that of the relationship of the Indian intellectual to his tradition.

The first detailed Marxist critique of Gandhi appeared in Roy's first major book, *India in Transition*, which was written in Moscow in 1921. The book grew out of discussions which Roy had with Lenin and other communist figures at the Second Congress of the Communist International. At this Congress, Roy had argued against

Lenin that communist policy in the colonial areas must be to support proletarian rather than bourgeois movements. Lenin contended that bourgeois nationalist organisations like the Indian Congress could be considered revolutionary, and since no viable Communist parties existed, these organisations deserved the support of the International. Roy replied that the Congress and similar agencies could only betray the revolution: an Indian proletariat existed, and must be mobilised behind a communist leadership. The Roy–Lenin controversy was clearly over fundamental issues, and had innumerable implications for communist strategy in the future.

Roy later reflected upon his differences with Lenin and concluded that 'the role of Gandhi was the crucial point of difference. Lenin believed that as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement, Gandhi was a revolutionary. I maintained that, a religious and cultural revivalist, he was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically.' In Roy's view, 'the religious ideology preached by him [Gandhi] also appealed to the medieval mentality of the masses. But the same ideology discouraged any revolutionary mass action. The quintessence of the situation, as I analysed and understood it, was a potentially revolutionary movement restrained by a reactionary ideology.' 'I reminded Lenin of the dictum that I had learnt from him: that without a revolutionary ideology, there could be no revolution.' These arguments formed the basis of the position on Gandhi that was developed by Roy in *India in Transition*.

(To be concluded)



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Anthem has to be Respected

Kuldip Nayar

**Gandhi and Roy:
The Interaction of Ideologies
in India**

Dr. Dennis Dalton

**National Museum Institute—
Shifting a Tughlakian
Misadventure**

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Gandhi - A Revolutionary ?

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When I was in Sialkot City, now a part of Pakistan, I used to visit cinema halls in the cantonment regularly. What I resented then was that I had to stand up for the British national anthem, "God save the king..." The cinema halls did not bolt the doors and left it to an individual how he or she behaved. There was no compulsion, but you were expected to stand up when the British national anthem was played.

The British rulers were sensitive to the people's rights and did not make it compulsory or impose any penal action against the public that did not stand up. Significantly, the practice of playing the British national anthem at the end of Indian films was gradually avoided, lest the viewers dishonour the king and later the queen. Even otherwise, they wanted to avoid the spectacle.

There have been legal interventions on playing the national anthem in theatres in the past. In 2003, the Maharashtra Assembly passed an order mandating the playing of the national anthem before the start of a movie. In the 1960s, the national anthem would be played at the end of the film. But as people

simply filed out after the movie, this practice was stopped.

Existing laws don't penalise or force any person to stand up or sing the national anthem. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 states: "Whoever intentionally prevents the singing of the Jana Gana Mana or causes disturbances to any assembly engaged in such singing shall be punished with imprisonment for a term, which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both."

The official duration of the anthem is 52 seconds, though what is usually played in cinema halls exceeds that length. A Home Ministry order in 2015 stated, "Whenever the Anthem is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention. However, when in the course of a newsreel or documentary the anthem is played as a part of the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as standing is bound to interrupt the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the anthem."

And the law until now, specifically says that it has been left "to the good

sense of the people" not to indulge in indiscriminate singing or playing of the national anthem. There are even specific rules as to whom the national anthem should be played for (the President and not the Prime Minister), and when people can indulge in mass singing of the anthem.

While the application of the Supreme Court order and the penalties for its violation are not clear, there are definitely precedents for individually perceived notions of freedom, which the court order says are overindulged, being upheld over nationalistic causes.

As things stand now, there is no judgment by the apex court, or a legal provision, or an administrative direction that makes it mandatory for people to stand during the national anthem. That they do so is essentially an expression of personal respect. But the Supreme Court had ruled that the national anthem should be played before the screening of films in cinema halls, and that all should "stand up in respect." "...people should feel that they live in a nation and show respect to the national anthem and the national flag."

During the October 2017 hearing by the Supreme Court Justice Chandrachud had hinted at modifying the 2016 order, observing "why do people have to wear their patriotism on their sleeve?... People go to a movie theatre for undiluted entertainment. Society needs that entertainment".

But the government has told the court it may consider restoring the position that existed prior to the November 2016 order when it was not mandatory for movie halls to play

the national anthem. "This Hon'ble Court may consider the restoration of status quo ante till then, i.e. restoration of the position as it stood before the order passed by this Hon'ble Court on November 30, 2016 with regard to direction 'd' in the said order to the extent that it mandates the playing of the national anthem in all cinemas before the feature film starts," it said.

Some years ago, a two-judge bench of the apex court had ordered a school in Kerala to take back three children who had been expelled for not singing the national anthem, although they stood during the anthem. The children desisted from singing because of their conviction that their religion did not permit them to join any rituals except in their prayers to Jehovah, their god.

The Supreme Court ruled that there is no legal provision that obliges anyone to sing the national anthem, and it is not disrespectful to the anthem if a person who stands up respectfully when it is being sung does not join in the singing. The court, however, did not deal with the issue of whether it would be disrespectful if a person chose not to stand during the national anthem. The judgment ended with the message: "Our tradition teaches tolerance; our philosophy preaches tolerance; our Constitution practises tolerance; let us not dilute it."

Unfortunately, in the absence of a clear cut decision, several high courts have dealt with such cases differently. For instance, in August 2014, police in Kerala slapped IPC Section 124A (sedition) on seven people, including two women, after they failed to stand when the national Anthem was played in a Thiruvananthapuram theatre. One of

them, M Salman, 25, was arrested for allegedly "sitting and hooting" as the anthem was played. He was also charged under Section 66A of the IT Act for allegedly posting a derogatory comment about the national flag on Facebook.

I personally think that there only should be a clear-cut order that all will have to stand when the anthem is sung or played because some part of the provision seem to make it mandatory to stand whenever the national anthem is played, while the other part creates an exception. But the rules nowhere prescribe a penalty for not adhering to it and, therefore, it has to work in accordance with the Act.

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Gandhi and Roy: The Interaction of Ideologies in India – II

Dr. Dennis Dalton

Roy begins his critique of Gandhi in this book with the confident assertion that Gandhism has now 'reached a crisis' and its 'impending wane . . . signifies the collapse of the reactionary forces and their total alienation from the political movement'. Roy's confidence was rooted in the classic Marxist belief in the inexorable march forward of western civilisation. Gandhism was seen as a temporary obstacle in the path of history, which would soon be swept aside: not by the Raj, but by the masses themselves, once they became conscious of the progressive movement of history. Whatever Gandhi may tell the masses, 'post-British India cannot and will not become pre-British India.' Therefore, 'here lies the contradiction in the orthodox nationalism as expressed of late in the cult of Gandhism. It endeavours to utilise the mass energy for the perpetuation or revival of that heritage of national culture which has been made untenable by the awakening of mass energy. . . . Therefore, Gandhism is bound to be defeated. The signs of the impending defeat are already perceptible, Gandhism will fall victim to its own contradictions.'

Roy admits that under Gandhi's leadership, through the effective use of hartal and non-co-operation, 'for the first time in its history, the Indian national movement entered into the period of active struggle.' Yet, here as elsewhere, Roy remains confined within his Marxist categories. Gandhi's success in 1920, he says, simply revealed that 'the time for mass-action was ripe. Economic

forces, together with other objective causes had created an atmosphere' which propelled Gandhi into power. Roy seeks to drive home his argument against Lenin by stressing the potential role of the Indian proletariat, portraying it as an awakened and thriving revolutionary force.

Roy's mistake cannot be explained wholly in terms of his Marxism. Rather, his Marxism may be explained as part of a desperate search for a new identity. The identity that Roy sought in the critical period of his youth was that of an urbane, cosmopolitan type, entirely at home with western civilisation which was responsible for the subjugation of his own people. The ideology must, in short, serve to liberate him from the sense of inferiority instilled by imperialism, and at the same time arm him in his struggle for the liberation of India. Marxism suited this purpose exactly. His total affirmation of Marxism, therefore, followed immediately after his total rejection of nationalism, and from this there emerged his total and unreasoning denial of Gandhi as a lasting political force in India. In this sense, *India in Transition* offers a clear example of an intellectual determined to reject his tradition. Not only Gandhi, but also extremist leaders like Tilak and Aurobindo, who only five years earlier had commanded Roy's allegiance, are now dismissed with contempt as examples of 'petty-bourgeois humanitarianism'. For the next few years, until his imprisonment in 1931, Roy struggled to affirm himself in his new identity as an international

Marxist revolutionary.

Throughout the 1920s, as Roy rises to the peak of his authority in the Comintern, his view on Gandhi set forth in 1921 is refined and elaborated. A series of excellent articles and pamphlets by Roy and his first wife Evelyn are devoted to Gandhism. In *One year of Non-Co-operation*, for example, the Roys distinguished five 'grave errors' or 'great defects' of Gandhism. The 'most glaring defect' is the absence of an intelligent programme of economic reform. Next, there is Gandhi's 'obstinate and futile' emphasis on social harmony instead of a frank recognition of the real necessity of class conflict. Then, they find a senseless 'intrusion of metaphysics into the realm of politics'. The revolt against the Raj, they emphasise, 'is a question of economics, not metaphysics.' Further, they deplore Gandhi's reactionary view of history, his desire 'to run from the Machine-age back to the Stone Age'. Finally, they criticise the total lack of any revolutionary quality in Gandhi's approach to social change; they see only a 'weak and watery reformism, which shrinks at every turn from the realities of the struggle for freedom.' The entire critique is made with exceptional clarity and forcefulness, and it, together with other writings by the Roys on Gandhi, represents the most incisive communist criticism of him during this period.

For a variety of reasons Roy soon fell out of favour with Moscow, and in December 1929 he was officially expelled from the Communist

International. He reacted by persuading himself that he could seize control of the revolutionary movement in India, and a year later he returned home. He was soon arrested, and he remained a political prisoner until November 1936. These five hard years in jail witnessed a substantial change in Roy's ideology, and this eventually had its effect on his view of Gandhi.

While in prison, Roy, like Gandhi and Nehru, read and wrote voluminously. His three volumes of 'prison diaries' often refer to Gandhi. Indeed, it might be argued that there is no better index to the extent to which Gandhi's presence dominated the Indian scene than the jail reflections of his harshest critic. Roy had inherited from his early nationalist experience and religious outlook a moralist's predilection for seeing the world in categorical terms of right and wrong and he had acquired from his brahmanical spirit a corresponding intellectual tendency to construct the required moral categories. Although Gandhi was never a theorist of this type, he nevertheless shared with Roy a strong taste for moralising and a passionate concern for the ethical well-being of society. Eventually, in his Radical Humanist phase, the morality in Roy will prevail, just as it had always prevailed in Gandhi, and Roy will abandon Marxism because he finds it devoid of ethics. But even as early as the 1930s, a first glimpse of the way in which Roy's moral outlook will eventually erode his Marxism can be seen in his prison diaries. This appears in his reflections on the two concepts of freedom and revolution. Both of these ideas were to become key themes of Radical Humanism, and the basis of their later development is found here, in the diaries.

When Roy wrote about freedom and revolution as an orthodox Marxist in the 1920s, he conceived them as economic categories. Freedom would come with the necessary changes in the economic mode of production, and revolution would be achieved through a violent seizure of power by the Party and the masses. Now, in the 1930s, Roy begins to perceive other dimensions in these two ideas. In regard to freedom, he says that his aim is to 'indicate the way to real spiritual freedom offered by the materialist philosophy'. For the first time in Roy's writings, the supreme goal of 'spiritual freedom' is distinguished from the lesser aims of 'political freedom, economic prosperity and social happiness'. It should be obvious that Roy, a Marxist, is not using the term 'spiritual freedom' here in a metaphysical sense. Yet the term does not derive from Marxism, and it cannot be a mere coincidence that it was often used by both Vivekananda and Aurobindo, who Roy had at one time read closely. The significant change in Roy's concept of revolution is evident in his increasing preference for the term 'Indian Renaissance', and the second volume of the jail diaries emphasises the need for a new philosophical outlook in India.

The above analysis of Roy's prison diaries is not meant to suggest that a reader of these volumes in the 1930s, with no possible knowledge of the way Roy's thought would develop, could have perceived the affinities between Gandhi and Roy which eventually appeared. The fact, however, that these ideas can be found in the diaries in embryonic form indicates that Roy's movement towards a Gandhian way of thinking did not occur overnight. But while it is necessary to appreciate this

degree of continuity in Roy's thought, it is equally important to recognise the sharp contrasts, especially in his view of Gandhi, between the 1930s and the late 1940s. Roy's ruthless attack on Gandhi in the diaries reaches a climax in an essay entitled 'India's Message'. The critique begins with a contemptuous dismissal of Gandhism as a political philosophy. Far from posing a philosophical system, Roy finds in Gandhism only 'a mass of platitudes and hopeless self-contradictions' emerging from 'a conception of morality based upon dogmatic faith.' As such, it is religion, not philosophy, a religion which has become politicised and thus serves as 'the ideological reflex' of India's 'cultural backwardness' and superstition'.

Roy's attack on Gandhi in 1922 was largely content to write Gandhism off as a medieval ideology at the mercy of inexorable economic forces. Now, in the 1930s, Roy concentrates on the moral virtues which Gandhi idealised and refutes them at length. Roy argues that 'admirable virtues' like 'love, goodness, sacrifice, simplicity and absolute non-violence' when preached to the masses by Gandhi only serve to emasculate them. Overthrow of the ruling classes becomes impossible, and the result can only be 'voluntary submission of the masses to the established system of oppression and exploitation.' The worst of Gandhi's tenets is his 'cult of non-violence', the 'central pivot' of his thought, 'holding its quaint dogmas and naïve doctrines together into a comprehensive system of highly reactionary thought.' Far from serving any noble purpose, *ahimsa* in politics only tends to support the forces of violence and exploitation. 'Therefore, those who preach non-violence, [to and for] . . . the

exploited and oppressed masses, are defenders of violence in practice. If Gandhi's non-violence were practised, capitalism would remain entrenched and the juggernaut of vulgar materialism would emerge triumphant. 'Love, the sentimental counterpart of the cult of non-violence, thus is exposed as mere cant.' Finally, Roy asserts that Gandhi's values are based on 'blind faith' and offer only 'the message of medievalism' which idealises 'the savage living on the tree.' In this way, Gandhi inhibits real progress, which Roy sees in terms of the 'dynamic process' of 'modern civilisation' that 'must go forward.' For Roy, then, the light is in the West: in the forces of rationalism, technology, modern science and 'an economy of abundance.' This latter position was maintained by Roy until the end, and it will always distinguish him sharply from Gandhi.

Soon after his discharge from prison, Roy decided that the sole route to political success in India lay in co-operation with the Congress. This meant a much more conciliatory attitude towards Gandhi. Subhas Bose, had opposed Gandhi in the Congress with some initial success, but Roy, unlike Bose, had neither mass appeal nor a strong regional base of power in Bengal. Therefore, Roy made a brief but futile attempt to rise in the Congress through co-operation with the Gandhians. His article written during this period entitled *Gandhiji, A Critical Appreciation* reflects this spirit of conciliation. He begins with the claim that 'I appreciate Gandhiji's greatness better than any of his ardent admirers.' Gandhi, he says, is a great 'political awakener' of the masses and the highest tribute that one can pay him 'would be a regard and respect Gandhiji as the

embodiment of the primitive, blind, spontaneous spirit of revolt of the Indian masses.' While Roy does mention, incidentally, that Gandhism may in the future come to stifle the revolution rather than promote it, he concludes that at present 'let us admire, respect and properly appreciate him for the great services that he rendered to the struggle for freedom.' This article does not present a sincere statement of Roy's view of Gandhi at this time. As his personal correspondence shows, Roy regarded Gandhi in this period as his arch-enemy, who should be destroyed as quickly as possible.

In 1946, Philip Spratt, a close associate and strong admirer of Roy, wrote an appreciative foreword for Roy's latest series of speeches, which were published under the significant title of *New Orientation*. Spratt reviewed Roy's position on Gandhi and then concluded:

Roy was highly critical of Gandhism from the very start, in 1920, and has never altered his opinion. . . . Yet it is true, I think, that he has failed to make his criticisms intelligible to the Indian reader. His approach to Gandhism seems that of an outsider, an unsympathetic foreigner. He has never tried to get under the skin of the Mahatma or his admirers and see where that extraordinary power comes from.

This remark constitutes a good indication of the nature of Roy's difficulties with Gandhi during a generation of observation and criticism. Yet, precisely at the moment of Spratt's writing, we can now see in retrospect that significant changes were taking place in Roy's thinking about several key theoretical issues: fundamental questions concerning the nature of power and

authority, revolution and history, politics and leadership. And with this fundamental reassessment of basic issues, which Roy called his *New Orientation*, there eventually followed a drastic change in his view of Gandhi.

Several factors influenced Roy's sweeping intellectual reappraisal in 1946. First, Roy's Radical Democratic Party, established in opposition to the Congress, was resoundingly defeated in the Indian general elections held throughout the country in the spring of 1946. If the historical importance for India of these general elections was to demonstrate that the League controlled the Muslims and the Congress the Hindus, then their importance for Roy was to show that his party, given the nation's polarisation, was nowhere in picture. It meant the end of his political career. A second factor which affected his thinking concerned the direction and behaviour of the world communist movement under Stalin. Abroad, the brutal aspects of Stalin's leadership were becoming more and more clear; at home, Roy had long been under attack from the Communist Party of India and it became evident that neither practical nor theoretical reconciliation with communism was possible. Roy expressed the nature of his dilemma in stark terms when he told his followers that they must beware of 'two psychoses' prevalent in India, those of communism and of nationalism. 'Radicalism,' he declared, 'is not camouflaged Communism. We shall have to get over the major nationalist psychosis as well as the minor Communist psychosis, if we believe that we have something new to contribute to the political thought and practice, not only for our country, but of the world as a whole.'

An ideologist abhors nothing more than a moral vacuum, or what Roy liked to deplore as the 'moral and cultural crisis' of our time. For such a vacuum or 'crisis' suggests basic uncertainty over the rightness and wrongness of fundamental moral values, and it is the element of moral certainty which the ideologist seeks above all else. In this respect, Gandhi was no less an ideologist than Roy; but whereas Gandhi had achieved certainty on such matters during his experience in South Africa, Roy underwent a series of such crises, the last and most serious in 1945–46. The final phase of his life, from 1946 to 1953, represents a period of gradual resolution in which Roy delved deeply into his personal resources, trying to form a coherent pattern of thought to meet the demands before him. A close examination of Roy's prolific writings during this period could tell us much about problems relating to the intellectual between tradition and modernity or the relation of ideology to the quest for personal identity. The main purpose of the concluding section of this essay will merely be to suggest how Roy, while trying to purge himself of the 'nationalist psychosis', nevertheless moved far away from Marxism into a way of thinking which is significantly akin to Gandhi.

In August 1946, while Roy, residing in Dehra Dun, was appraising and reappraising his *New Orientation*, and Gandhi was busy commenting on Nature Cure from Sewagram, there occurred in Calcutta the worst catastrophe that British India had known. The Muslim League's 'Direct Action Day' in Calcutta was accompanied by unprecedented communal riots: the great Calcutta killing lasted until 20 August, and in these four tragic

days, 4,000 Hindus and Muslims were slaughtered. The event marks a horrific watershed in the study of the Partition, and its consequences were to have a profound effect upon Roy's view of Gandhi.

Gandhi's reaction to the Calcutta killings, unlike that of Nehru or Jinnah, was to perceive immediately their disastrous social implications and then to act courageously in an attempt to quell the violence. Just as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre twenty-seven years earlier had shocked Gandhi into realising the injustice of the Raj, so the Calcutta killings forced him to see the abyss of violence within his own society. The Calcutta killings were followed by the violence spreading into Noakhali and Bihar. Gandhi moved fast and effectively. The ensuing fifteen months, culminating in his assassination, contain the finest hours of his entire career. During this period, he scored two brilliant triumphs for his method of satyagraha in his Calcutta and Delhi fasts against communal violence. Less dramatic than these, but equally impressive, were his 'walking tours' in Noakhali and his ingenious use of the prayer meeting to restore trust in a series of strife-torn villages. These final acts moved nearly everyone in British-India, Hindus and Muslims alike, to a higher appreciation of Gandhi's greatness. Roy in this case was no exception.

'What changed Roy's attitude [towards Gandhi]', writes Phillip Spratt, 'was Gandhi's campaign against the communal massacres, which came at the time of his own final disillusionment with communist political methods.' Spratt observes the similarity in Roy's and Gandhi's mutual opposition to Partition and the common spirit of their response to

the communal riots. He remarks that on hearing the news of Gandhi's assassination, 'Roy was deeply moved . . . henceforth a new respect for Gandhi showed in his writing.' There was indeed a striking change in Roy's attitude towards Gandhi following the assassination. In two articles of February and April 1948, entitled *The Message of the Martyr* and *Homage to the Martyr*, Roy sets forth for the first time the extent of his ideological agreement with Gandhi. He now discovers that Gandhi's revivalist nationalism was neither the essential nor the greatest element in Gandhi's teaching. 'Essentially, [Gandhi's message] is a moral, humanist, cosmopolitan appeal. . . . The lesson of the martyrdom of the Mahatma is that the nobler core of his message could not be reconciled with the intolerant cult of nationalism, which he also preached. Unfortunately, this contradiction in his ideas and ideals was not realised by the Mahatma until the last days of his life.' In Gandhi's final phase, what Roy repeatedly calls the 'moral and humanist essence of his message' appeared, and it is precisely this which is 'needed by India never so very urgently as today'. Thus, Indians can do justice to their Mahatma when they learn 'to place the moral and humanist core of his teachings above the carnal cult of nationalism and power-politics.'

There are those who argue that Roy's tributes to Gandhi after the assassination were merely sentimental outbursts, entirely inconsistent with the main line of his thought. This argument is mistaken for several reasons. First, when Roy was attacked by some of his readers for calling Gandhi a humanist and cosmopolitan, he admitted that he had written the article while 'deeply

moved' by the crime, 'in an emotional state'. But then he went on to defend his position with vehemence, deploring the 'insensitivity of the logical purists' who attacked him, and refusing categorically to retract even one word of what he had written. Gandhi, he insisted in this later article, 'sincerely wanted politics to be guided by moral considerations', and his 'endeavour to introduce morality into political practice was the positive core of Gandhism.' This made Gandhi, like Roy, a humanist. A second reason why this argument is mistaken has already been seen: glimpses of Roy's movement away from Marx and towards Gandhi can be found as early as in the prison diaries, in the ideological changes of his 'new orientation'. Finally, his far changed attitude takes a permanent form in his later writings; as Philip Spratt remarked, a 'new respect' for Gandhi now infuses his thoughts. This can be clearly seen in an article which Roy wrote on Gandhi a full year after the assassination. In this piece, Roy pays respect to 'the immortality of his [Gandhi's] message' and then sums up the significance of Gandhi's thought in these remarkable words: 'Practice of the precept of purifying politics with truth and non-violence alone will immortalise the memory of the Mahatma. Monuments of mortar and marble will perish, but the light of the sublime message of truth and non-violence will shine forever.' The passage signifies a total departure from Roy's earlier denunciation of Gandhi. Equally important, though, is the relationship which Roy suggests here between the values of truth and non-violence on the one hand, and the goal of purifying politics on the other. For the formation of this conceptual relationship indicates a nexus of ideas in Roy's mind familiar

to Gandhi's way of thinking, especially on the themes of politics and power, and the relation of the means to the ends of action.

'The implication of the doctrine of non-violence,' Roy now believes, 'is the moral dictum that the end does not justify the means. That is the core of the Mahatma's message—which is not compatible with power-politics. The Mahatma wanted to purify politics; that can be done only by raising political practice above the vulgar level of a scramble for power.' This passage represents those ideas which Roy began to develop at a feverish pace in the last five years of his life. In a characteristically Gandhian manner, Roy now wants to purify politics by purging it of both the 'struggle for power' and the party system itself. 'Humanist politics,' he says, must be a moral force; 'it must get out of the struggle for power of the political parties.' Only in these circumstances can political power be transformed into moral authority. Leadership must come not from corrupt party bosses, but rather from 'detached individuals, that is, spiritually free men [who] cannot be corrupted by power . . . it is possible for the individual man to attain spiritual freedom, to be detached and thus to be above corruption. Such men would not hanker after power.' Thus, preoccupation with the corruptibility of political power and the need for establishing a moral basis for leadership was, as Roy acknowledged, at the heart of Gandhi's thought. Moreover, their common preoccupation emerges from a similar set of ideological assumptions about the moral nature of men, and the possibility of creating a perfect social order of spiritually free men. The implications of this way of thinking for politics

are far-reaching: they range from a vision of the ideal political leader as a *karmayogin* type, above the lust for power, occupying a position of pure moral authority, to a theory of social organisation which urges party-less politics, and a highly decentralised system of government. This is a way of thinking which is fraught with paradoxes. There is a strong element of elitism or moral authoritarianism mixed with a marked strain of not only populism but a peculiar variety of Indian anarchism. Yet it is this paradoxical quality which makes the ideology of modern India so fascinating, as well as appealing, in its own way, as the equally paradoxical thought of Calvin, or Rousseau, or Marx.

It should be stressed in conclusion that the perception of a great tradition of ideas in modern India need not detract from the variety of little traditions of thought which co-exist beside it. Nor are the latter necessarily subsumed within the former. There is much in Roy's thought, for example, that is not encompassed by Gandhi. Radical Humanism as set forth by Roy and developed by his associates cannot be fairly presented as merely a variation of Gandhism. For Roy's persistent emphasis on atheistic humanism, rationalism and materialism must distinguish him from Gandhi, and indeed from any other tradition of thought in modern India. The focus of this essay has been on an ideological movement of congruence and not divergence. It is this movement of thought, shared to a notable degree by such apparently divergent figures as Gandhi and Roy, that can be seen as the dominant ideology of modern India.

(Concluded)

Happy Birthday, Simone de Beauvoir

January 9 marks the 110th birth anniversary of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), the acclaimed French feminist theorist. She is most known for her groundbreaking work, “The Second Sex” (1949) along with her book, *Mandarins*, which received France’s highest literary award in 1954.

Her phenomenal work on gender and her formulation, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” became the basis for understanding gender as a construct, a core idea for modern-day feminism.

At 21, the French philosopher became the ninth woman, the youngest person ever to obtain the prestigious agrégation in philosophy from the École Normale Supérieure. Some critics have argued that the lack of perspective on race in her work contributed to avoiding discussion about white privilege among second-wave feminists.

De Beauvoir along with her partner, Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, known for his work on the theory of existentialism, were invited to visit Cuba’s capital Havana to meet the Argentine revolutionary, Che Guevara, and Cuban revolutionary, Fidel Castro after the Cuban revolution.

Sartre who is known to have spent copious amounts of time in conversation with Castro later published a series of journalistic articles entitled “Hurricane over the Sugar” with *France-Soir*, a French publication in 1961.

The articles depicting the Cuban revolutionaries have a poetic quality

to them as they contain beautiful descriptions of the Cuban landscapes. The pieces were translated into many other languages including Spanish for Latin American audiences as “Huracán Sobre El Azúcar.”

In a 1976 interview with John “Tito” Gerassi, a French journalist and scholar, de Beauvoir, elucidated on why a feminist, by default, was a leftist.

“A feminist, whether she calls herself leftist or not, is a leftist by definition. She is struggling for total equality, for the right to be as important, as relevant, as any man. Therefore, embodied in her revolt for sexual equality is the demand for class equality,” de Beauvoir wrote.

“In a society where each person’s experiences are equivalent to any other, you have automatically set up equality, which means economic and political equality and much more. Thus, the sex struggle embodies the class struggle, but the class struggle does not embody the sex struggle.”

Here are a few notable quotations by the renowned wordsmith to help expand your mind, and world.

“I tore myself away from the safe comfort of certainties through my love for truth — and truth rewarded me.”

“Change your life today. Don’t gamble on the future, act now, without delay.”

“One is not born a woman, one becomes one.”

“The main curse of humanity is not ignorance but the refusal to know.”

“One’s life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship and compassion.”

“Defending the truth is not something one does out of a sense of duty or to allay guilt complexes, but is a reward in itself.”

“I am too intelligent, too demanding, and too resourceful for anyone to be able to take charge of me entirely. No one knows me or loves me completely. I have only myself.”

“That’s what I consider true generosity: You give your all, and yet you always feel as if it costs you nothing.”

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Letter to the Editor

National Museum Institute—Shifting a Tughlakian Misadventure

Sir,

The present Minister of Culture, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, a well-known doctor running a prominent hospital in NOIDA, whose credentials to having a link with the cultural heritage of India are unknown to the public, has bamboozled the bureaucracy and decided to shift the National Museum Institute (a Deemed Central University) from its present location in the world famous National Museum building in New Delhi to his constituency in NOIDA in UP. In some pictures posted on Facebook on 10 January 2018 he is shown inspecting the coming up project of the NMI.

I cannot appreciate the idea of the

National Museum Institute being located in NOIDA while the National Museum is on Janpath, New Delhi. The interrelation between the two institutions can be compared to that between a Medical College and an attached hospital. It is funny that every Minister who matters should try and succeed in pleasing the voters in his constituency by taking such irrational measures as in the instant case. It is like the successive Ministers of Railways from Bihar opening offices of new Railway Zonal Offices or launching new trains in their State. Or for that matter Smt. Mamata Banerji when she was the MR. These worthies should not forget that their loyalty should be to the whole country and whatever they do should be in the

interests of the nation. Petty minds cannot be accepted as national leaders. Will Dr. Mahesh Sharma also toy with the preposterous idea of shifting the National Museum to NOIDA? What happens if the next Minister of Culture belonging to another party decides to shift back the National Museum Institute from NOIDA to New Delhi? After all, we have the precedent of Mohd. Tughlak shifting the capital of India from Delhi to Daulatabad and after facing its disastrous consequences shifting back the capital to Delhi. Does NOIDA with all its record of crime and corruption have a special claim to culture and national heritage?

—Chandra Bhal Tripathi
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Gandhi - A Revolutionary?

A. Raghu Kumar

The very idea that Gandhi was a revolutionary in terms of Marxist description appears, at the outset, to be unthinkable. A preacher and practitioner of non-violence, an eternal seeker of Truth as God, an apostle of peace and an enigmatic opponent of modern civilisation of the Western Model, can he be understood as a revolutionary, on par with and in the great lineage of Marx and Lenin? Any Marxist trained mind would abhor the very thought and may also pooh-poo such propositions as foolish and absurd. Even the Right wing intellectuals may ridicule such hypothesis as the figment of imagination. The sketch of Gandhiji by almost all his friends and foes of his time, and even many later academics has always been that of a sober Gandhi, lovable or detestable as the case may be, but by no means a revolutionary.

Around three decades back, I read Lenin's article - "*Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution*" which took a critical look at Tolstoy in a historical setting, as an admixture of a great artist and a genius "*who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature,*" and "*a landlord obsessed with Christ*". "*On the one hand, merciless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration, and unmasking of the profound contradictions between the growth of wealth and achievements of civilization and*

the growth of poverty, degradation and misery among the working masses. On the other, the crackpot preaching of submission, "resist not evil" with violence. On the one hand, the most sober realism, the tearing away of all and sundry masks; on the other, the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction..." Lenin, with all Tolstoy's credentials and failures, considered Tolstoy to be a mirror of Russian revolution. When I had read this article as a young man, I had wondered why Indian Marxists had failed to make such a critical analysis of Gandhi and his ideas, instead of hurling abuse and ridicule at him. After all, the canvas of Gandhi and his actions were larger in scope, and he was instrumental in pitting himself in a gigantic task of anti-colonial struggle, though with all infirmities and idiosyncrasies, a mass leader par excellence and, a longtime source of guidance for a political outfit consisting of all shades of thinking from extreme left to extreme right.

My search for a different analysis of Mahatma Gandhi, from Marxian point of view, has almost ended with this finding "**Revolutionary Gandhi**", by Pannalal Dasgupta, a revolutionary Marxist of yesteryears, leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party. "**Revolutionary Gandhi**", was originally written in Bengali as "Gandhi Gabeshana". The Bengali manuscript was written by 1954-55, when Pannalal was

undergoing a prison term in the Alipore Central Jail, and was published in 1986. It was translated into English by K.V. Subrahmonyan in the 1990s. Though the English translation was complete by 1999, it could see the light of the day only in 2011, when it was published by Earth Care Books, Kolkata.

"Indian Communists have never tried properly to understand Gandhiji", writes Pannalal. "So, I have tried to acquaint people with the two most important phenomena and ideologies of our times, Gandhism and Leninism. I have explained Gandhism in the light of Marxism and also analysed Marxian thought and action in the Gandhian light",¹ declares the author. The book ends with a warning of Mahatma² "*Note down these words of an old man past the age of three score and ten; in the times to come people will not judge us by any creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogan that we shout but our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character. They will want to know what we have actually done for them. But if you don't listen, if taking advantage of the prevailing misery and discontent of the people, you set about to accentuate and exploit it for party ends, it will recoil upon your head and even God will not forgive you for your betrayal of the people*".

Two major objectives of the book are indicated at the end, in "**Epilogue**": "My purpose has been to show Gandhi in a new light to the

Indian leftists and to present the historical Gandhi to the so-called diehard Gandhians”.³“I look upon Gandhi, Marx, Lenin and other men of the age as forming a powerful giant telescope and introscope, if I may use that word to mean an instrument which shows what goes on with in my mind.”

In fact, the work is also a critique of three other works of that time, which the author considers just and necessary to offer, and those three works were Pyarelal’s “Mahatma: Last Phase”, Prof. Hiren Mukherjee’s “Gandhiji” and E.M.S. Namboodripad’s “Mahatma and the Ism”. It also offers critique of the views of Maulana Azad and C.R. Das and also compares the view points of Gandhi and Ravindranath Tagore, and Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose. It also deals with various aspects of Gandhism namely, Truth, God, Religion, Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Constructive Programme, Hindu Muslim Unity, Charkha, Cottage industry, Swadeshi, Economics and Ethics, Nai Talim (New Education), Harijans, Adivasis and Workers, Trusteeship etc. In the modern sense of academic writing it may be an omnibus work, but it was the older method of making a comprehensive assessment of philosophy, from various angles, something like a source book for future students to pursue further study in detail on each subject.

For a person to evolve into a revolutionary, he needs to be, first and foremost, a social scientist. Scientific thinking is the basic claim of Marxism. Can Gandhi be described as a scientist or a social scientist? Yes he can, says Pannalal. For a person to be considered as a scientist, he has to be truthful to the

inquiry and shall discard anything which proves the hypothesis false. While returning from England, at the conclusion of the discussions for the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhiji, talking to some well-known French journalists, made some remarks of profound significance. He said that he had at one time thought **God was Truth**, but had to change his mind, for he knew now, that **Truth was God**. “Truth has to be inquired into again and again constantly, for no truth wears the same face at all times”.⁴“Seldom do we come across an individual with such passion for inquiry”.⁵“Gandhiji would rather be happy to be a beggar holding on to an atom of truth than a king with a mountain of falsehood”. The search for truth is the main aim of science and Pannalal made a serious attempt to establish such a consistent truth seeker as nothing but a scientist in its strictest sense. An inquiry has been made into Gandhi’s method on that premise in the first Chapter of the work “**Gandhi and Truth**”. Gandhi wanted to show us that “a truth, which needed a false prop to stay safe, was not a complete, whole truth. Besides, if truth had to be defended by sheer physical force, deceit, falsehood or secrecy then the act would be no different from our common practice of defending with all our might something which is far from the truth, something which is untrue but is in our self-interest”⁶. Quoting from G.N. Dhawan⁷ where Gandhi said: “Truth rules out prejudice, evasion, secrecy and deception as well as exaggeration, suppression or modification of reality. It requires that we should never be afraid of confessing our mistakes or retracing our steps”. Thus Pannalal Babu bases his whole work on the premise that Gandhiji was foremost a scientist, dispelling the common notion he was only a

mystic, and a person relying on intuition rather than reason.

How does a Marxist understand a spiritual Gandhi? In search of an answer to this most complex question, while assessing Gandhiji as a sufficiently tempered scientist, the author examines the very nature of religion. Religion, he contends, manifests itself in diverse forms in human life. It ranges from the knowledge of good and evil, the question of sacred and the profane, the ideas of justice and injustice, the standards of beauty and ugliness, the inquiry into truth and untruth, right and wrong, to ideas of vice and virtue, spiritual merit and demerit, conduct and behavior, joy and happiness, arts, literature, architecture, and so on. Ideas about all kinds of social behavior have evolved under the shadow of religion. “Out of a variety of spiritual practitioners, it seems that Gandhiji’s was the only known instance of a spiritual aspirant wanting to see God face to face through politics and service to the country”. “The call of the Gita took Sri Aurobindo away from politics and sent him into total seclusion, and the same Gita inspired revolutionaries in India to wage armed struggle. And it is the Gita that Gandhiji called the non-violent yoga of action and adopted it as his path towards the realization of God...”.⁸Gandhiji has drawn much inspiration from the concept of “*Sthitaprajna*” or “abidance in the self”, which can be considered as a more secular religious understanding.

When once Mr. Montagu asked Gandhi, “How have you, a social reformer, found your way into this crowd?”, Gandhi replied: “I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of

mankind, and I would not do so unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into water-tight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activities, which they would otherwise lack, reducing life into an image of 'sound and fury' signifying nothing"⁹.

"His prayer meetings were more in the nature of political meetings...." and "during those days of communal frenzy, none but Gandhiji took any worthwhile steps to extinguish the flames". "Gandhiji interacted with atheists as well. People of all schools of thought went to him and held dialogue with him"¹⁰. The author recalls one such conversation of Gandhi with Goparaju Ramachandra Rao (Gora), which was later published by Gora as "An Atheist with Gandhi" (Navajivan Press). In one of such conversations Bapu replied to Gora, "We are seekers after truth. We change whenever we find ourselves in the wrong side.... There is no harm as long as you are not fanatical. Whether you are in the right, I am in the right, results will prove. Then I may go your way or you may come in my way; or both of us may go a third way..."¹¹. Thus the author contends that the ideas of Gandhi on religion are truly secular, and contrary to the many popular views on religion, and offer new insights into it.

On non-violence "Gandhiji said that he had an innate and natural attraction for truth from his early years, **Ahimsa or non-violence** was not an innate trait for him". But according to Pannalal, Gandhi himself was unable to formulate a clear definition of non-violence, but

we may try and formulate his ideas by letting the nature of his non-violence emerge from his work and writings¹². As a Marxist, the author considers that "history is as if a chronicle of wars, civil wars, class wars, and similar unnatural events, and it does not care to note the natural, peaceful periods of human life¹³. However, he notes that "we cannot conclude that there is no area of peace and love in the world, in human society and in the lives of families, simply because history is reticent about man's peace and eloquent about his conflicts". Gandhiji's non-violence is not just absence of killing. Gandhi recognized that in the progress of nations, both evolution and revolution have their own role. He said: "Nations have progressed both by evolution and revolution. The one is as necessary as the other." During a fast in 1932 Gandhi is said to have noted "those who have to bring about a radical change in human conditions and surroundings cannot do it except by raising a ferment in society. There are only two methods of doing this – violent and non-violent". Thus, Gandhiji, also anticipated revolutionary changes, but the means of achieving the same for him was only non-violent. His revolutionary fervor was not a bit less intense than that of the votaries of armed revolution, though their paths and means were different¹⁴. "It was manly enough to defend one's property, honour or religion at the point of the sword. It was manlier and nobler to defend them without seeking to injure the wrong-doers. But it was unmanly, unnatural and dishonorable to forsake the post of duty, and in order to save their own skin to leave property, honour and religion to the mercy of wrong-doers", Gandhi wrote in *Young India* of Oct 15, 1925¹⁵. "It is better to be

violent, if there is violence in our breasts, than to put on the cloak of non-violence to cover impotence. There is hope for violent man to become non-violent; there is no such hope for the impotent"¹⁶.

Concluding the examination of Gandhi's perplexing ideas on non-violence, the author contends that "in brief, the application of non-violence and satyagraha in each case had not been easy and smooth, and in his (Gandhiji's) experiments with and exploration of this path, Gandhiji had to keep probing and questioning himself until his final days. He kept asking himself time and again at Naokhali whether at all the non-violence of the brave was possible. His quest was incomplete, for on the last lap of his life's journey, he could not make the country strong through the non-violence of the brave..."¹⁷.

While evaluating the concept of satyagraha and its execution in practical field, the author declares his objective of explaining Gandhi: "Anybody who wants to understand Gandhiji will have to reckon with two facts. First, Gandhiji's historical role, and second his personal and independent ideology. Gandhiji was not merely the embodiment of non-violence; he also symbolized the national struggle against imperialism. He was the representative of India in a special era, and he also had a special responsibility with regard to non-violence. In his historical role he provided leadership to the nation and his endeavour was to guide history along a certain direction..."¹⁸. While Gandhi was more inclined to invoke non-violence and satyagraha as his modes of struggle, he was never willing to be included among the pacifists, even though many pacifists tried to persuade him to lend his name

to their movement. He knew that peace lovers and pacifists could never fulfill people's desire for freedom and emancipation. He, therefore, wanted a war, but one which would be free from violence, horror, cruelty and cowardice of wars. The war of Gandhi was called 'satyagraha'¹⁹. "Non-cooperation is not a passive state but it is an intensely active state – more active than physical resistance. Passive resistance is a misnomer."²⁰

The need for arms is not an eternal truth. What is eternal is the need for class struggle. It is not an unchangeable belief of Marxism-Leninism that class struggle will finally take place only by recourse to arms in all countries and at all times. The recourse to arms would depend on the actual conditions, and Lenin mentioned this too. It has been accepted at the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party also that it is possible to usher in socialism in many countries even without the use of arms and without a civil war and that all efforts should be aimed in that direction.²¹ There is no fundamental contradiction between the spirit behind Lenin's views and Gandhiji's non-violent struggle. Pannalal while accepting the dictum of Mao Tse-tung that revolution flows through the barrel of the gun, contends that this gun-toting is not valid for all countries and for all times. Statements like Mao's may make one think that revolution and the gun are interdependent and necessary, that one is the concomitant of the other. Such tall talk, according to him, can lead to an anti-social ideology, giving a boost to the morale of hoodlums. Struggle is certainly necessary, he accepts, but to assert that there can be no struggle without guns should be shunned.²²

Nirmal Bose²³ wrote: "It is just here that the method of satyagraha steps in as a possible and effective substitute for war. It does not propose to do away with conflicts; but it raises the quality of those very conflicts by bringing into operation a spirit of love and a sense of human brotherhood. **Satyagraha is not a substitute for war, it is war itself**, without of course many of its ugly features and guided by a purpose nobler than we associate with destruction. It is an intensely heroic and chivalrous form of war" (emphasis supplied). Thus the author states that the need for arms is not an eternal truth, but what is eternal is the need for class struggle. It is not an unchangeable belief of Marxism – Leninism that class struggles will finally take place only by recourse to arms in all countries and at all times.

Gandhi's non-violence, according to Pannalal Babu, is not merely a political tool or an ad hoc strategy. This non-violence is at the same time, the goal, the path and the provision for the path. It endows the individual's life with wholeness and aims at the molding of a complete human being. In its eyes, man is not merely a means but an end in himself. This non-violence is not a mere political tool; it is the sustainer of man, it is man's life principle, and hence the formation of man's character is its special primary focus. Hence, the non-violent man's democratic politics can prove to be as tremendously different – from the constitutional politics of the opportunistic, fortune-hunting man – as heaven is different from hell.²⁴

Two of the best topics well articulated in this work have been – "Constructive Programme" and "Economics and Ethics". The

leftists' belief that the masses cannot be rallied and organized except through struggles is a mere illusion, claims the author after examining the constructive programme of Gandhi. As a result of this belief that people can be organized only through struggles, says Pannalal, they saw Gandhi's many-sided constructive programme as nothing more than a reformist movement. Gandhiji was even more realistic and pragmatic than the Marxists in the field of action. He showed in no small measure the importance of the economic basis of political action, whereas the leftists and various Marxist parties believed in educating the masses in politics solely through political means. The constructive programme of Gandhiji, he says, has an economic foundation. It was the sum total of the constructive work which finally gave sustenance and strength to the freedom movement. According to Pannalal, "Innumerable workers and promising young men have wasted their ideals, dreams and lives in the so-called revolutionary parties" and he blames for this miserable state of affairs, more specifically in Bengal, the ultra-leftist politics which is devoid of roots, mass contact and constructive action.²⁵ However, the author also notes with all sincerity that "constructive programme could not awaken or enthuse political workers in a big way" and "people could not adequately appreciate the value of Gandhiji's contribution in this respect". In his analysis constructive work is not something dazzling and there is very little excitement in it to attract younger persons.

It is in the same breath, he considers the Charkha, Cottage Industry and Swadeshi. Quoting from N.K. Bose,²⁶ where Gandhiji said: "You cannot build non-violence

on factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages, even Hitler was so mired, he cannot devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy as I have conceived it eschews exploitation altogether and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have therefore to be rural minded before you can be non-violent.” The author examines the idea of charkha and cottage industry and says harmony and progress are possible only through the reconciliation and synthesis of mutually opposite trends. Marx and Engels, according to him, have exposed the face of the machine-culture and industrialization of the 19th century in all its ugliness, and Gandhi has showed the miserable condition of the human habitations, both India and abroad, which resulted from the centralized industrialization of the capitalist kind.²⁷ The specific understanding of Gandhiji in respect of these ideas has been that he too visualized electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making, and the like side by side with village handicrafts. The traditional Europe economist considers industrial cities to be dependent upon villages for supplies whereas Gandhiji wanted to reverse the process, i.e., the cities to be supply sources for villages. The author suggests that socialism would be richer in many respects by accepting Gandhiji, and Gandhism too would enrich itself by absorbing socialism. Cooperation would benefit both ideals as conflict can harm both.²⁸

One of the major considerations of the author has been that Gandhiji attempted to reconcile economics and ethics. One of the main charges leveled by economists at Gandhiji is that he did not accept the

independence of economic laws and created confusion by bringing ethics into economics. “Marx pointed out this blind operation of economic laws within capitalism and said that so long as capitalism survived, society could not exercise any direct and conscious control over its economics, whereas in socialism, economics could be regulated consciously and in a planned manner. Even under socialism, the objective laws and forces of economics continue to operate and remain independent but the internal anarchy is resolved and they become free from any conflict with the conscious endeavors of man”.²⁹ Gandhi believed in the importance of objective and scientific forces but even greater for him were also the ideas of wisdom and dharma. In his view, morality and religion were integral parts of everyday life. In a lecture before Muir Central College of Economic Society of Allahabad, he said: “I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on the laws of economics than many of the modern text books”.³⁰ At the same time, it is not that there is no ethical content in Marx and Engels economic theories. According to Pannalal, with the end of capitalism and imperialism and, with the advent of socialism and the exploitation-free society, what Gandhi said about morality and conscience will no longer seem merely imaginative, utopian and impractical. Ethics will therefore rapidly permeate economics. Hence, though Gandhi’s ethical and moral demands might sound unrealistic, they do not prove to be so in practice in socialist systems.

Another important topic of serious concern for Gandhi has always been “Hind-Muslim Unity”. In fact Gandhi’s concepts of religion and

inter-religious faith have been highly advanced by his time and age; and even today we may need to appreciate this area with fresh evidence of increasing religious conflicts. By providing leadership to the Khilafat Movement, the Indian firmament had been filled with the cry of “Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai”. India, oppressed and torn into pieces on religious lines for long, at last found in Gandhiji, a new method of uniting society. However, this kind of unity did not last long. The moment Gandhiji called off the non-co-operation movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura episode in 1922, the whole country suffered a shock. With the rise of Kamal Pasha in Turkey, the Khilafat Movement lost its meaning and significance. In the meanwhile, the Muslims of India began to drift away from the national struggle. The distinction between nationalist Muslims on the one hand and those belonging to the pro-government Muslim League on the other was becoming sharper. The views of Sir Syed Ahmed began to exercise a strong influence over the Muslims, and the educated Muslim elite was slowly drifting away from casting its lot with Gandhi, into a policy of cooperation with the British. On the whole, the Muslims at no time thereafter accepted Gandhiji as their own. In concluding the debate over Hindu-Muslim Unity, and Gandhiji’s contribution to it, the author says that although there was a conservative element in Gandhiji, yet we have seen that he could move with the times and that, in many cases, he proved himself to be more radical than the revolutionaries and that he had the capacity to assess the historical value of every action and accordingly to adopt or reject it.

Nai Talim (new education) of Gandhian pedagogy, much neglected

by many Gandhian scholars, has occupied a significant stage in the discussion of Pannalal Babu. The first and the foremost observation of the author has been that Gandhiji liberated manual labour from its dismal associations; more specifically in his scheme of proper education. “Trace the source of every coin that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write,” Gandhi said.³¹ Gandhiji named his new method of education through manual labour “*Nai Talim*”. Judging by results the contribution of the ‘groves of academia’ (the system introduced by the British) to our enlightenment is highly disappointing, not in one but in most aspects of life. The knowledge that they impart in various fields of education has been very shallow and has had no enduring impact on the lives of people. Learning has lost its intimate contract with real life and work. “If the farmer’s son is sent to school, he not only unlearns cultivation, but also starts looking down upon agriculture and neglects his parents”.³² The reason for this state of affairs is that education lacks an economic basis and a social significance. Gandhiji showed us, according to the writer, that education should be provided through some kind of physical work and behind such a system of education lies a far-reaching philosophical rationale. Gandhiji said: “Our education has got to be revolutionized. The brain must be educated through the hand...”³³ (Harijan Feb 18, 1939). While quoting extensively from Marx, Engels, Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Emerson, etc. the author contends that: We can find in human history fragments and hints which bear out the truth of this kind of thinking. It was Gandhiji, however, who gave in

concrete shape, experimented with it in his life and endeavoured to introduce it into the whole country.

Another great contribution of this work has been providing answers to certain contentious issues between Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore and, Gandhi and Subhash Bose. Both these areas can be said to be highly illuminating though brief. All Indians whose world-view was influenced by western culture and education – socialists, communists and many other groups of people voiced a uniform objection to Gandhi that he was a revivalist. They also objected to his models of constructive programme, satyagraha, non-cooperation, and swadeshi etc., as contrary to the universal goals of civilization and cooperation. Gandhi faced these attacks from almost all ‘progressives’. Tagore³⁴ considered ‘charkha’ movement would only make ‘coolies’ out of the people and it was but a proof of Gandhiji’s aversion to science. “People would go on plodding at the charkha, and not progress in human knowledge. Science has emancipated innumerable sudras from their sudra status”. Gandhiji³⁵ replied emphatically to the charge of Tagore: “... to a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves....”.

(To be concluded)

¹P. ix, Forward to the Bengali First Edition, Revolutionary Gandhi, Pannalal Dasgupta, Earth Care Books, Kolkata, 2011, Translated by K. V.

Subrahmonyan

² P 477 quoted from Pyarelal’s Last Phase, Vol.II p.255

³P. 443, *ibid*

⁴P.4, *ibid*

⁵P.5 *ibid*

⁶P.6 *ibid*

⁷P.12., from G.N.Dhawan, the Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, p.55

⁸p.15 *ibid*

⁹p.17-18, quoted from Pyarelal’s Last Phase

¹⁰p.26-27 *ibid*

¹¹p.33 *ibid*

¹²pp.38-39 *ibid*

¹³P.40 *ibid*

¹⁴p.44 *ibid*

¹⁵p.57 *ibid*

¹⁶p.57 *ibid*, from Harijan, 21st Oct, 1939

¹⁷p.78 *ibid*

¹⁸p.80 *ibid*

¹⁹pp.92-93 *ibid*

²⁰p.96 from Young India, 25th Aug 1920

²¹p.97 *ibid*

²²p.98 *ibid*

²³p.93 from Nirmal Bose, Studies in Gandhism, p-120

²⁴p.112 *ibid*

²⁵p.155 *ibid*

²⁶p. 197 *ibid*, from N.K.Bose who quoted from Harijan, 4th Nov, 1939

²⁷p.201 *ibid*

²⁸p.221 *ibid*

²⁹pp.223-224 *ibid*

³⁰p.227 *ibid*

³¹p.255 *ibid*

³²p.257 *ibid*

³³Harijan 18th Feb, 1939

³⁴p.271, *ibid* from Rabindranath Tagore’s Rachanavali, Vihwabarati Edition vol.24, pp.405-06

³⁵p.275 *ibid* from Great Sentinel, Young India, 13th Oct, 1921 quoted in Mahatma Gandhi by Romain Rolland, P.111



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First among Equals

Kuldip Nayar

Whether it was a proverbial storm in tea cup or something else the fact remains that the judiciary has been exposed. The impartiality with which it is known has been shaken. For the first time judges face people. This is the best headline which I found in an Urdu daily. It told the story and still left many things unsaid. Four judges of the Supreme Court—Justices J. Chelmswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph—have created history when they held a press conference to tell their side of story on what Chief of Justice of India Dipak Mishra has been doing. Their contention is that he is only first among equals, nothing more or nothing less. But the Chief Justice, they allege, has spread himself all over.

The questioning of the Chief Justice publicly by the four most senior judges of the apex court has put everybody in a fix. But the government has been correct in not interfering and letting the judiciary to settle the matter itself. Understandably, former chief justices have also expressed their “shock” over the unprecedented press conference by the four judges.

In his reaction, former chief justice R.M Lodha has questioned how such a boiling issue had remained pending for two months. “I am disturbed by today’s development. What happened today is unfortunate and painful for a person who presided over an institution like the Supreme Court. Reacting to the letter made public, the former chief justice is right when he says that the chief justice ought to have discussed it with them addressed those issues.

The issues, as pointed out by the four judges, may not be big. But they need to be addressed because both the chief justice of India and Justice J. Chelmswar, the second senior most, have been at loggerheads after the latter assigned a petition which sought probe into the medical college scam—former Odisha High Court judge I.M. Quddusi was suspected to be involved in it—to a bench of top five judges. But this decision was overturned by a five-judge Constitution bench which ruled that the CJI was the master of roster and he alone could assign cases to different benches.

Even otherwise, in recent times

the bench formation in the Supreme Court has been against the text of the Constitution which is very clear on constitutional issues because such matters have to be heard by a five-judge bench. But what has happened in recent times is that they have been referred to two or three-judge benches. This has not only eroded the confidence of fellow judges of the highest court in the land but has, as a result, created a crisis-like situation.

Differences among judges are nothing new. There have been past instances where judges of the apex court have fought over certain issues. The tussles between Justice Y.V. Chandrachud and his successor Justice P. N. Bhagwati in the 1970s and 1980s or the one between Justice A.M. Ahmadi and Justice Kuldip Singh in the 1990s were considered examples of "indiscipline" rather than "rebellion."

Whatever may be the differences, the press conference by the sitting judges has definitely irretrievably dented the integrity of the institution and also the moral authority of the Supreme Court. In the letter addressed to the CJI, the four judges have rightly pleaded with him to take corrective measures so that they can apprise him about similar judicial orders that need to be dealt with by him.

In our legal system, based on rule-of-law, no one including the Chief Justice is above it. No doubt, the CJI has the powers to form benches but the powers are supposed to be exercised judiciously and not arbitrarily. The government is looking for a window of opportunity to enforce the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act which the judges have rejected.

Unfortunately, the judges have not realized that they have already provided that by the current row which the government may use to have greater say in judicial appointments and transfers.

India is fortunate to have independent judiciary since freedom. But two judges, H.R. Khanna of the Supreme Court and Jagmohan Lal Sinha of Allahabad High Court, raised it to great heights at a time when the judiciary was timid and when it was a fashion to feather one's own nest. Khanna, during the emergency, spoke the truth knowing well the consequences he would face. He differed with his other four colleagues and upheld the inviolability of fundamental rights. He was superseded and he resigned in protest.

With Justice Ranjan Gogoi next in line to succeed Justice Dipak Misra as CJI when the latter retires in October this year may face a situation similar to the one that Justice Khanna faced many years ago. But the latter's judgment gave hope to the people of India that there were judges to uphold the truth even when the tallest in the country had compromised to stay in office. Khanna told the nation that the fundamental values of a democratic society demanded that every person must display a degree of vigilance and willingness to sacrifice. This is still a distant goal for India.

Despite such examples, the judiciary is losing sheen. People's faith in obtaining justice is weakening, not only due to inordinate delays in getting the cases heard but also due to the increasing impression that the judges can be managed. Clients and lawyers reportedly conspire to have hearings fixed before a particular

judge. The word, corruption, was not heard some years ago. Today, it is on everybody's lip.

Not long ago, judgments were pro-people, pro-weak and pro-environment. Laws were interpreted in such a manner that a common man got relief and the greenery was protected against the marauding builders. The judiciary, particularly after the globalisation, has tended to side with riches, power and those who destroy the flora and fauna. The judiciary has also tried to arrogate to itself the authority which belongs to the legislatures.

The judiciary has become a very important segment of public life. Politicians can be disciplined only through the law. If the Supreme Court judges think about themselves and not the law, democracy can be in danger.

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Gandhi Namesake, Operates as Mafia

Sandeep Pandey

Jagdish Gandhi is the founding manager of City Montessori School in Lucknow which enrolls more than 55,000 students in its 18 branches. This school has been listed in Guinness book of world records for highest enrollment of students. It has been awarded UNESCO prize for peace education for promoting the values of peace and tolerance. Jagdish Gandhi is also a recipient of Uttar Pradesh government's top honour Yash Bharti.

But Jagdish Gandhi has refused to admit a single student from the disadvantaged category or weaker section for the last three years under section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009, for free education from classes I to VIII, whose admission is ordered by District Magistrate or Basic Shiksha Adhikari. Eighteen children in academic year 2015-16, 55 children in 2016-17 and 296 children in 2017-18 were denied admission by Jagdish Gandhi violating their fundamental right. Thirteen children belonging to Valmiki community were admitted in the Indira Nagar branch of CMS due to a High Court order in 2015-16 after a case which took several months.

Recently under the Right to Information Act 2005 the Housing and Development Board of the UP government revealed that the building of Indira Nagar branch of CMS has been built without permission, the land use is still residential, thereby precluding the possibility of any commercial activity here, and most shockingly, that there

is a demolition order against the school building. The school building has been erected by combining two adjoining plots A-823 and A-903. Whereas the manager of CMS had bought the plot A-903, he took A-823 on rent but without the permission of owner R.B. Pathak, retired IAS, he constructed the school building. The owner complained to Commissioner, Housing and Development Board, but to no avail.

The question that now arises is how can a school be run from an illegal building? The school doesn't even have a play ground which is mandatory for seeking recognition. What will happen to the future of children studying in this school if the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations decides to withdraw the ICSE affiliation of the school?

The demolition order of A-823 dates back to 1996 whereas the demolition order of A-903 is of 2015. Once the authorities tried to implement the order but as it was during school hours the manager made all the children sit in front of the demolition squad. The complicity of school manager and government officials is quite obvious as no other attempt was made in the last 21 years in non-school hours or on a vacation, which would have been the appropriate time to demolish it.

Now that the information about demolition orders is out, Jagdish Gandhi went to the High Court on 4 January, 2018 and obtained a stay

order against demolition making a plea that future of 1,700 children studying upto Intermediate level and hundreds of employees and teachers is at stake. He urged the court to give a direction for shifting of the school rather than demolishing its building. The court has been requested not to take harsh action.

Jagdish Gandhi must be asked whether only rich children have a future? What about the future of those children whose admission he has denied under the RTE Act for the last three years? Did he not feel that he was being harsh on those children? It is significant that in HC he claims school enrollment as 1,700 whereas in a reply from Fire department in response to a query under the RTI Act, the school has reported an enrollment of merely 600 children. HC has been told that school runs till Intermediate or class XII where it merely has a ICSE affiliation, which is meant for class X.

The CISCE website shows recognition to only 12 of the 18 CMS branches, which implies that 6 of its branches are being run without recognition. Under the RTE Act the authorities should impose fine on these branches.

Jagdish Gandhi has a strategy to retain only 'bright' kids beyond class VIII so that his school delivers a good performance in Board examinations. A girl in the Aliganj branch wanted to choose Mathematics as a subject in class IX. However, because of her low scores

in class VIII she was allowed to select only Commerce with Hindi. She left CMS and is today pursuing the subject of her choice, Mathematics, in Delhi Public School.

The CMS charges fees for two months together. For parents from lower middle class background it becomes really difficult to make two ends meet. The school charges fees for vacation months much in advance. It is a well oiled money making machine.

The CMS offers concession in fees to children of its teachers but doesn't offer the same concession to its lower level employees like maids, sanitation workers, rickshaw pullers who bring children to school, etc. It is an open secret that Jagdish Gandhi offers concession in fees to children of IAS officers, politicians in high places, judges and most importantly journalists. This is how he manipulates his way through the system and operates by blatantly violating various rules and laws. He manages to keep himself in the good books of the chief minister of the day, irrespective of political affiliation. Hence no official, politician or judge takes action against him.

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Janata

is available at

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Pardon me, this isn't a story by Manto

Dr. H.S. Anupama

One

It was an unfortunate evening—everything around had transformed into something else. He was just 19. He had dropped out of college to earn his living and had started to work with his elder brother and father in the port.

That evening, he was preparing to observe the rituals that one observes before visiting the Shabarimala Ayyappa Swami temple the following morning. He had parked his bike at the site where there had been a clash between two groups earlier. He left his home to go to the site to get his bike, but never returned.

His worried family started looking for him. On realising that it was impossible to track his whereabouts, they approached the police. Even they could not find him. Two days after he went missing, an unrecognised body was found in the river of the village. When the police examined the body, it was of the same boy who had gone missing. He who had drowned to death was on the shore and his family had drowned in a sea of tears.

Two

Those three people in the truck had never imagined something like this could happen. A few men on the road, at the outskirts of a village, had seen the driver of the truck and had decided his religious identity.

They stopped the truck and started to interrogate the driver—his name and other details—and then started beating him black and blue. The other two with him somehow managed to escape from the site.

The driver too managed to get away from his assailants, and ran as fast as he could from the site, but was soon attacked by another group. The attackers started beating him with iron rods. They were about to torch him, but upon hearing people coming towards them they fled the site, leaving the injured driver on the road.

He had managed to save his life for the second time that day. He was brutally injured and couldn't stand or move. He crawled up to a house of a brahmin family living close by and pleaded for water. The family, on seeing his condition, mistook him for a mad man and offered him some water and food.

He was scared. He hid in a pit near this house for three days. The family was confused and he was scared. He then learnt that the riot that had broken out in the village had ended, and he felt safe enough to come out in the open. The police took him to the hospital. His family had concluded that he was dead and the villagers had already lodged a complaint in the police station.

He is now with his family and has managed to survive a brutal attack.

Three

I got a call at 11:53 pm. The lady who had called me said, "They have surrounded our house. They are pelting stones on our house. The windows have all been broken. We are scared to go out and fight them. What should be done, madam?"

What should be done?

The people who had surrounded their house were hurling abuses at them and were saying, "We have

burnt the car of a policeman. We do not care about burning these people alive." The attack had begun early in the morning and went on till late midnight.

The person who had called me said, "We are here in this village for forty-five years now. Our children were born here. We are very sad today. We feel like leaving this village for good. We think they are going to set us on fire. How can we escape? Where do we go? Where do we deposit our documents, money and gold we have in the house? What should be done, madam?"

What should be done?

A glass piece from the broken window had injured a six-month-old baby in the house. The mother of this baby was crying. The grandmother had no energy to utter words. The sister of the baby, who was now bored of being locked inside the house for the last five days, was annoyed; she said, "Why are you all crying? Why don't we go to the hospital? Why aren't you giving me my milk? Why shouldn't I go out and play? Why are they pelting stones on our house? What wrong have we done?" She kept asking such questions. And the mother asked me, "Tell us madam, what should be done?"

What should be done?

They knew each other since their childhood. They grew up together. Their religious identities had till date not affected their friendship. They would attend the village fair and eat the food available there. They would watch *yakshagana* together. They had learnt how to drive together. They had also eaten biryani together and had partied several times.

For him, it is disheartening to see the very same friends attacking him

and his family because of his religion. He is shaken and he asks, "Is this fair, madam? Isn't there anything called justice left? Could we file complaints on our friends? What should be done?"

What should be done?

It is a family without a patriarch. The single mother had struggled really hard and had saved some money to marry off her daughter. The wedding celebrations were due and were being organised in front of the temple close by. Relatives started to force her to postpone the wedding, and the groom's family suggested that they would like to reconsider the match, as it was not a good omen.

She now had to take care of the expenses of the wedding, all over again. This worried mother asks me, "What should be done now, madam?"

What should be done?

Please excuse me; this is not an excerpt from a story by Sadat Hasan Manto.

This actually happened. No one had anticipated something like this would happen till December 2017. Honnavar was a peaceful coastal small town in the foothills of western ghats. There never was any communal tension here. Our port was safe and nice, but not anymore. It is a violent sea that we see. We do not see a stop to this in the near future.

Who do we trust? Who do we complain to?

It is very hard to fix the broken

We are all taken aback by the developments of the last two weeks in the North Canara district of Karnataka following the death of Paresh Mesta, a 19-year-old boy. His dead body was found two days

after he went missing, and became the excuse for the spread of communal violence in the district.

Nineteen is no age to die. His unfortunate death would sadden anybody, irrespective of who killed him and why they killed him. His family has lost its much loved son and also an earning hand. No compensation would help the family overcome the pain that this loss has caused. All that we can do now is wish that such incidents would not repeat themselves in the future. The murderers have to be arrested and punished, and we need to make sure that the circumstances leading to his murder would not arise again.

On the one hand, we are saddened by the death of Paresh, and on the other hand, the violence that followed. Instead of mourning his death, people have succumbed to the rumours being circulated on the internet and have taken to violence. Those who are mourning his death are enraged and are destroying public property and accusing the people of other religion for his death.

Even small villages have started to become communal. We are also hearing news of inhuman attacks. It is always very easy to break things, but what is hard is making them.

The responsibility of maintaining communal harmony rests with every responsible citizen. We wish the communal harmony that existed in the scenic Uttara Kannada district is restored and this should be the goal of all those in the seats of power irrespective of the difference among the parties that they are affiliated to.

Mine — yours, theirs and ours
come, Let us join hands,
Then you see a new world,
A new world for everyone.

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Gandhi - A Revolutionary ? - II

A. Raghu Kumar

“The ideal of one world or human unity cannot be imposed from above. It could only be brought about if existing national and class contradictions and other social inequalities were resolved. Those who call themselves Marxists should have been the first to realize this. But the Marxists of this country were so self-deluded that they thought nothing of brandishing expression like ‘frog-in-the-well’ and ‘bourgeois nationalism’ to the anti-imperialist national struggle that Gandhi inspired and led. ... If the Marxists could commit such a blunder, why should not Rabindranath, poet and dreamer that he was?”³⁶ Gandhiji has no love for revivalism, and Rabindranath never suspected or believed that Gandhiji had any. However, he thought that there was a predilection for the traditional way among Gandhians or Gandhiji’s followers. Gandhiji himself was aware of such a trend, and lest in his name wrong things should be done, he often cautioned people. “.... I must not attempt to revive ancient practices if they were inconsistent with, call it you will modern life, as it must be lived.....”³⁷

Gandhi–Bose differences have led to lot of political controversy, especially in the recent past. Bose was tried to be owned or appropriated by both the left and the right. Being a contemporary and a direct witness to the debate, Pannalalji tried to put the facts straight with utmost respect and sincerity to both. He comes out with eleven points of convergence and divergence between them most

succinctly.³⁸ These differences were basically on the ideological as well as struggle tactics. These differences appear in their most sharpened forms between February 1939 and January 1941. Bose was more inclined that Gandhi shall give an ultimatum to the British government during the early stages of the World War-II, which was not accepted by Gandhi. Gandhiji felt that a dangerous atmosphere of violence was prevalent in the country, and any decision for final assault at that juncture would lead to disastrous effects. Moreover, he was also doubtful of the preparedness of satyagrahees at that time. Communal frenzy was all pervasive due to divisive politics and hate campaign of both the British and Muslim League, which was another factor running through the mind of Bapu. In fact, even Subhas Bose was not a believer in violent revolutions. He was a complete believer in Gandhian leadership. In his analysis of the strained relations of Gandhi and Subhas, more than anything else, the author blames the Pant Resolution, during the second term of the Congress Presidentship of Subhas Bose, which mandated the President seeking Mahatma’s approval before nominating new members to CWC, as the major reason for the rift.

There are several controversies and contradictions on the issue of Gandhiji’s role in respect of the upliftment of dalits, adivasis and workers. But one thing needs to be said that Gandhiji at one point declared that he would not step into

Hindu temples so long as they denied entry to the Harijans (the description Gandhi invoked for Dalits during his struggle) and other suppressed classes. He kept this vow till his last day, although he remained a devout Hindu throughout his life and acknowledged the need for temples. The Muslim League and the Ambedkarites carried on the propaganda that Gandhi’s Harijan movement was but a clever political ploy aimed at winning wider support. Even the leftists were, according to Pannalal, openly critical of the Harijan movement. The Left parties believed that the Hindu-Muslim divide as well as the Harijan problem would disappear if there were no religions at all. To them, the movements for securing entry for Harijans into temples or for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity, will only help perpetuate man’s bondage to religion and were thus reactionary.³⁹

After discussing various stands on this issue of dalits, Pannalal considers that in fact it is Gandhi who elevated caste problem into class-struggle. By looking at the problem as not of caste, but of high and low, the exploiter and the exploited, he contends that Gandhi projected the problem more as a problem relating to the class struggle.⁴⁰ Pannalal contends that “Gandhiji also put into practice the fundamental ideals of communism and socialism in a way that the communists or socialists of his time could only envy”. “In his outlook as well as his personal life, Gandhiji attained the level of the truly classless human being. “Gandhiji may not have been a communist, but

he could certainly have been a worthy member of a classless society.⁴¹

This particular part of the book, on “Harijans, Adivasis and Workers” offers a new and rich insights into Gandhi’s actions towards these issues. He elevates Gandhi to a better communist than many communists. Few quotes from Pyarelal’s Last Phase, and some other sources, was cited by the author to fortify his proposition. The one was Gandhiji reply to a question at a public meeting in January 1946 at Medinipur regarding his views on class struggle⁴² where he said that class struggle there had been always, it could be ended if the capitalists voluntarily renounced their rule and became labourers. The other was to realize that labour was real capital, in fact, the maker of capital. On another occasion it appears Gandhi said⁴³ “It is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared for the common good. ...”.

Another most controversial subject of Gandhian ideas or theories has always been “Trusteeship”. This almost goes against the grain of many western social or political philosophers and also their followers in India. The basic question that lingers in the minds of any socio-political philosopher since Hobbes has been: “Whether human being is naturally a social being?” “Whether human beings are good or selfish by nature?” Both Marx and Gandhi consider human beings as basically social beings. For Marx it’s the alienation of human being from nature that forms one of the bases of his social theory construction. For Gandhi also the alienation of man

forms the basis, but totally in a different way. He considers western civilization and the models of production and development, distribution and organizing the society as degrading and inhuman. From the above consideration of Gandhi flows the idea of “Trusteeship”. His concept of “Trusteeship”, as many of his other concepts, remains undeveloped further, and thus lacks sufficient philosophical explanation as an economic theory.

But, Pannalal Dasgupta, though a Marxist makes a major attempt in reconciling this contradiction between the Marxist tradition and the Gandhian thought. Probably it can be considered as a major contribution of Pannalal towards understanding the idea of ‘trusteeship’ from a Marxist view. “As far the communists and socialists, they wanted people to believe that trusteeship was just another of Gandhiji’s strategies in trying to perpetuate capitalism and the Zamindari system.⁴⁴ But according to Gandhi, land owners and other moneyed people could keep their property but they should not view it as their own or use it as they wished. He postulated that they should consider themselves as the custodians or trustees of the place or money they owned and they could take out of the property only as much as was due to them as its caretakers. Gandhiji himself was not consistent till his last days in his interpretation of the concept and he often spoke about it from different angles.

It was Gandhiji’s firm faith in the basic goodness of man that led him to evolve the trusteeship doctrine. In 1930 on the eve of Salt Satyagraha, he expressed his ideas on the

capitalists’ interests in very unequivocal language. “The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of the moneyed men, speculators, scrip-holders, land-holders, factory owners, and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous to British principals whose tools and agents they are.”⁴⁵ “I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence.”⁴⁶ “...I desire to end capitalism, almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even communist. But our methods differ, our language differ. My theory of ‘Trusteeship’ is makeshift, certainly no camouflage.”⁴⁷ “My fundamental difference with socialists is well-known. I believe in the conversion of human nature and in striving for it. They do not believe in this. But let me tell you that we are coming nearer to one another.”⁴⁸ “Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India....”⁴⁹

Both Communists or Socialists, and Gandhi are equally concerned with human nature, alienation and how to resolve the class contradictions, which was the consequence of the advent of capitalism. But the allegation of communists or socialist about the integrity or sincerity of Gandhi may not be correct, according to Pannalal. Gandhi being firmly rooted in the Indian concept of spirituality

considers non-possession or voluntary relinquishment of property or ownership can be invoked in human beings. Therefore, says Pannalal in conclusion, that in this socialist era of the world, it is not impossible for non-possession to become a universal trait.

How did Gandhi understand the role of women in the society? Indian women liberation activists never considered Gandhi's ideas in this regard as progressive or useful, though in his life time, he could bring in most women into the freedom struggle, probably more intensely than any other political leader in the world politics and women could work along with him more comfortably. His two-fold view of women in the traditional way and as a companion in struggles or in modern society offers most controversial reading at the outset. Commenting on the position of women in society Gandhi said: "A society cannot rise above the level of its womenfolk."⁵⁰ "... Many of our movements stop halfway because of the conditions of our women..." However, he differs with the western liberal ideas on this subject."He believed that men and women played complementary roles.His views regarding the man-woman quotient were very similar to Tolstoy's. Professor Nirmal Bose has given many insights into this aspect of Gandhi's personality in his book "Last Days with Gandhi". He says that in some ways Gandhi's personality was exactly like that of women and that he acquired this trait through conscious experiment and effort. Manuben Gandhi, Gandhiji's grand-niece, even chose for her book on Gandhiji the title "Bapu - My Mother."

One of the most typical statements

of Gandhi on the subject matter of 'socialism' has been what he said in Harijan, July 6,1947: "Socialism begins with the first convert, if there is one such; you can add zero to one and the first zero will count for ten and every addition will count for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginning is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning; multiplicity of zeroes will also prove zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste".⁵¹The socialists and communists persist in their belief that there is no need to reform the lives of individuals, and if the society is reformed it could take care of the lives of its individual members.

The major purpose of Pannalal Dasgupta's work has been to contextualize Gandhi in a historical purpose in terms of Marxist ideology and also to question certain narratives of Gandhians in placing him beyond time and, as something as eternal. Pannalalji considers that 'The Indian Marxists failed to fully learn their lessons from the Russian Revolution. They took the Russian Revolution to be more of an exception than a rule. They neither tried to understand the meaning of all the new ideas that had come into Marxism as a consequence of that revolution nor did they have any notion of the possibilities of developing those ideas. As a result of this blinkered view, they could not conceive any form of revolution other than the one leading to proletarian dictatorship. For them, any revolution which did not have the leadership of the communists was no revolution at all, even though it may include the working classes. "Caught in this narrow outlook, they remained aloof to the vast movement.... Saw the freedom struggle of colonial and

semi-colonial countries as pro-bourgeois".⁵²

While quoting from various correspondence between Marx and Engels and, Marx and others, especially the letter Marx wrote to Meyer and Vogt, which was further developed by Lenin, where Marx said: "After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers' movement all over the world) cannot be in England but only in Ireland".⁵³For Pannalal, the meaning of this new line of thought, (also according to the secret circular of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association he cited), was that the revolution had to be triggered off in England only through the freedom struggles in her colonies. "Firstly, the working class was not the only revolutionary class (as claimed in the Communist Manifesto).Secondly, the liberation of England's colonies was the chief condition for the emancipation of England's working class. Again quoting Stalin's caution "... what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation"⁵⁴ and of Mao's, Pannalal argues that Gandhi's historical role was profoundly revolutionary from the Marxist point of view.

After thirty years of writing in Bengali, when sending the manuscript for printing Pannalal added "Notes" to the chapter on "Gandhi and History", where he observes with hindsight that 'the limitations of ideals and ideologies, like freedom, democracy and socialism, which have inspired humanity during the past three

hundred years are being experienced at every step in all spheres of action. ...Hence there arises the necessity to re-examine Marxism, Leninism, Mao's thoughts and Gandhism, for the virtually blocked path of revolution has to be reopened for its onward march and a way have to be found to inspire faith once again in the hearts of men".⁵⁵

The concluding chapter of the book "Gandhism" considers Gandhi as a votary of both God and Truth – concepts which the modern intellectual would often regard as offending and mutually contradictory. "Gandhiji tried to equate science and philosophy by defining Truth as God." Pannalal writes that Gandhi was a many faceted personality-an experimenter of truth, a great pilgrim and a supreme leader. If Marxism has made a great contribution towards laying the foundation of that (socialist) culture from the point of view of economics and state craft, Gandhi's contribution in the domains of morality and public life will make their foundation considerably more natural and elegant. In Gandhi, we find a leader and a prophet rolled into one. "Men like Gandhiji do not appear often on the earth. No single individual or group can fill his place. It is only mankind in its entirety, which is capable of being a true successor to a person like Gandhiji. "Deluded as we leftists were," he says, "we shut our eyes to our own history and tradition. Consequently we lost focus on our goal, became self-complacent and engaged ourselves in imitating others".⁵⁶

In "Epilogue" he says, "my purpose has been to show Gandhi in a new light to the Indian leftists and to present the historical Gandhi to

the so-called diehard Gandhians. I look upon Gandhi, Marx, Lenin and other men of the age as forming a powerful giant telescope and introscope, if I may use that word to mean an instrument which shows what goes on within my mind. The epilogue indicates the purpose of the work as a critique of the works of Gandhians, and as well of the Left, and ends saying 'when they review Gandhiji's life and struggle they do not make the least effort to understand the gradual painful evolution of a very ordinary, peace-loving man of liberal temperament into an anti-imperialist fighter. On the contrary, they dig up a weak spot or a drawback and blow it out of proportion in order to show up all his work in poor light. "The sum and substance of my discussion in the foregoing paragraphs is that in their attempt to prove Gandhiji a bourgeois leader by means of a labored fallacious thesis, the Communists came up against an even greater obstacle on their way. In their concern to keep up consistency, they have had to ignore actual events or distort them. They have been at great pains to fit the whole history into the straight-jacket of a petty thesis; little knowing that it will all be in vain".⁵⁷

Pannalal Dasgupta's "**Revolutionary Gandhi**" is a rare piece of writing in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, which has appreciated Gandhi as a part of the dialectical movement of current history. It attempts to clear the Indian Marxist air filled with nothing but ridicule and abuse on Gandhi, and also endeavours at placing Gandhi in a historical setting of anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of many Asia-African countries of the nineteenth and early twentieth

century. Pannalal dispels myriad of Marxist's doubts on Gandhi's Non-violence, Satyagraha and Constructive Programmes. As a an eternal truth seeker, and a person who was always ready to discard any of his opinions or ideas, even those held by him quite preciously, at the instance of impeccable proof or convincing argument, Mahatma Gandhi is the first and foremost social scientist, contends Pannalal. Even on the most problematic issues such as God, religion, ethics and morals etc., Pannalal, though a believer in Marxist-Leninist path, considers Gandhi on par with or as above many so called secularists, and presents Gandhi's ideas in a fresh and modern milieu.

By appropriately placing Gandhi's ideas vis-à-vis Rabindranath Tagore, and Subhas Bose, Pannalal argues that Gandhi was more correct, if not absolutely correct, on the methods and strategies of conducting the freedom struggle, while simultaneously appreciating the counter narratives of Tagore and Subhas. During past several decades heated arguments have filled the political space on Gandhi's role and ideas on the issues such as dalits, women and workers which were also ably countered by Pannalal and consequently it may offer new insights into these areas. By redefining the ideas on class, class war and the employment of armed struggles in resolving class contradictions, through Gandhi's inputs, Pannalal invites all of us to relook our theory and practice. On an overall assessment of the work of Pannalal, we may say that Gandhism is shown in a progressive setting both in terms of history, and Gandhi as an individual in the course of history, and also as continuum of

the progressive tradition initiated by Marx and Lenin. It's rare more so, because it has come from the Marxist-Leninist activist of yesteryears, and a contemporary of Gandhi. In the end, it urges both the Gandhians, and the Leftists for fresh dialogue, and to re-appreciate the areas of congruence and difference, for the progressive purpose of both and also in the interests of people's struggles for a more socialist state of affairs.

(concluded)

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³⁶pp.276-277 ibid

³⁷p.289 ibid

³⁸pp.294-314 ibid

³⁹pp.315-317 ibid

⁴⁰p.325 ibid

⁴¹p.329 ibid

⁴²p.331 ibid

⁴³p.332 ibid from N.K.Bose, Selections from Gandhi, p.177

⁴⁴p.335 ibid

⁴⁵p.337 ibid quoted from N.K.Bose who in turn quoted from Young India, 6th Feb 1930

⁴⁶p.339 ibid quoted in N.K.Bose studies in Gandhism

⁴⁷p.339 ibid quoted from Harijan, 16th Dec, 1939

⁴⁸p.342 ibid quoted from N.K.Bose, studies in Gandhism, p.88

⁴⁹p.345 ibid quoted from R.K.Prabhu (Ed), India of my dreams, p.98

⁵⁰p.359 ibid quoted from B. Kumarappa, Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism

⁵¹p.376, Ibid

⁵²p.395 ibid

⁵³p.397 ibid

⁵⁴p.400 ibid from Works of Stalin, vol.7, PP.226-7

⁵⁵p.422 ibid

⁵⁶p.440 ibid

⁵⁷p.475 ibid

Lessons from Lohia for Disturbed Times

Justice B. Sudershan Reddy*

At the very outset, let me state that it is with utmost humility that I have accepted this task of delivering this brief speech in memory of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. It can only be with utmost humility that one could possibly make an approach to one of the makers of modern India. After all, how does one seek to encapsulate the life and works of a person like Dr. Lohia, who in the course of his life wrote prodigiously; as a young man, barely in his twenties, led a protest against the representation of India at the League of Nations in Geneva by Maharaja of Bikaner; formed the foreign affairs department in the All India Congress Committee; helped lay the foundation of the Congress Socialist Party; was imprisoned and tortured by the British; and in a free India founded the Socialist Party and indeed the humanistic socialist movement in India? Where does one begin to comprehend the vision, the mind and the integrity of a person who throughout his life worked, without respite and with only the remit of an unyielding conscience, to bridge the rich-poor divide, fought against the horrors of caste and gender inequality, warned us of the dangers of the big machine, not merely as a technological artefact but as a social machine, and above all the conditions of endemic inequality that perpetuates oppression of the many by the few, generation after generation, and lead to cycles of violence and repression?

Every time I think of Dr. Lohia, I am first reminded of an anecdote about him – something that is very pertinent in this day. In one of the elections that he contested, post-independence, he was approached by leaders of a particular community, asking him to deliver an election speech at a place of worship, assuring him that such an act would get him a lot of votes from that particular community. Dr. Lohia refused, and he lost the election very narrowly. His refusal was founded on the value that a space for worship, so intimately connected with the inner spiritual core of human existence, could not be used as a space for political propaganda. Fiercely independent, and never wavering from a concern for ethical implications of an action, and prioritizing the pursuit of the good of the broader society, within the framework of social justice, Dr. Lohia was indeed forever the “top-class scholar, civilized gentleman, liberal” and a person of “high moral character”. It is widely discussed in many a quarters, either openly, or in hushed whispers, as to whether India is turning or is likely to turn into a fascist polity, where the tenets of secularism are set aside, institutions of governance and justice compromised, of murders of journalists and open threats to do so too many others who may speak on behalf of the Constitution, one cannot but help asking, on recollecting that great man: “Jinhenaazhai Hind, par

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wohKahaanhai? Kahaanhai?"

Yet, I would not suggest that the life of Dr.Lohia be remembered for mere valorization and hagiographic speeches. It is precisely in these unsettled times, when arguments are made that "nothing has happened" for the past six decades, and there are unthinking claims only now we have a deliverer, that one needs to draw sustenance from the lives and works of great men and women of history. However, the prospects of sustenance can be enhanced only if we can analytically grasp the core principle or principles and apply it / them to our own times, modifying it and/or expanding the concepts in the light of new knowledge, institutional experiences and shocks faced by the democratic polity and the Constitutional structure.

I will humbly submit that one of the keys to the thought and life of Dr.Lohia is his lifelong struggle against the "Monotonic Mind". Of course everybody agrees that he used that expression in the context of "big machine" technology, and it then seems logically simple to conceive the political economy suggested by Dr.Lohia as one with E.F. Schumaker's "Small is Beautiful" and with the search for alternate technologies that enhances, rather than eviscerates, the role of labour in production. That would be a correct conception, but essentially an incomplete conception. After all Dr.Lohia also argued and fought for the empowerment, and capability enhancement of the downtrodden. Can any one claim that Dr.Lohia for instance would have disapproved of the use of internet by womenfolk in a village in India to direct their men folk to trading centres where they would be able to get higher price for their milk?

Or our youngsters getting access to the entire corpus of human knowledge? In many instances, that comment of Dr.Lohia has been taken to imply a blind anti-science and anti-technology stance on his part, and often misused in the more notorious politics by lesser men of recent times. I believe that we need a more nuanced, and a more detailed appreciation of Dr.Lohia's work, to go beyond the trivial, and contextual, extensions.

But prior to identification of that core principle, we must acknowledge the great perspicacity of Dr.Lohia's concerns with allowing unguided technological choices, and social choices uninformed with deep ethical concern for equality and human welfare, to destroy prospects of a democratic order, and the enslavement of the ordinary man. Recently, I was reading an interesting book "The Driver in the Driverless Car: How our Technological Choices will Create the Future" by Vivek Wadhwa and Alex Salkever. They posit, in much more stark terms what Amartya Sen has been saying for some time now – that our existing technology, and the ones that are impending, are more than capable of eliminating many of the ills that have plagued human beings throughout their existence. The issue is of choices we make, and the values we choose to undergird our choices. So far so good. But they present a dystopian alternative that they say is equally possible. In a world of "Homo Deus" – Human as God, beating death –run by Artificial Intelligence, as posited by Yuval Noah Harari, Vivek Wadhwa and Alex Salkever, it is equally possible that:

"we are capable too now of ushering in a jobless economy, the

end of all privacy, invasive medical record keeping, and an ever-worsening spiral of economic inequality: conditions that could create an unstable, Orwellian, or violent future that might undermine the very technology driven future that we so eagerly anticipate. And we know that it is possible to inadvertently unwind civilization's progress."¹

A dystopian vision such as this one ought to make us wake up in cold sweat. For most of our youngsters, we have not even managed to build educational systems to give them quality primary education. It took the ruling classes in our polity 14 years to even start thinking of enacting a bill to give the sanction of law to what Justice Jeevan Reddy had found to be an essential component of Right to Life guaranteed in our Constitution: the right to free and quality education for our children at least until the age of 14. Implementation has been shoddy at best, nearly a decade later, with great divides between regions, between rural and urban areas, between upper castes and the lower castes. Increasingly the talk is about most of the entry level jobs disappearing in the near future, even in technology fields that our policy makers hoped would lift most of our youngsters out of poverty. We cannot afford to let our demographic dividend go abegging, lest it might turn into a demographic curse. The pace with which the slipsour nation by only seems to have quickened.

With the intensification of inequality, something that Thomas Piketty has brought to the forefront of economic discussion brutally in the past 5 to 10 years, both within nations and across international regions, as a result of the globalised

neo-liberal order that the social and economic elites across the world have pushed through relentlessly over the past forty years, the prospect of the gaps between the haves and the have-nots may become unbridgeable in any foreseeable future. Take the levels of inequality between nations that emerged as a result of the Second Industrial Revolution and colonial exploitation. In mid 20th century, scholars and policy makers could intellectually conceive and argue that gaps can be lowered in a few generations and maybe even 100 years or so. But not so now, and inequalities could become unbridgeable. Yuval Noah Harari posits that in an increasingly data driven world "humans agree to give up meaning in exchange for power." That power could be the ability to create many of the marvels we may breathlessly wished for, including mastery over death. However, the massive price could be its inegalitarian spread, creating a new global elite. Tim Adams summarised this rather brilliantly in the Guardian: "The new longevity and super-human qualities are likely to be the preserve of the techno super-rich, the masters of the data universe. Meanwhile, the redundancy of labour, supplanted by efficient machines, will create an enormous "useless class", without economic or military purpose.... Again, if nothing in our approach changes, Harari envisages that "Dataism", a universal faith in the power of algorithms, will become sacrosanct. To utopians this will look a lot like the "singularity": an all-knowing, omnipresent data-processing system, which is really indistinguishable from ideas of God, to which humans will be constantly connected. To dystopians it will look like that too."²²

But we have had intimations of the formation of super elites for some time. Have we not? In a relentless pursuit of wealth, where greed has been dubbed to be good, we have created a layer of elite decision makers whose writ runs large in what happens in nations, and the globe, and what happens to the lives of billions of human beings, and who disproportionately bear the costs of externalities of this economic monstrosity. A scholar by the name of Manuel Castells called this a "Network Economy" way back in the year 2000. He also warned that as economic uncertainty grows, and inequality intensifies, the sociopsychological disconnect that citizens experience between their belief that their governments and policy makers, in response to electoral compulsions ought to work assiduously for their welfare versus their impotence in demanding and getting the ear of their democratically elected governments, could unleash forces that undermine liberal democratic structures and also drive groups of people into more primal identity groups, such as fanatical religious groups or cults.

It would seem that the political developments over the past few years indicate a steady retreat from the values that we had hoped would inform our liberal constitutional democracies. Increasingly we hear the shrill voices of unreason from a fragmented world, fragmented nations and fragmented societies.

How did we come to such a pass? And that too so quickly? What words of wisdom, and intellectual insights of people like Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia did we ignore?

I would suggest that we ignored Dr. Lohia's fears of and warnings

regarding Monotonic Logic and Mind, and its consequences for the society, and especially of the disempowered. It is that, coupled with his dictum that action without moral reasoning would be like a sentence without a verb, that drove him to be one of the more ardent advocates of civil liberties, articulators of liberal constitutional democracies that seek egalitarian goals and also be an agent provocateur throughout his life. In his thought, and in his actions, he was forever guided by the epistemic principles of Non-Monotonic logic, or rather a group of philosophical frameworks that encapsulate defeasible inferences — i.e., where reasoning is expected to lead to tentative conclusions from everyday life, reserving the right to change those inferences in light of new information. The times that he grew up and lived in, and in which he led a life of civil disobedience, were marked by extreme and visceral horrors that were visited upon mankind by Imperialism, Colonialism, Fascism, Capitalism, and yes, even Marxist-Leninism. In a certain sense, they were all the products of Monotonic Logic, a pure deductive schema of conception, in which observable phenomenon could be explained from a-priori definitions of nature that were posited to hold universally and without exception. The danger of such conceptions, is that every consequence, howsoever horrific, could be rationalized away as being inevitable. Such a mind and logic, at the individual and at the level of collectives, blinds us to the adverse consequences, even impending massive human tragedies, because we have denied the possibility of fallibility of our assumptions, and denied the possibility of alternate conceptions.

John Gray, a philosopher, points

to a fundamental cleavage in liberalism.³ On the one hand liberalism posits that there is one objective truth, which through exercise of rational thought, is comprehensible and upon which a consensus ought to be arrived at. On the other hand, liberalism also posits the view that toleration of different beliefs, experiences, views, and needs, and empathy for those who are deprived or left behind, is a *sine qua non* for social stability, an indicia that justice prevails, and the path to progress. The danger of the former view is that it is easy for us to come to the erroneous belief that the “truth” we have arrived at is the absolute truth. Consequently, it is easy to conclude that those who do not agree with us are the “others”, the evil, the “disorderly” elements, the anti-progress luddites, and the anti-development anti-nationalists. Having conceived the “other” as irrational, it would but be a logical step to tyranny: elimination of voices of dissent. On the other hand, with the other view also we have problems: of argument for the sake of arguments, of every argument being posited as the right argument, and hence denial of possibility of any action. The consequence is immediate: in the din of a million mutinies, the voices of cynical pragmatism, often called realism, advocate the loot and plunder of disembodied, de-socialised and de-humanised individuals, for whom the society has become but a market; a market of values, of ideas, liberties and rights. Again, the big machine takes over — the social machine of the elite comprising of, in Dr.Lohia’s terms, those who possess at least two of the three attributes, viz., knowledge, wealth and felicity of speech in the language of power. This in turn seeks to create a collective monotonic mind, numb in

its ethical value structures, dead to innate human empathy, uncaring of the suffering of fellow human beings, infantile in its demands on the social matrix, and blind to the impending doom of social conflagration.

History is littered with examples of social orderings and ideologies, that were promoted, and in turn, been sustained, by such minds. The rise of fascism and the emergence of Nazi Germany are but particular instances, and arguably among the more gory ones. The singular aspect of German Nazi regime, we must remember, was that ordinary folks, like you and I, had turned a blind eye, to the rising tide of intolerance and inhumanity. People who otherwise were capable of ordinary courtesies, and indeed even great empathy for one another, had given into xenophobia, based on the singular belief that nothing overrides the redemption of their national pride, and development of the economy that projects their might abroad were to be the over-riding goals. Further, they also believed that the path to such a goal was one, and anyone who advocated an alternate vision or path was to be treated as immediately suspect — and indeed even to be eliminated, all debate, and conceptions of the alternate modes of social organization were eliminated. A cultural blindness was created that failed even to perceive the holocaust — because the people being exterminated were made to be the others, and hence a stumbling block for the uni-dimensional national goal propagandized by the Nazi party. Indeed we must remember that democratic elections brought the Nazis to power, and it was popular support that kept Nazis in power. Democracy, by itself, cannot be the arbiter of truth, and always necessarily conducive to promotion

of human welfare. Preservation of alternate voices, the ones that question both the goal and the means, are vital for survival of understanding what is humane and inhumane.

Dr. Lohia was a student of human history — or more specifically, of the struggle of humanity against the monotonic mind of the elite that normalises the indifference of rulers to the plight of the disempowered and debasement of civil liberties. It is best to recall Dr.Lohia’s own words in this regard:

“The concept of civil liberties is an outcome of the struggle that the citizen has eternally waged against his State. Throughout history, the State and its laws have given rise to manifold types of abuses..... wrath of the State fell down on the citizen who tried to be critical. He suffered long and solitary confinements, quite often death, and his most precious possessions were snatched away from him. He, therefore stood in need of basis of safety from where he could launch attacks on the abuses and evils of his times.... If a resistance of civil liberties prevails, resistance to oppression is not attended with frightful consequences.

It is such a historical conception that animated the thoughts and actions of Dr.Lohia. His was a nationalism that was based on an appreciation of the specificity of India’s conditions, the particular needs, and the particular problems. Nevertheless, his was an open mind that could arrive at deducible inferences from the broad swath of human experiences, as a mode of guidance for immediate action, with a deliberately constructed appreciation of epistemic uncertainties, and fostering of monotonic mindset by the big State

to be experiential facts, that forever made him alive to the possibility of oppression. Hence, for him civil liberties were never about mere textual promises, but about an actual existential necessity, for the individuals, the groups and the nation itself. For him, civil liberties were the essential foundations on which social stability, and a constructive and progressive democracy could be constructed. I would dare say that Dr.Lohia's thought and life are early precursors to the kind of deliberative and capability enhancing democracy that Dr.AmartyaSen has been espousing for the past three decades. It pays to quote Dr.Lohia himself, in extenso:

“Civil liberties comparatively smoothen society's march towards progress. Society is being eternally pulled between reaction and progress.... In this pull, the State has more often been controlled by forces of stagnation and....

...Lest the State should turn into a terrible obstruction to progress and continually block it by its repression, its supreme authority over the citizens stands in need of description and curtailment.... In this manner orderly social progress becomes possible and society is not continually faced with the choice between tyranny and revolution. The concept of civil liberties is thus essentially a liberal concept which acts as a shock absorber of the cruel impact between State tyranny and mass revolts. “

Given Dr.Lohia's justifiable fear of the monotonic mind, and its social ordering, whether of the Marxist kind, or of the Capitalist kind, his greatest worry was about sustaining the feasibility of arguing for change without resort to violence. In this regard, Dr.Lohia's thought and life,

and more particularly his conception of the virtuous life, epitomizes what Paulo Freire, the eminent educationist from Brazil, had articulated as the search for a humanized condition. In every struggle for freedom from oppression, the quest for equality could and often does degenerate into an equal opportunity for the oppressed to oppress the oppressor in his or her turn. The dehumanized condition of oppression, thereby gets perpetuated. While violent agitations may be indicia of a social dialogue that has gone horribly wrong, one needs to appreciate two facts. One, people normally do not take to violence if the society, and the State, had allowed the expression of dissent, within the framework of diligently guarded civil liberties, which act as the safety valves. Second, the expression of violence cannot be met with unlawful and unconstrained violence of the State — for that will surely breed more resistance and violence. Dr.Lohia was acutely alive to this, and in his book “The Struggle for Civil Liberties” he cites Senator Borah: “Repression is not only the enemy of free government, but it is the breeder of revolution. It is the enemy of progress and human happiness. And above all, it is neither a test of error nor of truth.”

Over the past few decades, we have seen a systematic demolition of the legitimacy and validity, of civil liberties in many countries. We, I would submit, in this country are no exception to this rule. Even as neo-liberal economic thought took its evil roots again, as Washington consensus, and as necessary structural reforms in India, it systemically built a monotonic mind, ideology and culture. A knee jerk nationalism that condemns any

expression of dissent as anti-national and anti-development has been systematically built into our popular discourse. Every expression of dissent has at some point or the other, and more often than not, been portrayed in our popular culture and elite discourses as a potential threat to a development that is conceived as billion dollar homes for the one or two and shining towers of glass for the few, even as hundreds of millions are dispossessed of their land and livelihoods, of their water and clean air, of their social roots, and the informal sector swells with hundreds of millions of displaced, dispossessed, and dehumanized humanity. And when that humanity expresses its dissent, because the political process no longer properly encompasses its demands, the elite culture, in reaction, immediately asks for restoration of order, by use of extreme state repression, so that they can go back to their ever thinner TV's, a culture of glitz, and fads that define lifestyles. To all of this we have added the vilest discourse possible that demonizes, in the name of religion, in the name of God and in the name of construction of a monotonic spiritual order. All to be relentlessly pushed forward by subversion of constitutional structures and small armies of hate filled youngsters.

Dr.Lohia recognized the need for assiduous protection of civil liberties because they, in his words:

“lay bare political and social abuses which are the fountainhead of all suppression. An enquiry into a case of violation of civil liberties is simultaneously an enquiry into the particular abuse against which the individual had fought and for which the wrath of the State and other interests had descended upon

him....The special front of civil liberties maintains the backbone of the people. The spirit of opposition against injustice is kept intact. The individual gets strength from the knowledge that his resistance to police or executive oppression will awaken common interest. Again, such a common interest serves to convulse the conscience of the people against encroachment of their liberties. The people are taught to be vigilant, so that they clear the road to progress.”

Why was Dr.Lohia talking about the individual resistance against oppression ?Dr.Lohia believed that in the modern world, organization has become so embracing and powerful that the individual is completely subservient to it. “No matter where the origins of modern civilization lay, it is today the civilization of the collective, where the individual is only a number in the mass and his effectiveness exists in so far as he is a part of the mass. Individual is often an isolated item surrounded by a hostile world and, when a suitable organization is lacking, he is reduced to the status of the rats. Individuals unsupported by organization and weapons are negligible in the context of modern civilization. He observed when Hitler came to power in Germany, “it was easy enough to notice how those brave and valiant and thinking Europeans belonging to the Socialist and Communist parties had lost all their manhood and, although I regret to have to say this word, they behaved more or less like rats, scurrying to and fro for shelter from Hitler”. Lohia believed in civil disobedience and course of action suggested by Mahatma Gandhi. The weapon of “Satyagraha/civil disobedience is always available to individuals in their hands when

injustice and oppression go beyond bearable bounds. He believed that Satyagraha as a weapon will prevail as long as injustice and oppression prevail, and it should prevail, because if it does not, the gun or the bullet will”.Lohia rejected the theory propounded by some eminent and great thinkers of this country, that Satyagraha as a weapon is not permissible in a State of freedom and it was permissible only when the British rule prevailed. In his inimitable style he characterized the theory as “childish prattle”. It is worth to recall what he said “should our century, before it dies out, learn this lesson all the world over, that the individual as well as the mass have had placed in their hands this unique weapon of civil disobedience to defeat their tyrants, we may be ushering a new civilization”.

Ultimately what we allow to come true depends on how we make collective choices, and what values and aspirations inform them. The first of that value would have to be a commitment to an essential belief in innate human dignity of every human being. Constitutions, much less socio-political orders, do not survive in an environment of apathy. Ultimately, the greatest lesson from Dr.Lohia’s life maybe this – that he spent more years in prison in an independent India, notwithstanding his many longer decades of struggles against the colonial yoke. It tells us this , freedom, assertion of human dignity and creation of conditions for protection of some minimal content as a part of that human dignity are not one shot games, but matters of continuous struggles. Struggles at the political level, at the social level, and above all, at the level of values.

I conclude this lecture with what ShahidBhagat Singh said:

“You go and oppose the prevailing faith, you go and criticise a hero, a great man, who is generally believed to be above criticism because he is thought to be infallible, the strength of your argument shall force the multitude to decry you as vainglorious. This is due to the mental stagnation. Criticism and independent thinking are the two indispensable qualities of a revolutionary. Because Mahatmaji is great, therefore none should criticise him. Because he has risen above, therefore everything he says—may be in the field of Politics or Religion, Economics or Ethics —is right. Whether you are convinced or not you must say, “Yes, that’s true’. This mentality does not lead towards progress. It is rather too obviously, reactionary”, in the hope that we learn the right lessons, again and again, from the lives and thoughts of great men and women like Dr. Ram ManoharLohia.

Jai Hind.

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From the Editor's Desk

In an unprecedented act, on 12 January 2018, four seniormost judges of the Supreme Court went public and held a press conference to voice their concerns about how the Supreme Court of India was being administered by the Chief Justice, especially the manner in which he was assigning cases having far-reaching consequences for the nation, to selected benches without any rationale or rule, and in total disregard of well-established conventions. The last straw was the Loya case, wherein a judge looking into a very sensitive case died in mysterious circumstances. If the impression gains ground that judges looking into cases where powerful politicians are involved are vulnerable, their safety is not assured, then the entire judicial system collapses.

The charges being voiced in the media by some that they should have kept the matter within the Supreme Court fraternity, and by going public they have maligned the judiciary, is utter nonsense. The judges made it clear in their press conference that they had been raising these issues with the Chief Justice for months, but when it became clear to them that nothing was going to change, they were left with no option but to go public. As the judges made it clear in their press conference, the very “integrity of the institution” (the judiciary) was at stake.

The fact of the matter is, under the Modi-led BJP Government, it is not just the integrity of the Supreme Court that is being compromised, but all constitutional institutions are under threat. That is because the BJP does not respect the customs and conventions that allow these institutions to function properly.

Here are a few examples to illustrate this. There is no official leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha. Legislatures, especially in the states, are in session for ever fewer days. Important bills are being pushed through without scrutiny by parliamentary committees. Since the BJP presently does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha, it is trying to weaken the federal structure and bypass the Rajya Sabha. In March 2017, the BJP ramrodded

the Finance Bill through Parliament without giving much time for debate—the Bill had more than 40 amendments moved by the finance minister himself; several of these amendments involved very important issues, and a separate amendment should have been moved for each specific law in both houses of Parliament; such a finance bill has not been heard of in Indian legislative mechanism. Worse, the BJP got the Aadhar Bill passed by the Lok Sabha as a money bill, which means that it did not require to be passed by the Rajya Sabha. While on the one hand, Modi talks big about zero corruption, the government is quietly weakening anti-corruption institutions: though the Lokpal Act was passed by Parliament in 2013, not a single Lokpal has been appointed in the last four years; on top of it, the government is attempting to dilute the Act through amendments; similarly, the Whistleblowers' Act has not been operationalised; the BJP after coming to power has made a U-turn on the issue of bringing political parties under the RTI Act; on top of it, the government has made corporate funding of political parties more opaque! The Modi-Shah duo have launched a no-holds barred campaign to destroy state-level parties like the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, Janata Dal (United) in Bihar and Trinamool Congress in Bengal that have the capacity to form an alliance to defeat the BJP in 2019. Lt. Governors have made it nearly impossible for elected governments to function. Throwing propriety to the winds, former judges are being appointed to politically sensitive posts.

Although every government has breached such conventions in the past, the scale and frequency of recent breaches is alarming.

Much more dangerous than this breach of constitutionalism is that the BJP does not believe in the ideals embodied in the preamble of the Indian Constitution. It does not believe in democracy. It has launched a brutal offensive to silence its political opponents as well as secular and Left intellectuals, labelling all opponents of the regime as anti-nationals, hounding them through a

pliant media and getting a docile police force to arrest them under false charges of sedition. It does not believe in equality. It in fact believes in resurrecting all the traditional hierarchies of the past, including both the caste system as well as gender inequality, as sanctioned by the infamous law book of ancient India, the Manusmriti. It does not believe in secularism too; BJP leaders have made no secret of their desire to remove the word

'secularism' from the preamble of the Indian Constitution. The BJP is the political arm of the RSS, and the RSS is committed to transforming secular and democratic India into a Hindu Rashtra.

It is not just constitutionalism, but the very Constitution of India, that is under threat.

-Neeraj Jain

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Such Significance of Secularism being a Pillar of the Indian Constitution

Rajindar Sachar

The Preamble of Our Constitution mandates. WE THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC.

It is well settled that the Preamble is the key to the Constitution and the objectives mentioned in the Preamble, namely the ideals of Socialism, Secularism and Democracy, must govern any programme of the governments.

It is self evident that secularism as a philosophy as highlighted in the Preamble is one of the working foundations of the Indian Constitution.

It is implicit in the secular character of the Indian State that no religion can claim superiority of status on any other religion. All religions under our Constitution have equal acceptance and status. A single citizenship is assured to all persons irrespective of their religion.

Secularism does not signify anti-religion. In India people fervently believe in their respective religions and an overwhelming number of persons of all communities give equal respect to the religion of others. Secularism signifies giving equal dignity and respect to all religions. Of course it goes without saying that the Indian State has no religion of its own, nor for that matter can any religion claim superiority over another religion such as by resorting to the false premise that it is indigenous while others are foreign. This is heresy not permitted by our Constitution, which gives equal reverence to all the religions practiced by the various communities of India. The Supreme Court too has declared that the concept of secularism is that the State will have no religion of its own.

All religions have the same message. Thus *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) shows the spirit of tolerance in Hinduism. The same message of humanity and common good runs through all religions. Thus the Holy Quran proclaims, "All the created

ones belong to the family of God . . . so, an Arab has no precedence over a non-Arab, a White over a Black". And Christ said succinctly, "All are children of God."

It is a truism that in any country the faith and the confidence of the minorities in the impartial and even functioning of the State is the acid test of being a civilised State. This is accepted wisdom, and was succinctly expressed by Lord Acton as follows:

A state which is incompetent to satisfy different races condemns itself; a state which labours to neutralise, to absorb or to expel them is destitute of the chief basis of self-government.

We need only substitute minorities for races in the above quotation to apply the test to India.

But much earlier, the founding fathers/mothers of Indian Constitution with their vision to secure to all citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity provided these rights for the minorities. Thus the Fundamental Rights Chapter in Part III of our Constitution specifically provides, vide Articles 25 to 30, various rights and privileges for the minorities such as:

- i. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
- ii. Freedom to manage religious affairs.
- iii. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
- iv. Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.
- v. Protection of interests of minorities.
- vi. Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

Supreme Court and Secularism

However, mere provision of Rights can give no

assurance by itself. It is for this reason that Article 32 guarantees to every citizen the right to move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights. This article gives an assurance to the minorities that in case of apprehension that the political process is not giving them justice, they are not without remedy. The Supreme Court has upheld secularism in no uncertain terms. In the words of Chief Justice S.R. Das in the case pertaining to the Kerala Education Bill 1957 [AIR 1958 SC 956]:

We the people of India have given unto ourselves the Constitution which is not for any particular community or section but for all. Its provisions are intended to protect all, minority as well as majority communities. . . . It is, we conceive, the duty of this Court to uphold the fundamental rights and thereby honour the sacred obligation to the minority communities who are of our own.

The same sentiment was expressed by the Supreme Court when it said [Dr. Ismael Faruqui vs. Union of India, 1994 (6) SCC 360]:

It is clear from the constitutional scheme that it guarantees equality in the matter of religion to all individuals and groups irrespective of their faith emphasising that there is no religion of the State itself. The Preamble of the Constitution read in particular with Articles 25 to 28 emphasises this aspect. . . . The concept of secularism is one facet of the right to equality woven as the central golden thread in the fabric depicting the pattern of the scheme in our Constitution.

The Court stressed that:

The purpose of law in plural societies is not the progressive assimilation of the minorities in the majoritarian milieu. This would not solve the problem; but would vainly seek to dissolve it.

Posing the question as to what is the law's purpose, it referred with approval to the test laid down by Lord Scarman of the House of Lords of the UK:

The purpose of the law must be not to extinguish the groups which make the society but to devise political, social and legal means of preventing them from falling apart and so destroying the plural society of which they are members.

Thus inclusive development in India and for that matter in any country is the only path to prosperity. It is an undeniable truth and needs to be irrevocably accepted by all in India, namely that the minorities, Muslims and Christians are not outsiders. They are an integral part of India. Let me quote what Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest spiritual personalities of India, has to say of the intimate connection between the spirit of Islam and Hinduism. He told the 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 Paramhansa, had accepted all religions as true. Swami Vivekananda in fact profusely praised Islam and in a letter to his friend Mohammed Sarfraz Hussain (10 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 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.

There can thus be no real progress in India which does not include minorities, Muslims, Christians as equal stakeholders. It needs to be emphasised that development and growth in the country has to be all inclusive—the mode of development must necessarily take into account the needs and sensitivities of minorities, Dalits, tribals in India. This was reaffirmed and emphasised recently by the Socialist Party (India), which is inspired by and follows the philosophy and programme of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, thus; “that they must be treated as a special trust and there is an urgent need to attend to their problems immediately.”

United Nations and Minorities

The UN Declaration of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities 1992 mandates in Article 1 that States shall protect the existence of the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

The minorities, many a times, may feel that there is

discrimination against them in the matter of employment, housing, for obtaining loans from the public or private sector banks, or opportunities for good schooling. It is self evident that if minorities have these perceptions, law must provide an effective mechanism which should examine their complaints and be able to give effective relief.

In this connection it is heartening to find confirmation in the report of UN Human Rights Council, Forum on Minority Issues, on December 14–15, 2010 wherein it has made some significant recommendations on minorities and their effective participation in economic life, which each country is mandated to follow. The Council emphasises:

Consequently, the right of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be fully taken into account by governments seeking to promote equality at every level. From implementing non-discrimination in employment and enforcing protection laws in the private sector to developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes, governments face the constant challenge of ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected and that they benefit as equal members in society. . . .

Governments can consider both targeted and inclusive approaches to addressing the economic and social exclusion of minorities. . . .

Governments should gather and regularly publicize disaggregated data to measure and monitor the effective participation of minorities in economic life. Improved data collection should be made a priority for the areas of employment and labour rights, poverty rates, access to social security, access to credit and other financial services, education and training, and property and land tenure rights.

In the report of the Working Group on Minorities formed by UN Sub Commission on Protection of Minorities, it was the unanimous view that the assimilative approach was not promoted by the United Nations, and that formal recognition of minorities is the first crucial step towards their effective participation in society. This means not only participation in governance, but also involvement in the economy. Also accepted was

the need for multi-lingual education and respect for cultural identity of minorities and the need to ensure fair representation of minorities within the law enforcement system and the workplace. The basic task is to reconcile the pluralism which then exists in that State, and the need to respect the identity of the various groups, with the overall concerns of non-discrimination, equality, national security, territorial integrity and political independence.

UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues has recently emphasised the following:

The outcome document of the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State and Government, approved by the General Assembly, notes that “the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities contributes to political and social stability and peace and enriches the cultural diversity and heritage of society.”

Respect for minority rights assists in achieving stable and prosperous societies, in which human rights, development and security are achieved by all, and shared by all.

Inclusive Development Sole Path to Prosperity

As a member of the United Nations, the Indian government has a legal obligation to give concrete shape to these requirements, if its claim to minority welfare is to have any meaning.

Amongst the various recommendations by the High Level Committee constituted by the Prime Minister on the ‘Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India’ (report submitted in November 2006), a very urgent recommendation dealt with the unfairness of divisions of electoral constituencies which results in lesser number of Muslims in the legislature as compared to what they are broadly entitled based on the population. This anomaly arises from the irrational demarcation of seats in the legislature.

Thus for instance, in UP there is abundant potential for a substantial number of Muslims to win seats. UP sends the largest number of members (80) to the Lok Sabha. There are 25–52% Muslim’s in 18 seats, in 23 seats Muslims are 15–24% and in another 18 seats Muslims are 10–14%. The demographic–electoral reflection is similar in most other states. However, the

constituencies with substantial number of Muslims have been reserved for Scheduled Castes, and constituencies with substantial number of Scheduled Caste voters are unreserved. This is unfair to both Muslims and the SC electorate. The Committee had concluded that Muslims were thus denied benefits in politics since assembly constituencies where the voter population from the community was substantial were reserved for scheduled caste candidates. It would therefore be more equitable to reserve those constituencies for SCs where their voter population is high, rather than those where it is low and the Muslims presence is higher.

The Committee had hoped that its report would receive the attention of the government immediately because the Delimitation Commission was at that time engaged in this exercise. However, the High Powered Committee's suggestion was ignored during the delimitation. This anomaly is a reason for the low representation of Muslims in the legislatures. How inequitable that important issues related to the community are ignored or don't get the desired priority! Somebody has to take the responsibility for taking concrete action on this issue; mere lip sympathy is a facade.

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 cannot put it better than what Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan, one of the greatest leaders of our country, had to say over a century back. Gandhiji repeated it in 1921, and also in another prayer meeting at Rajghat on 24 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 suffers when either Hindus or Muslims suffer.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's clarion call emphasises that composite culture is the bedrock of secularism pervading our country. He said thus:

Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism. If Hinduism has been the religion of the people here for several

thousands. of years, Islam also has been their religion for a thousand years. 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.

Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievement. Our languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life which has escaped this stamp. . . .

This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality, and we do not want to leave it and go back to the times when this joint life had not begun. 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 civilisation 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.

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Nehru, Ambedkar and Challenge of Majoritarianism

Subhash Gatade

The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organised religion, in India and elsewhere, has filled me with horror and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seemed to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition, exploitation and the preservation of vested interests.

– Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru (1936), pp. 240–241.

If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost.

– Ambedkar, ‘Pakistan or Partition of India’, p. 358.

Introduction

India’s slow ushering into a majoritarian democracy is a matter of concern for every such individual who still believes in pluralism, democracy, equality and a clear separation of religion and politics. The way people are being hounded for raising dissenting opinions, for eating food of their choice or entering into relationships of their own liking or celebrating festivals according to their own faith is unprecedented. The situation has reached such extremes that one can even be publicly lynched for belonging to one of the minority religions or for engaging in an activity which is considered to be ‘suspicious’ by the majority community.

No doubt there is no direct harm to the basic structure of the Constitution, its formal structure remains intact, *de jure* India does remain a democracy as well as a republic, but *de facto* democracy has slowly metamorphosed into majoritarianism and the *sine qua non* of a republic—that its citizens are supreme—is being watered down fast. It does not need underlining that this process has received tremendous boost with the ascent

of Hindutva supremacist forces at the centrestage of Indian politics.

The brazen manner in which a Union cabinet minister—who has taken oath to abide by the Constitution—declared in public that they have come to power to ‘change the constitution’ and the manner in which ruling party members preferred to remain silent about it can be seen as a sign of the crisis facing Indian society. Perhaps less said the better about the man who calls Constitution ‘the most sacred book’ and who loves to project himself as a disciple of Dr Ambedkar.

A sobering fact at this juncture is to remember that leading lights of the movement for political and social emancipation—which unfolded itself under British rule—definitely had a premonition of things to come and had rightly cautioned / underlined / warned the people of the bleak future which awaits them if they do not remain vigilant. As Patel’s biographer Rajmohan Gandhi points out:

Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Patel formed a crucial trimvirate that agreed that independent India would not be a Hindu Rashtra but one that offered equal rights to all. After Gandhi’s departure and until Patel’s death, Patel and Nehru differed on several matters but not on some fundamentals. With the help of others including Ambedkar, Maulana Azad, Rajendra Prasad and Rajaji, they entrenched secularism and equality in the Constitution.¹

An inkling of the collective thinking among them is evident if one looks at the Objectives Resolution moved in the Constituent Assembly by Pandit Nehru on 13 December 1946 and adopted unanimously by the Constituent Assembly on 22 January 1947. It declared its firm resolve not only to make India an independent sovereign republic but also to guarantee and secure for all the people of India

social, economic and political justice; equality of

status and opportunities and equality before law; and fundamental freedoms—of speech, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action—subject to law and public morality;

and also ensure that adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes.

The key importance of the Objectives Resolution (which was then called / moved as ‘Resolution on the Aims and Objects of the Constitution’) can be gauged from the fact that according to the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, it was the basis of the ‘Preamble of the Constitution’. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee was Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who was appointed to this post at the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi possibly due to his scholarship in legal and constitutional matters.

One can take a look at the way Gandhi’s last struggle—the way he undertook fast unto death to stop the communal riots in 1947—unfolded itself, or the way Jawaharlal Nehru cautioned people about the possibility of India turning into a ‘Hindu Pakistan’² or the way he led the fight against danger of majoritarianism within the Congress itself. Describing communalism as an ‘Indian version of fascism’, Pandit Nehru said in 1947 that the tide of the fascism gripping the country was the direct consequence of the hate speeches given against non-Muslims by the Muslim League and its supporters.³

On the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi’s birth anniversary in 1951, Nehru said that if a person attacks another on the issue of religions, he will fight against that person till the end of his life both in his capacity of being the head of the government and as a true Indian. He advocated a ban on organizations based on religion and empowered the government by getting the Constitution amended to exercise restraining power to suppress communal writings and communally provocative speeches.⁴

One can look at his correspondence with chief ministers on various occasions or his instructions or his speeches in Parliament to know how he debunked ideas of special ‘protection for the majority’:

If I may venture to lay down a rule, it is the primary responsibility of the majority to satisfy the minority in every matter. The majority, by virtue of it being a

*majority, has the strength to have its way: it requires no protection.*⁵

Patel, the ‘Iron Man of India’, had declared in the Jaipur Session of the party that the Congress was dedicated to upholding secularism at any cost: ‘India is a true secular country’. He described the talk of ‘Hindu Rajya as an act of insanity’ in 1949.⁶

*That day Delhi caught Punjab’s infection. ‘I will not tolerate Delhi becoming another Lahore’, Vallabhbhai declared in Nehru’s and Mountbatten’s presence. He publicly threatened partisan officials with punishment, and at his instructions orders to shoot rioters at sight were issued on September 7. Four Hindu rioters were shot dead at the railway station in Old Delhi.*⁷

In a speech in Madras (1949), he underlined how apart from other challenges before the nation the government was dealing with the ‘RSS movement’:

*We in the government have been dealing with the RSS movement. They want that Hindu Rajya or Hindu culture should be imposed by force. No government can tolerate this. There are almost as many Muslims in this country as in the part that has been partitioned away. We are not going to drive them away. It would be an evil day if we started that game, in spite of partition and whatever happens. We must understand that they are going to stay here and it is our obligation and our responsibility to make them feel that this is their country.*⁸

Perhaps foreseeing that attempts would be made by interested quarters to drive a wedge between him and Nehru, he categorically stated in Indore on 2 October 1950, just three months before his death:

*Our leader is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Bapu appointed him his heir and successor during his lifetime and even declared it. It is the duty of the soldiers of Bapu that they abide by his orders. One who does not accept this order by heart would prove a sinner before god. I am not a disloyal soldier. For me it is unimportant what my place is. I only know that I am at that very place where Bapu asked me to stand.*⁹

In the following writeup we do not intend to deal further with the role played by the likes of Nehru, Patel

or other leaders in giving a shape to the emergent republic. Our focus is rather limited. We focus attention in this article on how Dr Ambedkar perceived of a future roadmap for India, his perception of the dangers of a 'Hindu India' or the possibility of a 'majoritarian rule' emerging here.

It is a rather neglected theme because under pressures of political exigency, discussion is usually restricted to one or the other aspect of Dr Ambedkar's life and struggle, and his overall vision does not get the attention it deserves. The urgency of this intervention is because while the Hindutva Right is overenthusiastically appropriating Ambedkar for its cause, the response from the seculars as well as the left is less than expected.

A close look at the last decade of Ambedkar's eventful life (1946-56) can help us discern various threads in his worldview or vision of a new India.

I

The making of the Constitution itself was marked by pressures and counterpressures—from believers of radical change to the status quoists—and what came out can at best be called a compromise document between various contending forces and ideas. Dr Ambedkar's separation between the beginning of political democracy in India with the advent of the one-man-one-vote regime, and the long hiatus he saw before the ushering in of social democracy—the regime of one-man-one-value—while dedicating the Constitution to the nation was in fact a reminder of the fact that the struggle was still not over.

Without doubt he was the chief architect of the Constitution, and it was his interventions—of course with due support from Nehru and others—that led to the inclusion of important pro-people or pro-disprivileged provisions into it, but we should not be under any illusion that 'his vision' ultimately triumphed and was inscribed in the Constitution.

Ambedkar in fact was very aware of the limitations of such a constitutional exercise in a backward society like ours:

Indians today are governed by two ideologies. Their political ideal set in the preamble of the Constitution affirms a life of liberty, equality and

*fraternity, whereas their social ideal embedded in their religion denies it to them.*¹⁰

His 'vision' about a future India can be discerned from his less discussed monograph, *States and Minorities: What are Their Rights and How to Secure them in the Constitution of Free India* which was basically a memorandum on the safeguards for the Scheduled Castes that was submitted to the Constituent Assembly on behalf of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation that he led. This monograph does not limit itself to 'safeguards' but also talks of the danger of majoritarianism, incompatibility of Hinduism with any change, and also proposes a model of economic development that he himself described as 'state socialism'.

It is a monograph that would be quite enlightening for many of us. In it, he envisaged that the 'state shall not recognise any religion as state religion' and 'guarantee to every citizen liberty of conscience'. Simultaneously, on the aspect of protection against economic exploitation, he not only declared that 'key industries shall be owned and run by the state', but also that non-key but basic industries shall also 'be owned by the state and run by the state'. He was of the opinion that 'agriculture shall be state industry', where 'the state shall divide the land acquired into farms of standard size'; the 'farm shall be cultivated as a collective farm . . . in accordance with rules and directions issued by the government'; and the 'tenants shall share among themselves in the manner prescribed the produce of the farm left after the payment of charges properly leviable on the farm'.

He further explains this clause in the following words:

*The main purpose behind the clause is to put an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to private enterprise, and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth. The plan set out in the clause proposes state ownership in agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of State Socialism in the field of industry. . . . State Socialism is essential for the rapid industrialisation of India. Private enterprise cannot do it and if it did it would produce those inequalities of wealth which private capitalism has produced in Europe and which should be a warning to Indians. Consolidation of Holdings and Tenancy legislation are worse than useless.*¹¹

Interestingly, he does not propose that the idea of State Socialism should be left to legislatures and instead wants it to be implemented by Constitutional law:

The plan has two special features. One is that it proposes State Socialism in important fields of economic life. The second special feature of the plan is that it does not leave the establishment of State Socialism to the will of the Legislature. It establishes State Socialism by the Law of the Constitution and thus makes it unalterable by any act of the Legislature and the Executive.

II

In the same monograph he clearly differentiates between ‘Untouchables’ and ‘Hindus’.

Gone were the days when he felt that Hinduism would reform itself from within. More than a decade had passed since his famous declaration at the Yeola conference that ‘I was born as a Hindu but I will not die as a Hindu’.

He is unequivocal about the ‘Hindu population which is hostile to them (Untouchables)’ and emphasises that it is ‘not ashamed of committing any inequity or atrocity against them’. He is also not hopeful about their situation under Swaraj:

What can Swaraj mean to the Untouchables ? It can only mean one thing, namely, that while today it is only the administration that is in the hands of the Hindus, under Swaraj the Legislature and Executive will also be in the hands of the Hindus, it goes without saying that such a Swaraj would aggravate the sufferings of the Untouchables. For, in addition to an hostile administration, there will be an indifferent Legislature and a callous Executive. The result will be that the administration unbridled in venom and in harshness, uncontrolled by the Legislature and the Executive, may pursue its policy of inequity towards the Untouchables without any curb. To put it differently, under Swaraj the Untouchables will have no way of escape from the destiny of degradation which Hindus and Hinduism have fixed for them.¹²

He was very much aware about the dangers of majoritarianism implicit in the way Indian nationalism had developed which according to him had

developed a new doctrine which may be called the Divine Right of the Majority to rule the minorities according to the wishes of the majority. Any claim for the sharing of power by the minority is called communalism while the monopolising of the whole power by the majority is called Nationalism.¹³

And so, to protect the rights of the minorities (remember that he does not restrict himself here to religious minorities but also includes the ‘scheduled castes’ in his definition) he proposes a form of Executive which could serve following purposes:

- i) To prevent the majority from forming a Government without giving any opportunity to the minorities to have a say in the matter.
- ii) To prevent the majority from having exclusive control over administration and thereby make the tyranny of the minority by the majority possible.
- iii) To prevent the inclusion by the Majority Party in the Executive representatives of the minorities who have no confidence of the minorities.
- iv) To provide a stable Executive necessary for good and efficient administration.

In fact, his fears vis-a-vis the majoritarian impulses were evident in the political manifesto of the Scheduled Castes Federation itself—the political organisation that was set up by him in 1942 which rejected the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha as ‘reactionary’ organisations:

The Scheduled Castes Federation will not have any alliance with any reactionary party such as the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS.¹⁴

Anyone who has studied the making of the Indian constitution would tell us why Ambedkar considered the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha as ‘reactionary’ parties. History is witness to the fact that they opposed its making and suggested in their organs that instead of a new Constitution, the newly independent nation should adopt *Manusmriti*. A laughable suggestion today, but the fact is it was then seriously raised by its proponents:

The worst (thing) about the new Constitution of Bharat is that there is nothing Bharatiya about it. . . there is no trace of ancient Bharatiya constitutional laws, institutions, nomenclature and phraseology in

*it. . . . no mention of the unique constitutional developments in ancient Bharat. Manu's laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity (among Hindus in India). But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.*¹⁵

In his monograph 'Pakistan or Partition of India' he reiterates his fears vis-a-vis the possible majoritarian turn at the hands of those who vouched for 'Hindu Raj':

*If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt be the greatest calamity for this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost.*¹⁶

III

Much on the lines of lack of debate / discussion around *States and Minorities*, another important intervention of Ambedkar during that period has also received little attention. It was related to the struggle for Hindu Code Bill and happened to be the first attempt in independent India to reform Hindu personal laws to give greater rights to Hindu women. Through this, his attempt was to put a stamp on monogamy, also ensure separation rights for women and also grant them rights in property. We know very well that it was a key reason for Ambedkar's resignation from Nehru's Cabinet because he felt that despite lot of attempts not much headway was being made in granting these rights. In his resignation letter he underlined the importance he attached to the bill :

*To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. This is the significance I attached to the Hindu Code.*¹⁷

How the Hindutva right and the conservative sections within the Congress coupled with the saffron-robed swamis and sadhus joined hands to oppose the enactment of Hindu Code Bill is well-known history. In fact, this motley combination of reactionary and status quoist forces

did not limit themselves to issuing statements. They also opposed the bill on the streets and led large scale mobilisation at pan India level against the bill. There were occasions when they even tried to storm Dr Ambedkar's residence in Delhi.

Their main argument against Ambedkar was that the bill was an attack on 'Hindu Religion and Culture'. The enormous resistance to this bill becomes clear from this excerpt from Ramchandra Guha's book:

*The anti-Hindu code bill committee held hundreds of meetings throughout India, where sundry swamis denounced the proposed legislation. The participants in this movement presented themselves as religious warriors (dharmaveer) fighting a religious war (dharmayudh). The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh threw its weight behind the agitation. On the 11th of December, 1949, the RSS organised a public meeting at the Ramlila grounds in Delhi, where speaker after speaker condemned the bill. One called it 'an atom bomb on Hindu society' . . . The next day a group of RSS workers marched on the assembly buildings, shouting 'Down with Hindu code bill' . . . The protesters burnt effigies of the prime minister and Dr Ambedkar, and then vandalised the car of Sheikh Abdullah.*¹⁸

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, founder of BJP's predecessor, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, declared that the Bill would 'shatter the magnificent structure of Hindu culture'.¹⁹

In his intervention in support of Ambedkar and the Hindu Code Bill during the debate in Parliament on this bill, Acharya Kriplani stated:

*Much has been said about Hindu religion being in danger. I am afraid I cannot see the point. Hindu religion is not in danger when Hindus are thieves, rogues, fornicators, black-marketers or takers of bribes! Hindu religion is not endangered by these people but Hindu religion is endangered by people who want to reform a particular law! May be they are over-zealous but it is better to be over-zealous in things idealistic than be corrupt in material things.*²⁰

In fact, like Mahatma Phule—whom he called the 'Greatest Shudra' and considered him his teacher along with Buddha and Kabir—the concern for women's

emancipation always existed in the movement led by Ambedkar.

IV

How did he envisage the idea of democracy ?

Perhaps his speech on the 'Voice of America' radio (20 May 1956) which he gave few months before his death could best summarise his ideas around this concept.

The first point which he makes is that 'Democracy is quite different from a Republic as well as from Parliamentary Government.' According to him:

*The roots of democracy lie not in the form of government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society.*²¹

He then goes on to explain the meaning of the word 'society'. He says:

When we speak of 'Society,' we conceive of it as one by its very nature. The qualities which accompany this unity are praiseworthy community of purpose and desire for welfare, loyalty to public ends and mutuality of sympathy and co-operation.

Examining Indian society, he questions whether 'these ideals are found in Indian society?' He says that Indian society is nothing but 'an innumerable collection of castes which are exclusive in their life and have no common experience to share and have no bond of sympathy', and concludes that:

*The existence of the caste system is a standing denial of the existence of those ideals of society and therefore of democracy.*²²

He goes on to say that 'Indian society is so embedded in the caste system that everything is organised on the basis of caste'. He shares examples of how the daily life of individuals revolves around the twin concepts of purity and pollution, then discusses how caste is prevalent in the social-political arena too, and wryly concludes that 'there is no room for the downtrodden and the outcasts in politics, in industry, in commerce and in education.'

Further he discusses other special features of the caste system which 'have their evil effects and which militate against democracy'. He particularly discusses the feature of 'Graded Inequality' wherein 'castes are not equal in their status' but rather 'are standing one above another' and form 'an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt' which has the most pernicious consequences as 'it destroys willing and helpful co-operation.'

Deliberating about the difference between caste and class, he takes up the second evil effect in the caste system which is 'complete isolation' which is not there in the class system. This manifests itself in the fact that 'the stimulus and response between two castes is only one-sided. The higher caste act in one recognised way and the lower caste must respond in one established way.' Such influences 'educate some into masters, educate others into slaves. . . . It results into a separation of society, into a privileged and a subject class. Such a separation prevents social endosmosis.'

The third characteristic of the caste system, that 'cuts at the very roots of democracy', is that 'one caste is bound to one occupation.' Ambedkar says 'there is in a man an indefinite plurality of capacities and activities. A society to be democratic should open a way to use all the capacities of the individual.' However, this binding of the individual to one occupation leads to stratification which stunts 'the growth of the individual and deliberate stunting is a deliberate denial of democracy.'

In the concluding part of his speech, Ambedkar discusses obstacles in the way to end caste system. He says that the first obstacle is 'the system of graded inequality which is the soul of the caste system.' The second obstacle is that 'Indian society is disabled by unity in action by not being able to know what is its common good. . . . Every where 'the mind of the Indians is distracted and misled by false valuations and false perspectives.' He ends his speech by emphasising that mere education cannot destroy the caste system: 'If you give education to those strata of Indian Society which has a vested interest in maintaining the caste system for the advantages it gives them, then the caste system will be strengthened. On the other hand, if you give education to the lowest strata of Indian society which is interested in blowing up the caste system, the caste system will be blown up.' And so he concludes: 'To give education to those who want to keep up the caste system is not to

improve the prospect of democracy in India but to put our democracy in India in greater jeopardy.²³

As opposed to the conservative notions about democracy that consider it to be an instrument to stop bad people from seizing power, Ambedkar considered democracy to be related to social transformation and human progress. He defined democracy as “a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed.”²⁴ The conditions for that are as follows:

*(1) There should not be glaring inequalities in society, that is, privilege for one class; (2) The existence of an opposition; (3) Equality in law and administration; (4) Observance of constitutional morality; (5) No tyranny of the majority; (6) Moral order of society; and (7) Public conscience.*²⁵

In his speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 he expressed three cautions and believed that paying heed to them was critical to ensure that our democratic institutions did not get subverted:

*(i) Constitutional methods; (ii) Not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man; (iii) Make a political democracy a social democracy.*²⁶

For Ambedkar, democracy and secularism are inseparable. Looking at the fact that India happens to be a multi-denominational society where the common denominator could be secularism which is understood as one of the pillars on which the superstructure of our democracy rests and is a unifying force of our associated life, he emphasised:

*The conception of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West. No institution which is maintained wholly out of state funds shall be used for the purpose of religious instruction irrespective of the question whether the religious instruction is given by the state or by any other body.*²⁷

In a debate in Parliament, he underlined:

It (secular state) does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people. All that a secular state means is that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any

*particular religion upon the rest of the people. This is the only limitation that the Constitution recognises.*²⁸

At the same time, he emphatically states that it is the duty of the state to ensure that the minority does not become victim of the tyranny of the majority:

*The State should guarantee to its citizens the liberty of conscience and the free exercise of his religion including the right to profess, to preach and to convert within limits compatible with public order and morality.*²⁹

In an insightful article, Prof Jean Dreze argues that ‘Ambedkar’s passion for democracy was closely related to his commitment to rationality and the scientific outlook.’ Jean Dreze elaborates the connection. Rationality is necessary for democratic government since public debate (an essential aspect of democratic practice) is impossible in the absence of a shared adherence to common sense, logical argument and critical enquiry. And, scientific spirit is inherently anti-authoritarian, as a person then does not believe in authority, but in coherence of the argument and quality of the evidence. Dreze goes on to argue that Ambedkar shared this belief. This is evident from one of Ambedkar’s last speeches, ‘Buddha or Karl Marx’, wherein he summarises the essential teachings of Buddha as follows:

*Everyone has a right to learn. Learning is as necessary for man to live as food is. . . . Nothing is infallible. Nothing is binding forever. Everything is subject to inquiry and examination.*³⁰

Jean Dreze says that it is important to bring forth this relationship between democracy and rationalism / scientific outlook because of the ‘recent threats to Indian democracy (which) often involve a concerted attack on rationality and the scientific spirit.’ (Ibid.)

V

*I will accept and follow the teachings of Buddha. I will keep my people away from the different opinions of Hinayan and Mahayan, two religious orders. Our Bouddha Dhamma is a new Bouddha Dhamma, Navayan.*³¹

An important development in the last decade of Ambedkar’s life was his decision to embrace Buddhism

with lakhs of followers. Apart from his deep fascination for Buddhism from younger days, his conversion to Buddhism had also to do with his contention that the ‘untouchables’ were in fact former Buddhists. He elaborates it in his book *The Untouchables: A Thesis on the Origin of Untouchability* (1948).³² Thus it could also be said to be a return to ‘their’ original religion than a conversion. Interestingly one finds deep commonality between Dr Ambedkar and Jyothee Thass, the great Tamil-Buddhist Scholar, who also maintained that ‘Untouchables’ were early Buddhists.

His ‘conversion’ to Buddhism was also renouncement of Hinduism which according to him had

*proved detrimental to progress and prosperity of my predecessors and which has regarded human beings as unequal and despicable.*³³

If one refers to the 22 pledges he administered to his followers on the occasion then one can broadly categorise them into four parts: complete rejection of Hindu gods (for example, I will not accept Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as Gods) and their worship and the related rituals (I will not perform *Shraddha Paksh* or *Pind Dana*, rituals to respect the dead); acceptance of the principles and teachings of Buddhism; declaration that ‘all human beings are equal’; and ‘no faith in divine incarnation’.

An important aspect of this ‘return’ or ‘conversion’ is the fact that it was also a reinterpretation of Buddhism which he described as *Navayan*—a new vehicle. Apart from a big monograph *Buddha and His Dhamma* where he tries to revisit Buddhism, one can get a glimpse of his reading of the Buddha and his teachings from the speech he delivered in Kathmandu merely a fortnight before his death which was posthumously published as *Buddha Or Karl Marx*.

Summarising the ‘Creed of Buddhism’, while on the one hand he underlines the necessity of ‘religion for a free society’, at the same time, he says many things which would be rather unacceptable to a scholar or follower of religion because he appears to reject the ‘necessity of God’ as well as *Shastras* and rituals. Thus for instance, he says:

- *Religion must relate to facts of life and not to theories and speculations about God, or Soul or Heaven or Earth.*

- *It is wrong to make God the centre of Religion.*
- *It is wrong to make salvation of the soul as the centre of Religion.*
- *It is wrong to make animal sacrifices to be the centre of Religion.*
- *Real Religion lives in the heart of man and not in the Shastras.*
- *Man and morality must be the centre of religion. If not, Religion is a cruel superstition.*
- *It is not enough for Morality to be the ideal of life. Since there is no God it must become the law of life.*³⁴

Ambedkar differentiates himself from popular definitions of religion first by criticising the way religions have tried to explain the origin and the end of world and says that its ‘function is to reconstruct the world and to make it happy’. He then goes on to explore the source of unhappiness, and does not talk about ‘sins’ or ‘otherworldly affairs’ but says that ‘unhappiness in the world is due to conflict of interest and the only way to solve it is to follow the Ashtanga Marga.’ Further elaborating on the ‘Creed of Buddhism’, he says that ‘private ownership of property brings power to one class and sorrow to another’ and ‘it is necessary for the good of Society that this sorrow be removed by removing its cause.’ While religions the world over have remained the basis of ‘othering’—which in extreme cases have resulted in genocides too—Buddhism as perceived by Ambedkar believes that ‘all human beings are equal’ and ‘worth and not birth is the measure of man’.

While supporting ‘war for truth and justice’ and also emphasising that the ‘victor has duties towards the vanquished’ in the last part of his summary of the ‘Creed of Buddhism’, he not only challenges the monopoly of a few over learning but also emphatically states: ‘Nothing is permanent or sanatana. Everything is subject to change. Being is always becoming.’

This speech—as the title shows—also throws light on his views about Marxism. Of course it is not for the first time that he had expressed his views on the theme. In his famous booklet *Annihilation of Caste* he had already made it clear that while he appreciates the goal of Marxism, he is repelled by its Indian practitioners. In this speech too, he declares that ‘Buddha is not away from Marx’ if ‘for misery one reads exploitation.’

For him non-violence is not an issue of principle: 'The Buddha was against violence. But he was also in favour of justice and where justice required he permitted the use of force.' Ambedkar further writes that:

Violence cannot be altogether dispensed with. Even in non-communist countries a murderer is hanged. Does not hanging amount to violence? Non-communist countries go to war with non-communist countries. Millions of people are killed. Is this no violence? If a murderer can be killed, because he has killed a citizen, if a soldier can be killed in war because he belongs to a hostile nation, why cannot a property owner be killed if his ownership leads to misery for the rest of humanity? There is no reason to make an exception in favour of the property owner, why one should regard private property as sacrosanct.

He goes on to assert that even Buddha established communism:

The Russians are proud of their communism. But they forget that the wonder of all wonders is that the Buddha established communism so far as the Sangh was concerned without dictatorship. It may be that it was a communism on a very small scale but it was communism without dictatorship, a miracle which Lenin failed to do.

Of course, he underlines that:

The Buddha's method was different. His method was to change the mind of man, to alter his disposition, so that whatever man does, he does it voluntarily without the use of force or compulsion.

The concluding remarks he makes while ending his speech seem to validate, in Anand Teltumbde's words, 'his decision as confirming to Marxism, minus violence and dictatorship in the latter.'³⁵

It has been claimed that the Communist Dictatorship in Russia has wonderful achievements to its credit. There can be no denial of it. That is why I say that a Russian Dictatorship would be good for all backward countries. But this is no argument for permanent Dictatorship. . . .

We welcome the Russian Revolution because it aims to produce equality. But it cannot be too much emphasised that in producing equality society cannot

*afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty. It seems that the three can coexist only if one follows the way of the Buddha. Communism can give one but not all.'*³⁶

VII

These are no ordinary times to discuss the future of our republic.

We have before us an India where (to quote Prof Achin Vanaik):

The centre of gravity has shifted perhaps decisively to the right, in three crucial spheres: economy, secularism and democracy.

It is an India where the political dispensation at the centre is busy furthering the exclusivist/majoritarian worldview of Hindutva supremacism coupled with the neoliberal agenda under the glib talk of development and a concerted attack has been unleashed on (what Ambedkar defined as) minorities of various kinds and other deprived sections.

What can then be the contours of Dr Ambedkar's Vision for our times?

It will necessarily have to be: ensure that the 'state shall not recognise any religion as state religion' and 'guarantee to every citizen liberty of conscience'; stand against 'majoritarianism of every kind' and, more specifically, prevent the majority from forming a government without giving any opportunity to the minorities to have a say in the matter; stand up for women's emancipation, for state ownership in agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of State Socialism in the field of industry; stand against inequalities of wealth which private capitalism produces. It will necessarily have to be for annihilation of caste as 'the existence of the Caste System is a standing denial of the existence of ideals of society and therefore of Democracy.'³⁷ It will be for reason and rationality and scientific temper and not for dumbing of minds.

It does not need reminding that it will not be based on sanitisation or vulgarisation of Dr Ambedkar in any form as is being experimented with these days. While his appropriation by the Hindutva Right and its attempts to

carve out a 'suitable' Ambedkar for its project based on exclusion and hatred has been widely commented upon and exposed, much needs to be done to expose the projection of Ambedkar as a free market economist.³⁸ Scholarly sounding pieces have appeared based on selective quotes from his vast corpus of writings to project him as a 'Free Market Economist'.³⁹ In contrast to Ambedkar's views, there are also articles valorising capitalism for supposedly annihilating of caste.⁴⁰ This latter article by a noted columnist and an upcoming industrialist from the oppressed communities argues that:

Capital is the surest means to fight caste. In Dalit's hands, capital becomes an anti-caste weapon; little wonder that the traditional caste code prohibits dalits from accumulating wealth. Dalit capitalism is the answer to that regime of discrimination. The manifesto demands promotion of dalit capitalism through a variety of means-procurement, credit options and partnerships.

Last but not the least one will have to be wary of 'hero worship' or laying 'liberties at the feet of a great man' as it can culminate in 'subverting of institutions' in a democracy as Ambedkar has warned us. In fact he had this to say while dedicating the Constitution to the nation:

This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.⁴¹

Everybody can see that this caution has contemporary import. No month passes when some responsible member of the ruling dispensation compares the honourable PM to God or as 'God's gift to India'.

While *Bhaktis* can rejoice about this unique gift to India, every sensible person would agree that if this trend is allowed to continue then it is a 'sure road to degradation and eventual dictatorship.'

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Ambedkar's Prescient Warnings About the Constitution

Neeraj Jain

On November 25, 1949, in his last address to India's Constituent Assembly, Dr B.R. Ambedkar voiced two serious concerns about the future of the country. Unfortunately, both his warnings are proving to be prophetic today. Let us discuss his concerns.

On the Future of India's Independence

On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future.

What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people. . . . Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety.¹

Despite this grim warning, scarcely would Dr Ambedkar have apprehended that the Free India of his dreams would lose its freedom once again; that a mere 70 years after independence, Delhi's Moghuls would have pushed the Indian economy into such a crisis that they would be welcoming gigantic foreign multinationals with garlands and red carpets to invest, import, pollute our environment, ravage our natural resources, pillage the savings of our people, exploit our workers in the most inhuman ways, and inseminate our culture with violence and the invisible terrorism of America Inc.

This would sound surprising to many of our readers. But that is because they have been led to believe by India's treacherous intellectuals and sycophantic media that the foreign investment flows into the country (also called foreign direct investment or FDI) are an indicator of development, that the foreign corporations are coming

into the country to help us develop. If they are so good, why did we drive them out?

The truth is, these foreign capital inflows are not the result of deliberate policy by our ruling politicians and bureaucrats and are not taking place on equal terms, but are because our country has become dependent on foreign capital inflows to prevent our economy from sinking into external accounts bankruptcy. We explain this point briefly below.

The Indian economy was in crisis by 1991. Our external debt had gone up to \$84 billion, our foreign exchange reserves were insufficient to pay even the instalment on our external debt, and we were on the verge of external account bankruptcy. And so, in mid-1991, the Indian Government accepted the conditions imposed by India's foreign creditors and, in exchange for a huge foreign loan to tide over the foreign exchange crisis, agreed to a thorough restructuring of the Indian economy.² One of the important conditions accepted by it was to open up the economy to inflows of foreign capital and goods. It is this 'restructuring' of the Indian economy at the behest of the country's foreign creditors that has been given the grandiloquent name, globalisation. Since then, while governments at the Centre have kept on changing, globalisation of the Indian economy has continued unabated. The pace of implementing the economic reforms has accelerated under the new BJP Government at the Centre.

Nearly three decades after the beginning of globalisation, because of the very consequences of opening up the economy to unrestricted inflows of foreign capital and goods, India's external accounts are in a far worse state as compared to 1991.

- Our trade deficit, the difference between our merchandise exports and imports, has zoomed due to the huge inflow of foreign goods into the country. From \$2.8 billion in 1991–92, it has gone up to \$112.4 billion in 2016–17.

- Because of the huge rise in our trade deficit, our current account deficit (CAD), that is, the net deficit in our day-to-day transactions with other countries, went up from \$1.2 billion in 1991–92 to \$87.8 billion in 2012–13, before easing to \$15.2 billion for the financial year 2016–17 due to the fall in global oil prices. Indications are that it is going to rise again and is expected to go up to around \$30 billion in 2017-18.³

International trade takes place only in the currencies of the developed countries. Therefore, when a poor country like India runs up a current account deficit, it needs to attract foreign capital inflows to bridge the deficit. These can be either in the form of capital investment flows (either in the form of FDI, or investment in the stock markets) or more external borrowings.

The problem is:

- Capital investment flows result in profit outflows. The more the FDI, the more the profit outflows in the coming years.
- And, an interest has to be paid on external debt!

Both these therefore lead to a rise in CAD in the subsequent years, implying that in the coming years, the country will need even more capital investment inflows, or more external borrowings. It is a kind of debt trap!

Three decades of globalisation has pushed our economy into a far worse foreign exchange crisis than we faced in 1991. Our external debt now stands at an astronomical \$485 billion in end-June 2017,⁴ up by nearly six times from \$83.8 billion in end-March 1991!

The result is that the Indian economy has become totally dependent on foreign capital inflows, including foreign direct investment inflows and speculative capital inflows, as well as foreign debt flows, 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).⁵ 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.

This is the reason why India's Prime Ministers, from Manmohan Singh to Narendra Modi now, have been travelling to the capitals of the developed countries with a begging bowl—to entice foreign investors to invest in India, and promising them all kinds of incentives and concessions. The 'swadeshi' BJP Government is in fact implementing the World Bank dictated economic reforms at an even faster pace than the previous UPA Government.

During the past two years, the new government has twice announced huge liberalisation of FDI rules for foreign investors, in November 2015 and June 2016, such as permitting 100% FDI in several key sectors like defence, civil aviation and pharmaceuticals via the automatic route, that is, without being subject to government approval. More recently, on January 11, 2018, the newspapers reported that the Union Cabinet has unveiled a fresh round of liberalisation of our FDI policy and allowed 100% FDI in single-brand retail and real estate brokering services via the automatic route, and also allowed foreign airlines to invest up to 49% in Air India. This opening up of the retail sector to giant foreign retail corporations implies that the BJP has made a complete U-turn in its earlier opposition to FDI in Retail, a policy that will spell disaster for India's dynamic small scale retail sector. This sector is the second biggest employer after agriculture and employs nearly 4 crore people. Opening it up to investment by giant international retailers will push lakhs of small shopkeepers out of business.⁶

The Modi Government is bending over backwards to meet US objections to India's nuclear liability law, so that giant US corporations can set up nuclear power plants in India without having to worry about paying indemnities in case of design defects causing a nuclear accident—they are thus being encouraged to supply risky equipment, which is nothing but an invitation to disaster.⁷ The foreign corporations are keen to take over India's public sector insurance companies and banks, and thus acquire control over their huge premium income and deposits; bowing to their dictates, the BJP Government has taken the first steps to privatise these institutions. This is also the real essence of Modi's slogan *Make in India*—the 'swadeshi' government is inviting foreign corporations to manufacture in India and is promising them conditions in which they can produce in India at cheaper rates than China / Bangladesh / Vietnam, and thus make higher profits. For this, it is demolishing our

labour laws, so that MNCs can employ contract workers, pay them rock bottom wages, increase intensity of work to inhuman levels, force them to work 10–12–14 hours without paying overtime wages, and fire them at will. In a nutshell, they have put India ON SALE.⁸

On the Future of India's Democracy

The second warning delivered by Dr Ambedkar in his final address to the Constituent Assembly was with regards to the future of her democratic Constitution:

On the 26th of January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people. . . . What would happen to her democratic Constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it . . . I do not know. But it is quite possible in a country like India . . . there is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater.

Ambedkar suggests that “if we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact”, we must “not to be content with mere political democracy.” He goes on to say:

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. . . . Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. . . .

Ambedkar says: “We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian Society.” And what are these two things:

One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty.

On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. . . . How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians—if Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. . . . The realisation of this goal is going to be very difficult . . . (because in) India there are castes. The castes are anti-national. In the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paint. . . .

Ambedkar's warnings on this aspect too are proving to be prophetic. Inequality in the country has grown hugely, especially since the beginning of neoliberal economic reforms in 1991, making India one of the most unequal countries in the world. In 2000, India's richest 1 percent held 36.8 percent of the country's total wealth; in 2014, when Modi came to power, this figure had gone up to 49 percent; and in just 2 years, by 2016, this figure has gone up to a mind-boggling 58.4 percent, according to a report by Credit Suisse Group AG, the financial services company based in Zurich. The richest 10 percent haven't done too badly either. Their wealth increased from around 66 percent in 2000 to 80.7 percent by 2016. In sharp contrast, the bottom half of the Indian people own a mere 2.1 percent of the country's wealth.⁹

While India now has the fourth largest number of billionaires in the world—the country now boasts of 101 billionaires, with a collective net worth of \$325.5 billion¹⁰—its human development indicators place it near the bottom in the list of the world's countries. Some indicators that highlight the terrible conditions in which

the vast majority of the Indian people are living:

- According to the latest available National Family Health Survey–4 data for 2015–16, 38.4% of children under the age of five are stunted (low height for age, indicating chronic malnutrition); India is home to one-third of the world’s malnourished children; malnutrition is more common in India than in sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹
- More than 40% of the children in the 6–14 age-group in the country have dropped out of school without completing even basic schooling. And for those going to school, the conditions in a majority of India’s schools is so abysmal who do complete basic schooling cannot read, write or do sums expected of children in Class 2 or 3!¹²
- Basing herself on official NSSO data, the noted economist Utsa Patnaik has shown that the percentage of persons in rural areas who could not consume enough food to obtain the minimum recommended calorie norm (2,200 calories/day) was 75.5% in 2009–10. In urban areas, the percentage who could not consume enough food to obtain the norm (2,100 calories/day) was 73%.¹³
- And so, it is not surprising that India’s hunger levels are among the worst in the world. 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 2017.¹⁴

The coming to power of the BJP at the Centre in 2014 is rapidly worsening India’s social inequalities too. During the first few decades after independence, economic development had indeed led to a weakening of the link between caste and occupation. Nevertheless, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continued to face social, economic and institutional deprivations, and were also subjected to enormous atrocities. But with the coming of the BJP to power, these social inequalities are rapidly worsening. That is because the BJP—and more important, its parent, the RSS—does not believe in equality. On the contrary, BJP–RSS are firm believers in the caste system.

Thus, for instance, Guru Golwalkar, considered to be the most important ideologue of the RSS, in his treatise, *Bunch of Thoughts*, explicitly upholds the *Purush Sukta* of the *Rigveda*, wherein for the first time in Vedic literature the four varnas are mentioned and justified. The *Purush Sukta* justifies the caste system thus: Brahmin is the head, King the hands, Vaishya the thighs

and Shudra the feet. Golwalkar goes on to write that “the people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e., the Hindu People, is our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of ‘nation’ and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage.”¹⁵

One of the most important of the Hindu scriptures or dharma-shastras that sanctifies the caste system is the Manusmriti. The RSS is a firm believer in the Manusmriti. V.D. Savarkar, one of the most prominent of the RSS ideologues, expresses his affinity for the Manusmriti thus:

*Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worshippable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules, which are followed, by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manusmriti. Today Manusmriti is Hindu Law.*¹⁶

And so, after coming to power, while on the one hand the BJP is speedily implementing economic policies that are further deepening our economic crisis and worsening economic inequality, on the other hand, it is implementing a very regressive social agenda that is worsening social inequality. Caste atrocities in the country are on the rise. The latest NCRB data reveal that atrocities or crime against scheduled castes increased by 5.5 per cent in 2016 over 2015. A total of 40,801 cases of crime against scheduled castes were registered in the country in 2016 compared to 38,670 cases in 2015. The data also show that the five states that recorded the highest crime rate in the category of “crime/atrocities against scheduled castes” during 2014–16 (crime rate is defined by the incidence of crime recorded per one lakh population) were all ruled by the BJP directly or in alliance with other parties, with Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan at the very top.¹⁷

In Gujarat, where the BJP has been in power uninterruptedly for nearly two decades now, atrocities against Dalits are on the rise. The incident at Una on July 11, 2016, when seven members from a Dalit family were brutally beaten up with iron rods and sticks by *gau rakshaks* for skinning a dead cow, made national news after a video of the beating went viral on social media. Fed up with the daily atrocities, thousands of Dalits in Gujarat came together to take out a *Dalit Asmita Yatra*

and pledged never to pick up carcasses again. Yet, so emboldened have upper caste goons become under BJP rule that they attacked this *Yatra* too! In fact, this massive mobilisation of Dalits has not led to any reduction in atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat. In 2017, the newspapers reported several instances of Dalits being attacked even for sporting moustaches or watching garba.¹⁸

The RSS not only does not believe in democracy and equality (and secularism), all fundamental pillars of the Indian Constitution, after the BJP won the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BJP and RSS leaders have publicly called for changing the Constitution.¹⁹

There is nothing new in this. The RSS has been opposed to the Indian Constitution from the very time of its drafting, because it was not based on Hindu scriptures, in particular the laws of Manu. Four days after the Indian Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, an editorial in the RSS organ *Organiser* complained:

*In our constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.*²⁰

Guru Golwalkar, considered to be the most important ideologue of the RSS, also criticised the Indian Constitution in the following words in his most important treatise, *Bunch of Thoughts*:

*Our Constitution too is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of the Western countries. It has absolutely nothing which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is? No!*²¹

And so, after the BJP first came to power at the Centre in 1998 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, it had set up a commission headed by former Chief Justice M.N.R. Venkatachaliah to review the Constitution. But Vajpayee was heading a coalition government, and this effort could not go very far, and the report of the Commission was shelved.

Now, having come to power with an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, the BJP and RSS are more emboldened, and are openly calling for changing the Constitution “in line with the value systems of the country”—and when Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief says this, he is obviously meaning the Manusmriti, and not the value systems of Buddha, Kabir, Tukaram and Basavanna.

Ambedkar's warning, that political democracy bereft of economic and social democracy, will ultimately threaten our democratic Constitution, is proving to be prescient.

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The Search for New Time

Dilip Simeon

The timing of death, like the ending of a story, gives a changed meaning to what preceded it.

—Mary Catherine Bateson

Nihilism¹ doesn't stand at the door, as Nietzsche told us over a century ago. It has entered the house. We now speak as if belief is the highest form of truth, feelings may freely be substituted for facts, truth is pure illusion and war an eternal condition. Examples of this are visible in all continents; indeed, we are reliably informed that ours is the post-truth era. Let us examine how we have arrived at this situation and what Mahatma Gandhi can tell us about it.

Permanent War

Speaking of Napoleon's place in the advent of modernity, Marx wrote: 'Napoleon was the last stand of revolutionary terrorism against the bourgeois society. . . . He perfected the Terror by substituting permanent war for permanent revolution.'² Two observations from this text are significant for our theme: the advent of permanent war; and the dual aspect of the state as an end in itself and as an instrument of conquest. The war unleashed by the French Revolution was the first total war of modernity, it was fought by ideologically motivated soldiers, and required total social mobilisation.³ The modern tendency towards totalitarianism became visible in the emergence of war as the centripetal force capable of galvanising social energy on an unprecedented scale. The democratisation of the polity was accompanied by the democratisation of the military. Over time, this would lead to the implosion of warfare into the social fabric, its about-turn from national frontiers into national societies.

It has been claimed that the arrangements of 1815 resulted in pan-European peace for most of the nineteenth century. This is correct only if we leave out the uprisings of 1848, the Crimean War and the wars over German unification that led to the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871. However, the French revolutionary

wars were global in their reach, because the powers involved were colonial empires.⁴ A broader view of the subsequent period shows the upsurge of war consuming the polities of India, China and Africa, with England, France, Belgium and Holland leading the charge. When combined with Russian expansion in central Asia and Siberia, the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-64, the Second Opium War of 1856-60, and the Indian rebellion of 1857, a picture emerges of a world plunged into a vortex of conflict whose locus was European militarism. Man-made famines and epidemics in India and China during the 1870s and 1890s resulted in the deaths of between 32 and 61 million people, a catastrophe that has been named 'late-Victorian holocausts'.⁵

The process continued with the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the Great War of 1914-18, which was accompanied by the first modern genocide (of Armenians by their Ottoman rulers). The global influenza epidemic of 1918-20 cost 50 to 100 million lives, an impact accelerated by war-related human mobility. The spiral of war continued into the 1930s, with the Japanese invasion of Manchukuo, the Spanish civil war, the Sino-Japanese war of 1937-1945, and the Second World War—the end of which was marked by several partitions, which cost the lives of lacs of Indians, including Mahatma Gandhi. Thereafter it spilled over into Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s, the Arab world soon after, and carries on till this day. Depending on how it is calculated, the twentieth century has witnessed the unnatural deaths of between 175 to 250 million people. Frontiers have imploded; terror, war and revolution have merged into one another, as have international war and civil war, militaries and para-militaries, legitimate force and vigilante violence.

Today, language and power are being used to enforce the disappearance of these distinctions. As Orwell put it, war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous. Global capitalism is a society in turmoil, geared toward perpetual conflict. State structures are torn apart by the

requirement of social stability and the magnet of militarism. The uneasy balance between capital accumulation and a world order founded on competing nation-states is under constant threat of violent disruption. Capitalism feeds on war, but is also threatened by it—the sobriety of accumulation cannot always accommodate the passions unleashed by organised killing.

Gandhi's Confrontation with Modern Nihilism

The nihilism of our time has three aspects: the annihilation of language, time and life. The three merge into one another in practical politics. It is against this backdrop—of life lived in the shadow of semantic disintegration and total destruction—that we need to assess once again Mahatma Gandhi's life and the message his life signifies. There are four dimensions through which we can re-appropriate Gandhi's political challenge and legacy.

Transformation Without Hatred

The first is reflected in his campaign for an end to colonial power without animus. When he was in London for the Round Table Conference in 1931, Gandhi decided to visit the mill areas of Lancashire. The police had warned he would be mobbed by angry workers who had lost jobs due to the boycott of English cloth. But he wanted to explain India's case to them. The American journalist William Shirer reported the workers' reactions to Gandhi in the town of Darwen—they instinctively recognised in him "a man who had devoted his life to helping the poor. They gave him a tumultuous welcome." Gandhi was mobbed, but by people filled with admiration, not anger.⁶ A photograph from that day shows a smiling Gandhi in his dhoti surrounded by joyous women workers whose faces shine with love. Other photographs from this trip show similar images of the common English people's love for the man whom their government portrayed as the Empire's chief trouble-maker. There are few, if any, examples of the leader of an anti-colonial struggle whom the citizens of the colonial power held in such affection.

Thus in contra-position to the political tradition exemplified by Machiavelli and Robespierre, for which violence was essential to the act of political foundation, Gandhi made the prescient observation that 'what is granted under fear can be retained only as long as the fear lasts'. This is an insight into the nature of the modern state; but it also questions the assumption of Western political science wherein the foundation of a new order is necessarily marked by violence. Gandhi dispensed with

the justification of originary violence, the teleological suspension of ethics. This was a radical departure from the revolutionary political theory of the Jacobins and Bolsheviks and a unique attempt at self-assertion combined with respect for the opponent. Gandhi implanted love at the centre of the new beginning, and he kept this flame alight in the midst of enveloping darkness. His faith in the persistence of human capacity and need for love and mutual respect was something that transcended the boundary of religion and politics.

Theology and Civil Religion

Flowing from this was his creative challenge to traditional theology and his implicit but radical renovation of civil religion theory. As regards the first, Gandhi is misunderstood because of his refusal to separate religion from politics. This confusion is due to the fact that religion nowadays is treated as a flag of political identification, rather than as a source of philosophical and moral standards. If we used the terms *ethics* in place of *religion*, and *power* for *politics*, the matter would become clearer. Should power be free of moral guidance? Gandhi regarded political activity as the highest sphere of social action, and insisted on informing this action with moral guidelines. Truth for him included *moksha* and self-knowledge, as also justice and social integrity. This is why he refused to separate means and ends—evil means would corrupt the best of ends. For him, ahimsa was the means and truth was the goal. Religion and spirituality were not instruments for the pursuit of political power; rather, political activity had to be informed by the best spiritual ideals.

Over centuries, the ancient debate between reason and revelation has acquired a nihilist dimension in the quest for a civic religion. Must political life be governed by divine or human guidance? For centuries philosophers dodged this far-reaching and intractable query via their focus on the utility of religion rather than its truth—an area of inquiry also known as political theology. The use of religion by the state (civic religion), the use of the state by the priesthood (theocracy), and the elevation of science to an object of belief ('scientism') tend to strengthen ethical nihilism. This tendency is highlighted by the emergence of propaganda, which makes knowledge and goodness slaves of the state. Often even the high-priests of religion use the separation of religion and politics as a convenient excuse to condone crimes committed by their co-religionists, thus undermining public morality. In stressing the healing power of religion Gandhi

challenged theologians to translate their fine-sounding doctrines into reality.

Gandhi addressed these issues directly and from within his faith—which underwent transformation with time and experience. His approach to the relationship between reason and revelation is contained in a response he made in 1936 to the query ‘where do you find the seat of authority?’ Pointing to his breast, Gandhi said: ‘It lies here. I exercise my judgment about every scripture, including the Gita. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. Whilst I believe that the principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly.’⁷ As his career progressed he came to the view that ‘it is more correct to say Truth is God than to say God is Truth.’ With Tagore he could make the distinction between the all-encompassing religion of humanity and the several faiths which were manifestations of it. That is what he meant when he said ‘I have made the world’s faith in God my own.’ This is why the separation of religion and politics was incomprehensible to Gandhi. Answering a query on this issue in 1940, he remarked: ‘Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonises them and gives them reality.’⁸

This stance is a clue to Gandhi’s implicit belief that given the plethora of faiths, there could be no singular civil religion in India. For him, the issue was not the separation of religion and politics, but of religion and nationalism. This is also the clue to his ecumenical *pravachan sabhas*, where he read passages from all major religious texts, doing his best to convince his fellow Indians that they need not be divided, but in fact could be united by their religious beliefs. It is significant that he continued this practice to the last day of his life. I note in passing that the Pakistan ideal was grounded in the conviction that Islam could function as a civil religion. And for its part, Hindutva resembles State Shinto in Japan. Gandhi’s name for communalism was ‘irreligion’, and he believed these versions of utilitarian religiosity to be perversions of faith and harbingers of disintegration. Gandhi’s instincts on this score were correct: it was not possible to establish a stable polity in India based on a ‘national’ religion. The attempt to enforce a civic

religion—the ‘nationalisation of religion’ as it were, could ignite a colossal legitimisation crisis for the Indian state. This has been borne out by the history of partition and its aftermath.

Ideology vs Truth and Ahimsa

In current usage the word ideology denotes political belief, the ‘party line’. But the matter is far more complicated. Since the 1790s when it first appeared, the word has acquired meanings that serve political purposes, and for that very reason carries the burden of deceit. Ideologies are mixtures of facts, half-truths and convictions, and have emerged as political substitutes for religion. Hannah Arendt called ideology the most devilish form of lie, and described ideological (totalitarian) regimes as being ‘secret societies established in broad daylight.’⁹

Ideological systems treat truth as pliable to political convenience: ideology is a corruption of truth. Religion too has succumbed to ideology or ideological manipulation. As a genuinely religious person, Gandhi saw this very clearly. It is worth reflecting that hardly any leading Indian religious personages today show any interest in healing the wounds of communal divisions. In an essay titled *Politics and the Devil*, Leszek Kolakowski referred to ideological states—states whose legitimacy derives from the claim that their rulers are owners of truth—as ‘caricatural imitations of theocracy.’¹⁰ Such states dispense with any distinction between secular and religious authority, concentrating both spiritual and physical power in one place, including the nation itself. Given the authoritarian impulse of ideology, (the beliefs of pacifists or Quakers are not, generally, referred to as ideologies), there has always been a link between ideology and violence. Ideological movements tend to carry a seamless connection, overt or covert, with controlled mobs and private armies. Ideological thinking signifies the end of the dialogic pursuit of truth—it is the marker par-excellence of the age of permanent war. It would not be far-fetched to say that we live in an ideological era; and for that reason have voluntarily imprisoned ourselves in an ‘enemy system’.

Gandhi’s challenge to ideology arose out of the connection he made between ahimsa and truth. In the face of hostile sloganeering in Bengal in 1940, he remarked, ‘I love to hear the words “Down with Gandhism”. An “ism” deserves to be destroyed. It is a useless thing. The real thing is non-violence. It is immortal. It is enough for me if it remains alive. I am

eager to see Gandhism wiped out at an earlier date. You should not give yourselves over to sectarianism. I do not belong to any sect. I have never dreamt of establishing any sect. If any sect is established in my name after my death my soul would cry out in anguish.” On ahimsa too, Gandhi was reluctant to provide a theory: ‘To write a treatise on the science of ahimsa is beyond my powers. . . . Let anyone who can systematise ahimsa into a science do so, if indeed it lends itself to such treatment.’¹¹ His approach to non-violence was not tactical or ideological, but metaphysical. One scholar describes it thus: ‘Being a manifestation of Brahman, every living being was divine. Taking life was therefore sacrilegious and a form of deicide.’¹² It was his sense of being at one with all Indians—indeed, all humanity—that lay at the root of Gandhi’s charisma.¹³ There was never such a thing as Gandhian ideology—nor is it proper to call anyone a Gandhian.

Gandhi’s Recuperation of the Present

An essential feature of future-oriented ideological thinking is the abolition of lived time as the locus of politics. With their bent towards the future, ideologies convert presence into transience. With their promise of a glorious future that never appears, ideologies are a mode of rendering permanent what economists call deferred gratification. Because of their focus on an ever-retreating horizon of the future, ideologies reduce presence to evanescence. If ‘being is becoming’, where are we? Hence Gandhi’s challenge to ideology was also a manifestation of his political resuscitation of the Present. His apparent disregard of ‘history’ was a reflection of this approach. Asked by an imaginary interlocutor (in *Hind Swaraj*) for historical evidence on what he called soul-force or truth-force, Gandhi replies that the continued existence of human life despite incessant wars was proof enough. It was war and violence that made news, not the everyday love and co-operation that characterised the lives of millions. History was a record of interruptions; of ‘every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. . . you cannot expect silver ore in a tin mine.’ He also clung to his belief in the human capacity for betterment: ‘To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man.’¹⁴

Conclusion

Amidst the never-ending debate about the nature and origins of modernity, it is sometimes forgotten that criticisms of modernity have emanated from both right

and left, from the side of nostalgia for tradition, as well as that of the supremacy of science and reason. I will not enter that debate, except for one point that is relevant to our theme. In his focus upon violence and ahimsa Gandhi had grasped the central feature of modernity viz., militarism. Militarism was not only the basis of the colonial system that had subjugated India, but had seeped into the very bowels of society, corrupting its thought processes as well as its capacity to sustain itself and maintain an ecological balance between humans and nature.

Gandhi was a Mahatma, but one who was never at peace with his own people, nor they with him. But he manifested what was best in them, so much that even those who celebrate his assassination are obliged deceitfully to own him. Many of his contemporaries were pessimists even when there was hope. But Gandhi spoke of love and mutual respect in the midst of carnage and hatred; he gave people hope in the midst of despair; he appealed to their better instincts at the worst of times. The message of his fast in January 1948 is a message from a man of extraordinary strength and courage. After he died, politicians argued about whether he was the father or the son of the nation. It would be more accurate to say that the Mahatma’s last sacrifice became the foundation of India’s secular constitution.

As to whether ahimsa is bound to fail, it is sufficient to recall the words of Martin Luther King: ‘the choice today is not between violence and non-violence; it is between non-violence and extinction.’ Could it be true that harmony and goodness are independent of violence, and exist on their own? Here is what Gandhi said about this: ‘Good is self-existent, evil is not. It is like a parasite living in and around good. It will die of itself when the support that good gives it is withdrawn.’ We may also remember Edmund Burke: ‘The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.’ The Mahatma is not just an icon of the good man in an age of genocide and utter barbarity. His steadfastness and love for truth will, like that of Socrates, shine for centuries. Those who hate and slander him are spitting at the moon. They will disappear into the mists of time. Gandhi will never be forgotten.

(This was originally presented at the Champaran Satyagrah centenary celebrations, Patna, April 10, 2017)

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- 9 Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 606-607. She named three features of ideological thinking; the element of motion, of emancipation from reality, and of logical consistency deriving from an assumed first premise.
- 10 Leszek Ko Bakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, Chicago, 1990, p 189.
- 11 “To write a treatise on the science of ahimsa is beyond my powers... Action is my domain, and what I understand, according to my lights, to be my duty, and whatever comes my way, I do. All my action is actuated by the spirit of service. Let anyone who can systematise ahimsa into a science do so, if indeed it lends itself to such treatment.. The world does not hunger for shastras. What it craves, and will always crave, is sincere action.. No man has ever been able to describe God fully. The same is true of ahimsa.” *Harijan*, March 3, 1946.
- 12 “Gandhi rejected violence on four grounds: the ontological, the epistemological, the moral and the practical. Being a manifestation of Brahman, every living being was divine. Taking life was therefore sacrilegious and a form of deicide.” Bhikhu Parekh; *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*; New Delhi, 1989, p 155.
- 13 “There can be no rule-books of Gandhian policy. There are no easy Gandhian formulae. This, however, does not necessarily reduce the value of Gandhi’s teaching in the contemporary political situation. After all, the indication of direction that a compass-needle gives is of some value in itself, even if it takes no consideration of the terrain through which we must pass.” Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, in *Gandhi and the Nuclear Age*, 1965, p130.
- 14 M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* (1909), Ahmedabad, 2003, pp. 67 and 57.

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Gandhi, the Eternal Translator

Apoorvanand

The relationship between Gandhi and colonialism is complex. He is responsible for the dismantling of the British empire. It started a process of creation of independent nation states. Also a different way to look at the world. Even before that, while fighting with the British, whom he berated for keeping unwilling populations under their dominance, Gandhi had already turned into the lens through which the world had started looking at itself. But before that he had to cover a long path.

Before we talk about his path let me share with you an incident from the life of Gandhi. The year was 1912. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was visiting South Africa and meetings were being held for him. Gandhi had already established himself as a tall leader in South Africa. He had travelled from one colony that India was then to another colony as a professional. But he was destined to transform himself into a crusader for the rights of the immigrants, initially Indians. He had trained himself in the language of law. In South Africa it became his job to translate and interpret this language for the benefit of his fellow countrymen and women who had settled there in various professions but were kept firmly out of the realm of rights which were legitimately available to the whites. Gandhi asserted that his and his fellow countrymen and countrywomen's rights be respected as they were legitimate subjects of the British empire.

D.G. Tendulkar describes the role of Gandhi in these meetings. Gokhale was a giant figure for the Indians and even the colonial masters paid deference to his position. In Johannesburg a mass meeting was held for the Indians. Gandhi requested Gokhale to speak in Marathi as there were several Konkani Muslims and some Maharashtrian Hindus among the audience. When Gandhi said that he would translate his Marathi speech into Hindi, Gokhale burst into laughter and remarked, 'I have quite fathomed your knowledge of Hindi, an accomplishment upon which you cannot exactly be congratulated. But now you propose to translate Marathi into Hindi. May I know where you acquired such knowledge of Marathi.'

Gandhi replied, 'What is true of my Hindustani is equally true of my Marathi. I cannot speak a word of Marathi but I am confident of gathering the purport of your Marathi speech on a subject with which I am quite familiar. In any case you will see that I don't misinterpret you to the people.' Gokhale fell in with Gandhi's suggestion and from Johannesburg right up to Zanzibar he always spoke Marathi, and Gandhi served as interpreter. On the whole Gokhale was gratified by the results of the experiment and Gandhi was pleased that an Indian language was given its place in South Africa.

The audacity of Gandhi is remarkable. But there is much more to this issue than just his desire to host an Indian language in a land which was not very hospitable to languages which belonged to the immigrants. He himself was an immigrant there, not only fighting for the rights of Indians but also advocating dignity for other linguistic groups.

Margaret Chatterjee writes in her book *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends* about an incident of 1911. A Russian Jew Jack Gerber was restrained from disembarking from the ship on the ground of deficient education. Gandhi took note of this injustice and wrote in the *Indian Opinion* that had Mr. Gerber been an immigrant from any other part of Europe and had he belonged to a different denomination, he would not have been subjected to the harsh treatment that was his lot.

There was more to it. Education was being defined by the competence of the immigrant in a language of the choice of the coloniser. The draft immigration bill had dropped Yiddish as a qualification for entry, the proposed new law prescribed a dictation test in a language of the choice of the immigration officer.

The apathy of the administrator Jan Smuts towards languages like Yiddish led Gandhi to reproach him. All the more so because Smuts was no ordinary administrator. He had written an essay on 'The Conditions of Future

South African Literature' and loved Taal, a local language. He had this to say about Taal: 'For expressing wit or humour as well as the ordinary emotions of the human heart—and in this it reveals the character of the people—it is scarcely second to any other language with which we are acquainted.'

Smuts could see the value of Taal but found no value in Yiddish.

Chatterjee writes that what Smuts felt about Taal and the Russian Jewish immigrants felt about Yiddish, Gandhi felt in the first place about Gujarati. He chose it as a family language, and later in the Phoenix settlement and the Tolstoy farm he made it a mission to translate many of the works that had influenced him into that language and write his own work first in Gujarati for publication before translating it into English.

Let us return to the Gokhale–Gandhi interaction. What was Gandhi trying to do there? He was proposing that the act of translation is a pointer towards our inadequacy. While we desire to interpret each other in our own languages, we also need to admit that there would always remain a gap, a lack and both the sides have to recognise this as a fact. With this recognition arises the issue of difficulty. The difficulty in knowing the other facing me and talking to me. The act of decipherment is a never ending one. This can thus be understood as a principle Gandhi was trying to initiate for co-habitation in which there would always come moments of unfamiliarity with the other and one will have to grapple with them with the resources available. But inadequacy of resources should not be an excuse to postpone the task. This is an act to create relationships in which I accept my inability to completely grasp or capture you.

I have tried to think deeper about the reluctance of Gandhi in accepting English as the language in which an Indian leader like Gokhale should be talking to his own people. Was it a nationalist act or something else?

Rajmohan Gandhi in one of his tellings of the life of Gandhi titled *The Good Boatman* recalls one of the South African moments of Gandhi. Again it is about a bill, which was going to impact the life of immigrant Indians. The lawyer Gandhi retires to a hill near his house and translates the whole draft bill into Gujarati. Rajmohan writes that this was entirely an unnecessary exercise. The case against the draft bill had to be built in English only. But he would understand the full import of this bill

on the lives of the Indian immigrants only when the law is transferred to the realm of their own language, in which the ordinary emotions of their heart are held and expressed, to recall Smuts. The act of translation is then an act of achieving justice. The injustice ingrained in the law would be revealed only by a language in which he lives and breathes.

Gandhi, as Chatterjee shows, probably did not know that Yiddish had a rich repository of literature, but that did not prevent him from supporting its cause in his own way: 'Jewish scholars have succeeded . . . in giving their masses a language of which they may feel proud . . .'

Gandhi's support to the cause of Yiddish is again, as Chatterjee rightly notes, an act of justice. Also about its being a people's matter. She writes, 'With his unflinching ear for what was "of the people" he could recognise its folk quality, and furthermore he saw the justice of the cause of those who were promoting it.' Justice, she points out was never for Gandhi a function of numbers.

Talking about numbers, one would see later that he always sided with those who were smaller in number or in other words, were a minority anywhere. Minority is not again a matter of numbers. It is always a relational thing. Those with greater political power should be deemed as majority and those who have less power should be treated as minorities. His defence and advocacy of Urdu had something to do with this idea of smaller numbers. His insistence on creating a new variety of Hindi and Urdu which he called Hindustani is again to be seen as an act of creating relationships between Hindi and Urdu, which were demanding their own rights from the colonisers. He proposes a third way or middle path of Hindustani. This was not to deprive any of the two of the script in which they were written. Linguist Suniti Kumar Chatterjee expressed his reservation about this insistence of Gandhi. He told him that it would be very difficult for the common masses to practice and master both the scripts. He recalls the firmness with which Gandhi rejected him, 'Do please give a trial to what I say. I am firmly of the belief that this will be quite practical.' Hindustani had to be practiced in both the scripts. The question of Hindi and Urdu had already acquired a divisive character, a matter of Hindu and Muslim rights. Gandhi wanted to forge a nationalism on the bedrock of Hindu–Muslim unity. If Hindus were giving up what was theirs—and he saw Urdu as theirs too—he had to persuade them to re-adopt it.

It has been pointed out and rightly so that while being partial to Hindustani, Gandhi was imposing a north India centric view on the rest of India. This is not the place to go into this debate. What is interesting for me is Gandhi's relational approach.

When Gandhi planned to return to India, he started learning Bengali. His biographers note that one of his first destinations in India was the abode of Rabindranath Tagore, Shanti Niketan. Tagore, poet and thinker of Bengali, was not a nationalist. The relationship between the Mahatma and the poet has been a subject of study for many scholars. In their mental and philosophical outlook, they were very different. Yet none wanted the other to lose his voice. One is seen as an aesthete and the other a utilitarian. Their ideas on education and agitation differ. But they are ready to reach out to each other and make efforts to understand each other. That this dialogue, in which disagreement is an essential element, took place in a colonial setting is no deterrent.

Gandhi, the relationist, supports Shanti Niketan and collects funds for it. This is despite the fact that his educational philosophy as expressed in his experiments of Buniyadi Shiksha or Nai Taleem are at divergence from Tagore's educational philosophy. Gandhi's practice of Bangla continues even after the death of the poet. His companions report that when Gandhi is in Noakhali, a place in East Bengal, dousing the flame of violence by Muslims against their Hindu neighbours, he carries with him a slate on which he keeps practicing Bengali.

On his last day, the evening which witnessed him being killed, he carried on his daily practice of Bengali.

Gandhi is seen as a person who started the dismantling of colonialism. He is thus the most significant personality of the 19th and 20th centuries who changed the emotional geography of the 20th century. His struggle began in South Africa and thus his principles and method of agitation took shape on what would be called a foreign soil. But even before that, right in the formative years of his life, he had decided to move to London. London is the heart of the colony of which he is a subject. Even before reaching London, he had a London of his imagination. It was an abode of poets and philosophers. He was thus not going to a foreign land. His biographers have noted the doggedness of his will to go to London. He begs for money and fights with his community against its religious prejudices and persuades his reluctant mother to be able to go to his dream land. He just could not bear the thought

of not being able to achieve this dream.

It is not very difficult to see that Gandhi would not have been what he ultimately became had he not gone to London. London became a location or a geography where Gandhi found his tongue. His first interaction in London is with the societies advocating vegetarianism. As novelist Naipaul says, an instinctive habit turns into an informed choice. Gandhi finds the support of science to what was largely a matter of culture.

Gandhi is seen grappling with the question of power and violence when discussing vegetarianism. Are vegetarians less strong and courageous than those who eat meat? This is a question he had been facing since his childhood when his friends used to taunt him for not eating meat. Gandhi finds an intellectual and scientific basis for his dietary choice in England and through Western sources. While in London, he wrote a lot on this subject and participated in meetings meant to discuss vegetarianism. But it does not make him a fanatic.

When the son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan shows his impatience with the vegetarian food regime of the Sevagram Ashram, Gandhi laughs and is ready to arrange his favourite dish of chicken for him.

Gandhi's ashrams are again a result of his dialogue with Western traditions. His vegetarianism and ashrams are seen as directly descending from Indian sources. But without Tolstoy or Thoreau his ashrams would not have been conceived.

Gandhi in a way crafts his unique Indianness from his interaction with the West. His stay in London not only brought him close to the Bible, it was the circle of his Western friends which motivated him to read and study *The Song Celestial*, the translated version of Gita. He felt greatly ashamed that he had not read Gita in the original but this encounter led to a lifelong relationship with the Gita. He produced an interpretation of the Gita which unseated the interpretation of Gita as given by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the protagonist of militant nationalism in India. It also inspired Vinoba Bhave to write another interpretation of the holy book.

Gandhi was not interested in placing Gita above books from other religions. In fact, even before becoming a devotee of Gita, he had developed a kind of affection with *The Sermon on The Mount*. He famously said that even I forget every word of Gita and the book itself is

lost or destroyed, and if I still have the Sermon on the Mount, it would give me the same solace as Gita gives, nothing less.

And then while accepting the greatness of the *Bible* or *Quran*, he is not ready to leave his dharma. On the other hand, he does an innovation by creating a unique prayer which includes verses and words from nearly all religions. The idea of it came from an incident during one of his sea voyages. The ship was caught in a storm. Passengers were frightened. Gandhi with the captain of the ship was trying to calm them. He noticed that all of them, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, were crying out to their Gods to help. From here the idea of this prayer emerged in his mind.

Gandhi's germinal contribution to modern human thought was made in the form a small book, titled *Hind Swaraj*, or Self Rule. It is again the result of his interaction with Western traditions of Tolstoy, Emerson, Thoreau and Ruskin, and also after his encounter with some Indian youth in London who, though fighting the British, were in his opinion only following the Western path which led to violence.

Is it the West he is fighting with or, as Rajmohan Gandhi in his new biography of Gandhi says, its arrogance and dominance? Gandhi, on more than one occasion, praises the courage of the British. He has not forgotten his 'dear London' even when fighting against it.

In the First World War Gandhi is enlisting Indians to fight on the side of the empire. Thirty years later he is adamant not to send a Bhai or a Pai to the war unless the British left India.

Even then, while talking to a correspondent from the *Daily Express*, Gandhi remembers his dear London thus, "I know every nook and corner of London where I lived for three years, so many years ago, and somewhat of Oxford and of Cambridge and Manchester too, but it is London I specially feel for. I used to read in the Inner Temple Library and used to attend Dr. Parker's sermons in the Temple Church. My heart goes out to the British people, and when I heard that the Temple Church was bombed, I bled. And the bombing of the Westminster Abbey and other ancient edifices affected me deeply."

Gandhi asks his colonisers to leave India. He challenges them from the standpoint of Christianity.

Beginning from *Hind Swaraj* to his last days, he laments that what the colonisers are doing is a clear betrayal of Christian principles. Gandhi says that his struggle is to help them, to remind them of their forgotten Christian values.

It is remarkable the way Gandhi made friends in London, South Africa, all over the continent and in the United States of America. He won for the cause of India the affection of the best from that race and language, which considered itself superior to India and its languages. It could happen because Gandhi remained all his life a translator, an interpreter and an interlocutor between the West and the colonies. He started his life as a petitioner and practised this art to perfection seeking to appeal, persuade the best in the opponent. This art he learnt as a colonial subject seeking his rights from the Empire.

Gandhi, in this process, developed a unique non-violent language. It is full of Biblical references. He often invokes Christian motifs when in dilemma or agony. These are the lines he found most apt to describe his mental and emotional state when in his free nation, Hindus and Muslims were at the throats of each other:

It is by my fetters that I can fly
It is by my sorrows that I can soar
It is by my reverses that I can run
It is by my tears that I can travel
It is by my cross that I can climb
into the heart of humanity
Let me magnify my cross, O God.

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Gandhiji and Nehru on Economic Policies on the eve of Independence and After

Sudarshan Iyengar

Jawaharlal Nehru was the most prominent national leader after Gandhiji on the eve of India's Independence. Gandhiji saw Nehru as the leader of the country in Independent India. On many matters both agreed, but on certain matters they did not. One area of major disagreement was the economic system and policies. Gandhiji wanted to be certain that Nehru would try to reconstruct the nation according to his vision of *Swaraj*. But Nehru had made his position and thoughts on the subject abundantly clear that he did not agree with Gandhiji. Essentially the perspectives and therefore visions differed significantly. A short debate ensued between the two on the eve of Independence. To understand the ideas of both, a brief recount of it would be an appropriate start. We may then delve somewhat deeper into their concepts and visions.¹

On 5 October 1945, Gandhiji wrote a letter to Nehru in Hindustani in which he wanted to clarify what he considered a big difference of opinion. It appears that this was on his mind for quite some time. Gandhiji wrote that the delay in his writing was also because he was not sure whether he should write in English or Hindustani and that he finally chose to write in Hindustani.² He perhaps wanted to make a heart to heart to talk and therefore he chose to write in Hindustani. Nehru answered in English. Thus, in a way it was two civilisations talking. Gandhiji also appeared to be absolutely clear that both of them owed it to the people of India to share their thoughts and perspectives and if there was any deep difference it should be made public. Gandhiji made a reference towards the end of the letter that he was prompted to write because some debate had taken place in the Congress Working Committee Meeting held in Mumbai (then Bombay) during September 22-24, 1945 which Gandhiji had attended despite his indifferent health³. India was to gain political independence soon and Gandhiji wanted to be sure what kind of *Swaraj* was being visualised by Nehru who he thought would be leading Independent India. It is in this letter that Gandhiji made clear that he saw Nehru as his heir. It should be

clarified here that it did not necessarily mean that Gandhiji wanted Nehru to be the Prime Minister of Free India. Let us see why he thought Nehru as his heir.

*Our bond is not merely political. It is much deeper. I have no measure to fathom that depth. This bond can never be broken. I therefore want that we should understand each other thoroughly in politics as well. The second reason is that neither of us considers himself as worthless. We both live only for India's freedom, and will be happy to die too for that freedom.... Though I aspire to live up to 125 years rendering service; I am nevertheless an old man, while you are comparatively young. That is why I have said that you are my heir. It is only proper that I should at least understand my heir and my heir in turn should understand me.*⁴

In the letter Gandhiji wanted to know from Nehru whether he agreed with his idea of *Swaraj*. Gandhiji wrote that he still stood firmly by the system of government he had envisaged in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. That was his realisation of truth that had not changed all these years and he would stand by it all alone if it came to that. He then drew the picture anew in his own words and said that he was not out to prove that what he had said then was right but to express and share with Nehru what he felt while writing in the present time. Gandhiji wrote,

I believe that if India, and through India the world, is to achieve real freedom, then sooner or later we shall have to go and live in the villages—in huts, not in palaces. Millions of people can never live in cities and palaces in comfort and peace. Nor can they do so by killing one another, that is, by resorting to violence and untruth. I have not the slightest doubt that, but for the pair, truth and non-violence, mankind will be doomed. We can have the vision of that truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of the villages. . . . The sum and substance of what I want to say is that the individual person should have control over

*the things that are necessary for the sustenance of life. If he cannot have such control the individual cannot survive.*⁵

Gandhiji was not referring to an ancient thought and a dark, depressed, diseased and dull village society. He was able to relate to modernity to an extent.

*While I appreciate modern thought, I find that an ancient thing, considered in the light of this thought looks so sweet. You will not be able to understand me if you think that I am talking about the villages of today. My ideal village still exists only in my imagination. . . . In this village of my dreams the villager will not be dull—he will be all awareness. He will not live like an animal in filth and darkness. Men and women will live in freedom, prepared to face the whole world. There will be no plague, no cholera and no smallpox. Nobody will be allowed to be idle or to wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to do body labour. Granting all this, I can still envisage a number of things that will have to be organized on a large scale. Perhaps there will even be railways and also post and telegraph offices. I do not know what things there will be or will not be. Nor am I bothered about it. If I can make sure of the essential thing, other things will follow in due course. But if I give up the essential thing, I give up everything.*⁶

In the picture that Gandhiji draws in the letter he is clear that modern thought according to him was relevant for education, science, hygiene and sanitation. The mode of production was to be decentralised and labour intensive. Self-sufficiency in basic needs was the model. He did envisage modern amenities such as post and railways. He also conceded the point that it was likely that in such a rural society some production will also be undertaken on large scale. But most important was that it will be a village based rural society with truth and non-violence as non-negotiable values in the economic system as well.

Nehru responded rather hurriedly promising that he would write or engage in discussions later. Nehru did not have any problem with the basic values of truth and non-violence, but he expressed his inability to understand the content and ways of doing to form a society that was practising true cooperation and peaceful methods. His major problem was the village or the rural society. Responding to Gandhiji's letter of 5 October, Nehru wrote on October 9, 1945:

*I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent.*⁷

Nehru also differed on ways to achieving the objective of providing basic needs to the growing population of India. A rural and agrarian society was not an answer, according to him. Urbanisation and industrialisation was his vision for solving the poverty problem in the country. In his idea the State had a far bigger and important role in shaping the destiny of the last man. He made it clear in his letter,

*Then again we have to put down certain objectives like a sufficiency of food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation, etc. which should be the minimum requirements for the country for everyone. It is with these objectives in view that we must find out specially how to attain them speedily. Again it seems inevitable that modern means of transport as well as many other modern developments must continue and be developed. . . . If that is so, inevitably a measure of heavy industry exists. How far will that fit in with a purely village society? . . . If two types of economy exist in the country there should be either conflict between the two or one will overwhelm the other.*⁸

Nehru also categorically brought in the point about foreign aggression and wrote,

*The question of independence and protection from foreign aggression, both political and economic, has to be considered in this context. I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country. I am not thinking for the moment in terms of just armies but rather of scientific growth. In the present context of the world we cannot even advance culturally without a strong background of scientific research in every department.*⁹

Nehru emphasised the need for urbanisation although he was aware about urban areas growing very big and the problems which arose due to it. He wrote,

There is no question of palaces for millions of people. But there seems to be no reason why millions

*should not have comfortable up-to-date homes where they can lead a cultured existence. Many of the present overgrown cities have developed evils which are deplorable. Probably we have to discourage this overgrowth and at the same time encourage the village to approximate more to the culture of the town.*¹⁰

Apart from deeper difference on how society should be formed in free India, Nehru clearly admitted that *Hind Swaraj* as a treatise on vision of free India had never registered in his mind. He had thought that even Gandhi had grown beyond it and hence a convinced reference to it again in Gandhi's 5 October 1945 letter had surprised Nehru. In his response he said,

*It is many years ago since I read Hind Swaraj and I have only a vague picture in my mind. But even when I read it some 20 or more years ago it seemed to be completely unreal. In your writings and speeches since then I have found much that seemed to me an advance on that old position and an appreciation of modern trends. . . . As you know, the Congress has never considered that picture, much less adopted it. . . . It is 38 years since Hind Swaraj was written. The world has completely changed since then, possibly in a wrong direction. In any event any consideration of these questions must keep present facts, forces and the human material we have today in view, otherwise it will be divorced from reality. You are right in saying that the world, or a large part of it, appears to be bent on committing suicide. That may be an inevitable development of an evil seed in civilization that has grown. I think it is so. How to get rid of this evil, and yet how to keep the good in the present as in the past is our problem. Obviously there is good too in the present.*¹¹

Gandhiji was not apparently satisfied with what he read in Nehru's letter. He did not respond immediately. However, it appears that Gandhiji and Nehru had an opportunity to meet and interact fairly leisurely. The itinerary of Gandhiji shows that he was in Pune (then Poona) for the whole of October and until 17 November 1945. There is a letter of 13 November 1945 in which Gandhiji refers to the meeting of 12 November and summarises his understanding gained in the meeting. He wrote,

The talks we had yesterday have given me the impression that there is not much difference in our

outlooks or the way we understand things. I want to tell you how I have understood you. If there is any difference you will let me know.

- 1) *The crucial question according to you is how to ensure man's mental, economic, political and moral development. That is my position too.*
- 2) *And in doing so every individual should have equal right and opportunity.*
- 3) *From this point of view there should be equality between villages and cities. And therefore their food and drink, their way of life, their dress and their habits should be the same. If such a condition is to be brought about people should produce their own cloth and food and build their own houses. So also they should produce their own water and electricity.*
- 4) *Man is not born to live in the jungle; he is born to live in society. If we are to make sure that one person does not ride on another's back, the unit should be an ideal village or a social group which will be self-sufficient, but the members of which will be interdependent. This conception will bring about a change in human relationship all over the world.*¹²

Two basic differences are discernible from the debate above. One was the economic system and second was the political system for supporting the economic system. Gandhiji believed firmly and argued for a decentralised village society that was self-sufficient in fulfilling basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. The political system that could support such an economic system would also be decentralised with most power resting with a village body, a panchayat or what is now called a Gram Sabha after amendment of the Constitution. Nehru was also very clear in his vision in which economic well-being for all citizens in the country could be achieved through industrialisation which brought with it urbanisation. In the modern world that was emerging after the Second World War, the state had to be strong and had to be controlling defence of the nation. Science and technology were the vital components that were to be used to produce armaments and equipment and which were also to help in building modern techniques to gain economic independence. Modernity was to be embraced only in this form and it was inevitable.

Why did Gandhiji gain an impression that there was not much difference in their outlooks and the way they understood things is not known. It is certain that Gandhiji read Nehru wrong as they thought fundamentally differently on the form and content of the state and economy notwithstanding the similarity in basic values. Nehru had embraced modernity in the way it had evolved in the West. He was worried about the ills of it to an extent and this was where he came closer to Gandhiji's thought. He conceded in the letter quoted above that there was in the world a tremendous acquisitive tendency both in individuals and groups and nations, which lead to conflicts and wars. Our entire society was based on it more or less. But such an admission did not help him come close to Gandhi, for the roots of Nehru's differences with Gandhi lay elsewhere. Bhikhu Parekh has given an excellent and elaborate analysis on this subject. He argues that Nehru's was highly critical of India's past. In Parekh's words, "he thought that apart from a couple of brief periods in ancient India, the rest of its history was a story of degeneration and decline."¹³ Nehru's upbringing perhaps led to him to develop great faith in the traditions and values of the West in polity and economy. Parekh notes that Nehru believed that India needed to follow a path of comprehensive modernisation. Nehru harboured deep fear that if India did not industrialise, it would be highly vulnerable to foreign aggressions again, just as in the past it had fallen an easy prey to Britain because it had remained scientifically and technologically backward. Parekh points out that Nehru had visualised seven basic goals: national unity, parliamentary democracy, industrialisation, socialism, cultivating scientific temper, secularism and non-alignment.¹⁴ He further notes that for Nehru, agriculture was primitive and a culturally inferior activity; it lacked the power and energy to haul the country out of its 'traditional grooves' and 'propel' it along the path of modern ways of life and thought. If one wove the economic system around it, the country would remain scientifically and technologically backward.

Nehru's overly concern about the vulnerability of India to foreign aggression and perhaps undue hurry to industrialise and thus rid the nation of its poverty and 'superstitions' had blurred his vision because of which he was unable to appreciate Gandhiji's perspectives on the state and economic system. Here are some excerpts from the thoughts expressed by Nehru at a gathering of prominent associates of Gandhiji at Sewagram just six weeks after Gandhiji's assassination, which show how

confused he was:

Major issues confront us – fundamental questions. Things like Khadi are secondary; they are branches of the tree, not the root of the matter. . . . Some essential things have been said about khadi and village industries, and we should keep this separate from some other questions. The matter of a 'competitive economy' and a new social order have been raised . . . my interpretation of a competitive economy is something a little different; the economy you put forward should be self-supporting. . . . The government has to help it get going; but the fundamental question is whether it will be strong enough to stand on its own feet or not. . . . This is not a question of competition with cottage industries. We have to build a framework of industrialisation separate from the home industries . . . the fundamental problem is that the whole world is moving towards centralisation both politically and economically. We too want to give our central government greater authority and make it more powerful.¹⁵

That Nehru differed from Gandhiji in a significant way has been commented upon by various scholars at different times. Paying rich tributes to Nehru soon after his death, eminent economist Prof. M.L. Dantwala noted the following:¹⁶

Nehru's biggest contribution to economic strategy was in committing the nation to a policy of planned economic development. This was by no means the easiest thing to do. Within the country, he had to contend with his Gandhian colleagues who saw in this imposition of Centralised Statism, while they were emotionally committed to village self-sufficiency. . . . Another equally important, though somewhat controversial, element of our economic policy, which but for Nehru's support would not have passed muster, is the launching of the modern type of industrialisation with its emphasis on heavy industries. . . . There was another section—well-meaning and sincere—in the country which felt that such a pattern of industrialisation was wholly contrary to what Gandhiji would have wished. . . . The emphasis on heavy industries has been variously presented as tantamount to neglect of agriculture, death-knell of Khadi and Village Industries and callousness towards the problem of unemployment. . . . As is being increasingly realised, the antithesis sought to be drawn between the development of

industries and that of agriculture is totally false.

It may be recalled that Prof. Dantwala was a Gandhian in many ways and he did not agree with the view that India was heading towards becoming a totalitarian state and that Nehru would end up neglecting agriculture and khadi and village industries. Dantwala had produced the draft document of Trusteeship that Gandhiji had approved. Thus, Dantwala was able to visualise integration between what Nehru did which he felt was the need of the times and Gandhi's approach of developing a decentralised economy.

In another tribute that appeared in *The Hindu* on 29 May 1964, H. Venkatsubbiah, a senior bureaucrat and author, clearly expressed the view that Nehru differed in his economic vision from that of Gandhiji:

Wedded to scientific rather than a vaguely humanitarian socialism, as he was, Gandhiji's economic ideas did not make much impact on Mr. Nehru. . . . He also rejected Gandhiji's theory that the rich are the trustees of the poor. Nehru's formal education was in the natural sciences. In the social sciences, he was a self-educated man. This amalgam produced the scientific-humanist temper which characterised Nehru's economic philosophy. . . . It cannot be said that he took much interest in the Khadi and Village Industries movement. That was largely looked after by other associates of Gandhiji.¹⁷

In more recent times, economist Laveesh Bhandari has brought out the basic difference between Gandhiji and Nehru well.¹⁸ He terms the difference between the ideas of the two as a rich dialogue

of ethics and dharma, responsibilities and rights, and the roles of individual, community and the state. There is a deep layer of disagreement between the two which reflects a clash of two civilisations—an Indian ethic reflected in Gandhi's thought versus a Western one that India's first prime minister had embraced. . . . The core of this silent debate has to do with the importance of personal morality and the creation of a social milieu that supports such behaviour. . . . All other elements—swadeshi, swaraj, Khadi, panchayati raj, enlightened anarchy, etc.—were rooted in this element. . . . While Gandhi was dreaming of a utopia where the individual was so responsible that there was little need for a strong state, Nehru was imagining another where the state would create a fair and

prosperous world for all. While Gandhi wrote about self-realised individual responsibility when he held forth on redistribution through trusteeship, Nehru created a mechanism forcing the individuals and businesses to conform to a state determined planning process.

Nehru and most others perhaps failed to understand Gandhi's position. Gandhi parted company with standard economics as he has an important element in his worldview not fully shared and appreciated in the Western thought. To quote Dasgupta, 'This is his conviction that one's behaviour as an economic agent cannot be isolated from one's behaviour as an autonomous moral agent.' Ethical considerations and individual moral values have to inform the choices of an individual.¹⁹

In the present times both Gandhiji and Nehru are not fashionable in the intellectual world. Nehru was, in his times. But now neoliberalism seems to rule. Free market is considered to be the best agency which would provide equal opportunity to all, thus optimising individual and social welfare simultaneously. In such a system, much of the government's role is assumed by civil society. The neo-liberal thesis assumes that these virtues and characteristics of civil society continue to be relevant in today's world. Giddens quotes David Green who lists some of its features thus: 'The virtue of civil society, if left to its own devices, are said to include "Good character, honesty, duty, self-sacrifice, honour, service, self-discipline, toleration, respect, justice, civility, fortitude, courage, integrity, diligence, patriotism, consideration for others, thrift and reverence."²⁰ But neo-liberalism is already in trouble. Giddens draws attention to the paradox that has become apparent in the neo-liberal worldview. The transformation in our personal life is a case in point. In the contemporary world, one sees the emergence of an individual far more self-centred and self-absorbed than existed in earlier generations. It is difficult to know which way this individualistic society with its new moral concerns will turn. Neither neo-liberalism nor neo-socialism seem to be sure about the direction to take. Further, both systems fail to ask some fundamental questions that matter for societies to be sustainable. The issue of sustainability is raised only in the context of the environment and there too there is no clear or common vision about the threat facing our world. What is the way out? This ideological gridlock seems to call for a fundamental change of perspective.

Those who seek it will find in Gandhi a thinker whose

insights on economic matters were based on a broader critique of the pervasive materialism of modern civilization. He questioned the rationale of viewing progress in purely materialistic terms, of measuring development exclusively in terms of growth of material wealth, and of excluding from consideration questions of ethics and morality. Most of all, he helps us trace the roots of many seemingly intractable problems facing economists and policy makers to the need for the moral transformation of individuals. It is not difficult, for example, to see how the Gandhian values of *aswada* or 'control over palate' (implying mastery over animal impulses), *asteya* or 'non-stealing' (implying honesty and truthfulness), *aparigraha* or 'being a trustee of wealth and embracing voluntary poverty', *shram* or 'bread labor' (implying disciplined hard work) and *ahimsa* or 'non-violence as a principle governing one's life and one's interactions with others' would provide long term remedies to the problems of insatiable aggregate demand, monopolistic practices, abnormal profit appropriation and environmental degradation. Gandhi takes us back to the profound yet simple truth that the betterment of the world cannot be separated from the moral edification of human beings. We cannot have a happy, just and united world if we believe that human nature is incapable of rising above self-interest or the pursuit of power. The path that Gandhi beckons us towards, and one which he himself followed, was a move away from self-indulgence towards disciplined effort aimed at the realisation of our innate nobility. As he put it in a 1916 lecture, it is a "straight narrow way" that one needs to walk—"slowly indeed, but surely and steadily".

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Deepening Economic Crisis and Policy Paralysis

Arun Kumar

The ruling dispensation in India is facing a crisis of low growth, protests by major sections of the population—farmers, youth and traders—and criticism about non-fulfillment of the many promises it has made. It has announced many policies, but not only is their implementation tardy, many of them are a continuation of the past policies under different names. This is another kind of policy paralysis, like what UPA II was accused of. To counter these criticisms, the government has been highlighting its achievements by comparing the present performance of the economy with that of the last few years of UPA II.

No doubt the situation is not what it was in 2012-13, when there was a macroeconomic crisis. But presently also a crisis confronts the nation, triggered by two shocks to the economy—due to the demonetisation announced on November 8, 2016 and implementation of GST from July 1, 2017. The present crisis is a different macroeconomic crisis than the earlier one because it is policy induced—that is the damaging part. It is brought about by ill thought through policies.

The crisis during the UPA regime was largely triggered by international factors, like high crude oil prices. By the time the NDA came to power, the economy was emerging from that crisis with inflation moderating, the current account deficit declining and growth rate rising. Crude oil prices had moderated, and the advanced countries growth had started picking up so that exports again became buoyant.

The PM has been reeling off statistics to support his contention that the economy is strong. But that is the role of a finance minister. A PM should assure the public that there is a responsive government in place that would look into the present crisis and find solutions to it.

Be that as it may, the data presented by the PM does not address the main points highlighted by the critics. For instance, growth rate of the economy has been

declining, unemployment remains high, rate of inflation has increased, investment rate remains low and credit off take is at a historic low. A total view cannot emerge from citing growth of some sectors like sales of automobiles and air travel. If they are growing fast in a slowing economy then other sectors must be declining even faster. The poor in the unorganised sectors do not buy automobiles or travel by air. It is these sections that have been hit hard by both demonetisation and GST. It is the impact on the unorganised sectors that has led to the decline in the rate of growth of the economy and this is not captured in the official data.

The Prime Minister has been stung by the criticism emanating from within his party. That rings alarm bells in a party that is run on a tight leash where criticism till now was not tolerated. Two former ministers of the previous NDA government have come out openly and criticised the economic policies. They have also challenged the way decisions are made in the government, where a few decide everything. This again hurts the ruling dispensation.

Two former finance ministers have also spoken earlier about the looming crisis in the Indian economy. Both have identified demonetisation and the poorly executed GST as the cause. In a political twist they have blamed the current finance minister. Since both had pushed for GST during their times in power, they now do not admit that it is not suitable for India but blame its implementation. The adverse impact of both demonetisation and GST on the unorganised sectors of the economy and the consequent crisis in the economy needs to be understood. The problem is not just of faulty implementation of GST but its inappropriate design.

A key problem facing the Indian economy for the last 3 years is that the data on the basis of which policy is being made does not reflect reality. Mr. Yashwant Sinha has alluded to it by saying that the rate of growth is artificially boosted by 2% due to change in methodology.

In other words, the actual crisis is being hidden behind the smokescreen of data. But this change in methodology was initiated by the UPA itself. That is why even the low rate of growth during the last years of the UPA regime was also boosted by 2%.

If the current rate of growth is more than 6%, it is nothing to sneeze at. It is a healthy rate of growth by international comparisons and also by India's own historical yardstick. So, if true, no drastic steps need be taken to boost the economy further. An increase in the fiscal deficit by 0.5% of GDP would be enough to raise the rate of growth further.

However, if the actual rate of growth of GDP is close to 1% and falling then a small increase in the fiscal deficit would not do and one would have to raise it by a much larger percentage to raise the rate of growth to 6%. The purists suggest that this would dent private investment. That would have been true for an economy where credit off take was robust and the economy was running at full capacity. But that is not the situation in India so a higher fiscal deficit would be alright.

The present situation in India is similar to the one during the global crisis of 2007-08 when the world economy went into a recession and was prevented from going into a depression by the major economies raising their fiscal deficits. The US raised its fiscal deficit from 3% to 12%. China went in for a \$600 billion package of expenditure on rural infrastructure. India escaped the recession and had a healthy rate of growth of 5% because of the large package of spending in rural areas based on a large increase in its fiscal deficit. The FRBM act was put on hold.

What is the evidence that the actual rate of growth is around 1% and not 6%? The quarterly rate of growth of the economy is estimated by resorting to data largely from the organised sectors of the economy. The data for the unorganised sector constituting 45% of the GDP comes with a time lag based on surveys conducted periodically. Since no comprehensive official survey has been done during the period of demonetisation or in the first few months of implementation of GST, the impact of these two on the unorganised sectors will never be captured in the official data.

Private surveys done in the midst of demonetisation found the impact to be consistently dramatic. They showed an impact of between 60 to 80% and an increase

in unemployment. This is significant since 93% of the workforce is in this sector. This led to a drastic fall in demand. According to the RBI, capacity utilisation in organised industry fell. Even before demonetisation, capacity utilisation was hovering at between 70 and 75%—a low figure. Demonetisation led to a further fall in investment, slowing down the growth of the economy even after the immediate period of notes shortage was over. It is this slowdown that is manifesting itself in the economy.

The introduction of a faulty GST and its poor implementation has also had a deep adverse impact on the unorganised sector. The organised sector which was expected to gain from GST has also been hit hard for the same reason. Instead of 'Ease of doing Business', doing business has become more difficult. There is utter confusion, massive increase in paper work and increase in compliance costs. This has adversely impacted the investment climate and further contributed to the slowdown in the economy.

In short, the data is inadequate to assess the actual performance of the economy. Government will keep claiming that things will improve on the basis of the limited data it has—as usual, the golden period is always ahead. The international agencies, like the World Bank, IMF, ADB and Moody's, who are supporting the government's contention of a high growth rate, do not collect data independently and depend on government data. So their assessment is not an independent view.

One of the ministers has claimed that the Indian economy is so robust that it has become the engine of growth for the world economy. But the Indian economy is only about 3% of the world GDP? Such statements are only an indication of the government's desperation given that the situation on the ground does not support its contention that there is no crisis.

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 have slowed down. In October 2016 it was already at its lowest point in the last 50 years, and it fell to its lowest level in 60 years after demonetisation was announced. Worse followed with negative growth in July and August 2017. This has never happened before in the Indian economy.

Interest rate cuts have been suggested as a panacea but this is not going to work when demand is depressed

and capacity utilisation low. Will demand pick up with cut in interest rates? It is argued that the demand for white goods bought on loan (via EMI) can rise and so can the demand for housing. But these are discretionary purchases and will only be undertaken if the sense of crisis in the mind of the public is overcome. In times of crisis, the public becomes cautious and does not increase its purchases or investment in these items. If people feel that their incomes are falling due to rising inflation or that their job is uncertain, they would not increase expenditures on discretionary items, in spite of lower EMI.

The investment climate has also been vitiated by the constant attack on businesses after demonetisation. Not that they are paragons of virtue but what they do does matter to the economy. There is an attempt to brand those who deposited money in the banks during demonetisation as black money holders. This is being done to claim success of the failed demonetisation. While some who deposited large sums of money were indeed laundering their black money, but the indiscriminate character of the move to brand everyone has vitiated the environment. Added to this, GST has created uncertainty about input credit, additional paper work, e-way bill, etc. and this has vitiated the investment climate further. So, 'Ease of doing Business' is not visible.

The government itself sensed the brewing crisis. It revived the Economic Advisory Committee to the PM. This is a vote of no confidence in the Ministry of Finance which is primarily responsible for economic policies.

But the key members of the Council are from the Niti Aayog and other think tanks already advising the government. So, what new can be expected from this Council? Its members have not tried to work out an alternative data base; they continue to work on the existing data on which policy has been formulated and which is the cause of the problems.

The mood in the economy is increasingly one of crisis in spite of the booming stock markets. The rate of growth of the economy had dropped continuously for six quarters before there was a slight upturn. It had started falling even before the ill-advised demonetisation was announced. The drop became steeper after demonetisation but data does not reflect that. A reflection of the crisis in the economy is the agitation by farmers, youth, traders and other sections of society. This will not abate because the government does not seem to have a

strategy to tackle the real crisis.

The government and its supporters have been suggesting supply side reforms like labour and land reforms. These are the usual concessions that businesses want and that they extract from society whenever there is an economic crisis. But this would not deliver demand which is low due to the adverse impact of various policies on the unorganised sectors. The crisis in the banking sector due to the large and growing NPAs is nowhere near resolution. That is adding to the difficulties in boosting investment. The package of investment in the banks to boost their capital will help but not resolve the problem since the problem emanates from default by industry and especially the critical infrastructure sectors.

The government has to stop being in denial about the nature of the current crisis in which output, prices, investment and employment are all hit. After demonetisation was announced and the economic situation deteriorated, the government was in denial about the resulting crisis. The economy is facing the consequences of that denial now. With the crisis being deeper than what the government is willing to admit, unless bold steps are taken, the situation can only get worse and that will have political repercussions later on.

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Indian Economy and Food Price Volatility

Dr. Vibhuti Patel

Introduction

Though India adopted a policy of economic liberalisation in 1991, the agrarian sector was liberalised in 2004 when more than 400 agrarian commodities were exposed to global competition. Food price volatility became perennial problem after that.

*“Price fluctuations are a common feature of well-functioning agricultural product markets. But when these become large and unexpected—volatile—they can have a negative impact on the food security of consumers, farmers and entire countries. Since 2007, world markets have seen a series of dramatic swings in commodity prices. Food prices reached their highest levels for 30 years during the summer of 2008, collapsing the following winter, before rapidly rising again in the months that followed. Food prices today remain high, and are expected to remain volatile.”*¹ This acceptance by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations speaks volumes.

During the period 2014 to 2017, food prices have risen to record highs. The hedge fund speculators indulging in futures trading and commercialisation and corporatisation of food markets are found to be the major culprits for this phenomenon. The free play of market forces is hampered and needs corrective measures. Many poor nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia have experienced food riots as a result of neoliberalism; the political systems have abandoned their responsibility to ensure food sovereignty and food security to their toiling masses through the public distribution system. Corruption and cronyism at micro, meso and macro level does not allow those at the bottom of the pyramid to afford higher food prices. Food and nutrition security for the poor is at stake. Thus macroeconomic policy as well as political decisions serving the vested interests of big players has created food price volatility.

Food Security Concerns

As per the World Bank, 1.2 billion people living below

the poverty line manage their lives with less than \$1.25. Out of these, 33 percent or 40 crore poor are in India. If India is able to address food price volatility, it will have major implications for global food security and fulfilling our promise of achieving the First Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, namely, Eradication of Extreme Hunger and Poverty.

As per the 2011 Census of India, more than two-third Indians live in rural areas. Nearly 50% of the work force is employed in agriculture. Majority of them are agricultural workers. Majority of cultivators are small, marginal farmers and poor peasants who own 1–3 acres of land. There are no other opportunities for them to enhance their income. In this context, it is very important for the decision makers in the agricultural sector to contain food inflation.

Concerns for Food Sovereignty

Each time prices of grain, pulses, vegetables and milk shoot up, either food shortage or drought are blamed, while at a grassroot level farmers report bumper crop. The corporate houses buy vegetables and pulses at throwaway prices. International pressure through World Trade Organisation and General Agreement on Trade and Tariff pressurise the poor countries not to give farm subsidies in terms of support price and let the market reign supreme without accepting the fact that there is no perfect competition. Consequently, farmers have to do distress sale of their products because of the monopsony market, wherein corporates are price-makers and farmers are price-takers. Thus, even after improvement in food production, the food price situation has not improved. Occasional tightening of grain exports in case of pulses and sugar and liberalising imports in case of onions and fruits remain just symbolic gestures.

Concentration of food inflation in India in a few commodity groups such as vegetables, fruits, milk, pulses and cereals and eggs–fish–meat is marked by production shocks and the government not playing a facilitator’s

role in the food markets in terms of improvement in storage facilities, rational procurement policy, augmentation of buffer stocks and adjustment of trade policy with production scenario. Sensitivity to farmers needs is very important so that they do not feel demotivated which may result in production shortfalls. Trend analysis of inflation between 2009 and 2013 reveals that increases in demand side pressures mainly for pulses, milk, edible oils and eggs–meat–fish—and increases in the cost of production are the major factors behind food inflation. Thus both demand and supply factors have resulted in food price volatility.

Price Fluctuations in Essential Commodities

Annual trends of price fluctuation in essential commodities show that different commodities had inflationary prices in different years and that no single commodity showed uniformly high inflation. Currently, food inflation is marked by price rise in milk, cereals, vegetables, meat, eggs and fish. Tur dal contributed majorly to food price inflation. Prices of edible oils were stable. Intra-year price volatility in fruits and vegetables and commodities that have greater weightage in the national consumption basket is worrisome. Supply side factors such as quantum of production, wages, support price for cereals need fixing and both supply and demand factors responsible for price fluctuations in pulses need to be addressed. The prices of eggs, meat, fish, milk, and fruits and vegetables appear to be driven mainly by demand-side factors.²

The food price challenge is more about price volatility rather than food price inflation. Rather than long-term structural trends in food prices that we can prepare for and adjust to, it is the rapid and unpredictable changes in food prices that wreak havoc on factors such as labour and product markets, as well as political and social stability. It is important to accept that volatility cuts both ways—prices go up and down. The only reason food prices are going up so much this year is because they came down so fast after reaching 2008 peaks. Both rapid increases and rapid declines in food prices can create problems.

Dynamics of Food Markets

Characteristics of food markets determine food price volatility. Both supply and demand curves of food markets are highly inelastic, and in the short run none of them respond much to price variation. Shelf life of food products are limited and there is seasonality. Hence, small shocks in either supply or demand will result in to large price

changes. Today, we have many shocks: supply shocks in important food producing states due to extreme weather (droughts in Maharashtra and floods in Bihar) and due to the higher cost of inputs (water, electricity, fertilisers, pesticides and transport linked to oil prices). Policy decision to increase bio-fuel content in gasoline has resulted in volatility in food prices.

In this volatile situation, speculators enter futures markets in a big way. Speculators make money out of understanding the market dynamics and providing insurance against volatility. They do not create the volatility themselves, except under extraordinary conditions such as man-made or natural disasters. The volatility inherent in the food marketplace causes speculation, not the other way around.

Remedial Measures

So what is the way out? Unless the link between food prices and oil prices are broken, not much can be achieved. The current global food system worked well in a world of cheap, stable energy prices which allowed food to be grown in concentrated locations and transported over huge distances to meet demands. Volatility in oil prices results in volatility in food prices. As a macro policy, the government needs to promote more localised and more diversified production and consumption, less use of fertiliser and less wastage (20 percent of all food gets spoiled in storage and transport today). To deal with urban and rural hunger, community-managed food banks must be created. Like France, all nation states need to tell restaurants not to destroy unsold food but deposit it in the local food banks. Farmers should be encouraged to sell their products directly to customers without any interference by state governments. At the same time, investment in agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure needs to be enhanced to address increasing demand.

The technology to increase yields is well-known but requires investments; large portion of agricultural land in India is rain-fed and subject to the vagaries of weather. Mechanised power to till the soil is only in green belt areas. India needs a second Green Revolution.

Debt ridden farmers' suicides are a stark reality after liberalisation of Indian agriculture. Governments must make sure that rural farmers get 'fair' prices, while urban masses get affordable food to consume. Not only budgetary allocation for public distribution system must be enhanced, but the distribution channel also must be

improved in terms of quality of food, packaging and storage. Local markets must be protected against volatility in the global price of food. Rich countries are protecting interests of their farmers. America subsidises almond farmers, Japan subsidises rice farmers, France subsidises grape farmers, Europe subsidises dairy farmers, but in the World Economic Forum the same rich countries pressurise the poor countries to withdraw subsidies to farmers in the name of stabilisation policy. India has stood firm against this double standard of the industrialised North against the poor South.

Global versus Local Economic Realities

The current global economic scenario does not give any incentive for any single country to liberalise its agricultural trade so long as the distortions of rich countries—and the volatility in global markets they encourage—remain. Intellectual property in seeds, introduction of bio-technology favouring multinational corporations worsen the situation. And this brings us directly to the failure of Doha Round trade talks even after several years of negotiations. The main bottleneck has been the impasse on agriculture policy. The ongoing failure of the Doha Round shows that the political will to take collective action to reduce food price volatility is lacking; there is no trust that the market will deliver access to food better than a government.

Conclusion

Policy makers and politicians in developing countries care more about volatile food prices than those in developed countries because their citizens are more directly affected by the ups and downs of food prices. Hunger, food and nutrition security of the population and food sovereignty of the nation are at stake. Today, it is the lack of affordability of food for the poor. Studies have shown that the poor are spending more than two-thirds of their income on food. If food prices double, these households literally become faced with the prospect of starvation. The solution: safety nets of social security and social protection for the poor, to cushion the blow of rapid changes in food prices. India passed the Right to Food Act, 2013 that guarantees food and nutrition security to all its citizens.

Good safety nets require effective targeting. Who should be protected? The children, especially the very young, as there is ample evidence that early childhood malnutrition results in long-term deterioration of brain development. Hence, India has universalised Mid Day

Meal Schemes for children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. The state government of Tamilnadu provides meals to destitute elderly also. As a practical matter, national social protection frameworks to create facilities for food for homeless, unemployed poor, elderly supported by public private partnership under Corporate Social Responsibility need to be created. Building social safety nets in India for sustained food security for all remains a worthy but long-term project.

Major swings in food prices are happening more and more regularly and proving to be highly destabilising for development, poverty reduction and social harmony. The solutions lie in three areas—improving food markets and agricultural production by addressing demand and supply side factors, building political will to integrate food markets in such a way that economic interests of farmers in poor countries are not compromised, and judicious implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (also known as the Right to Food Act), an Act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidised foodgrains to approximately two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. Developing social safety nets in India for socio-economically marginalised and resource poor producers, that is, farmers, as well as urban, rural and tribal consumers needs combined and concerned efforts of state and non-state actors.

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What Is to be Done ?

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The Idea of India faces an unprecedented challenge. Preventing irreversible damage to the Republic of India, as we have known it, is the most pressing political task of our times, our *yugadharma*. So far, the response to this challenge has been marked by intellectual lethargy and political paralysis. A better response would require that we appreciate the dangers, acknowledge the depth of the challenge and then prepare a road map that combines short- and mid-term strategies with a long-term vision. This is what the present essay offers.

It argues that the challenge is at once more serious and deep-rooted than we care to admit. We are up against nothing short of a hegemonic regime that enjoys power with legitimacy. Having said that, it suggests that at least some of the sense of doom and gloom that surrounds the defenders of the idea of India is self-created, that we have more resources to take on the present challenge than we imagine, and that this challenge requires us to respond creatively. Paradoxically, this crisis could well be an opportunity.

First, a candid look at the nature and extent of the challenge. There can be an argument about whether we have reached the lowest point of democratic freedoms in the history of post-independent India. But not about the fact that we are passing through the most trying time, so far, for the ideals that the Republic of India stood for.

While the current challenge is unprecedented, it is not the first time that one or the other constitutive element of the idea of India has faced a serious challenge. India's democratic record was tainted by the Emergency and regularly smudged by many milder but chronic failures. Our commitment to diversity has been punctured by episodes of majoritarian excesses like the Sikh massacre of 1984 and Gujarat carnage of 2002 and by failures in regions like Kashmir and Nagaland. There is not much to write home about the idea of development for the last person, an ideal that has been practiced mostly in its breach.

Yet, the present juncture represents an unprecedented challenge to the idea of India in multiple ways. One, all the core ideas—democracy, diversity and development—are under simultaneous and vigorous challenge. Two, this challenge does not arise from a mere failure or violation of the vision; rather it is informed by a vision that stands in opposition to the idea of India. Three, for the first time the onslaught enjoys considerable popular backing; there is a real danger of the republic being undone by the public.

I

The challenge has caused more damage than we are willing to admit. This onslaught has already downscaled constitutional commitment to diversity, halted the deepening of democracy and further distorted the developmental trajectory. The present juncture has not just exposed the long-standing weakness of the institutional edifice of our democracy, it has taken deinstitutionalisation to a new low. The gains from a deepening of democracy in the 1990s have largely been reversed.

Many higher education institutions have been politically captured with little resistance from the top. Anti-corruption agencies have either been packed with yes-men or put in deep freeze. The higher judiciary has been part-infiltrated and part-tamed, though not without some flashes of dissent. The Election Commission too appears weaker than ever in the post-Seshan era. The regime has found ways to circumvent the Rajya Sabha. The national security apparatus as well as intelligence and investigation agencies have been aligned, more than ever before, with the demands of the ruling party. Extra-legal actions by security agencies face less scrutiny than ever before, even as vigilante groups on the street and social media trolls enjoy visible political patronage.

There is a brazen shift to a 'growth-only' paradigm of economic development. Most of the welfare measures introduced in the post-liberalisation era face a quiet but effective rollback. The environmental safeguards built

over the last three decades are being dismantled, one after another. There is a naked disavowal of commitment to diversity; Muslims have de facto been reduced to second-rung citizenship, though without a change in their de jure status.

All these changes have been accompanied by a significant shift in the spectrum of public opinion in favour of a majoritarian consensus, achieved through a mix of image positioning, aggressive ground action and media control. A Modi cult has been carefully built up with the help of communication, media amplification, spin doctoring and social media management. A series of critical events were engineered for assertion of aggressive nationalist rhetoric so as to brand and silence all voices of dissent. Above all, mainstream media has been compromised through a mix of clever spin doctoring, meticulous capture of key media positions, misuse of state patronage alongside brazen use of money power, blackmailing and arm-twisting.

The real challenge is, however, much deeper. If this onslaught continues for a significant duration, we may well be looking at a fundamental disfiguration of the Indian enterprise. The end product may not be 'fascism' in a textbook sense, but likely something different if not worse. It is hard to outline the features of this evolving deformity, but some of the elements can be anticipated. The political system could be 'competitive authoritarianism' where representative democracy and party competition would be limited to episodes of elections, with the playing field severely skewed in favour of one party. In between elections, it would resemble an authoritarian system with a presidential form of governance, severe curtailment of civil liberties, and a higher threshold of tolerance for deviations from constitutionally mandated procedures.

Concentration of power would take many forms: state power into the Union government, governmental power into the ruling party, and the power of the party into the hands of one person. Development would mean a non-nonsense rule of capital, with occasional populist discount but minimum 'hindrance' from ecological considerations. On the diversity front, it would be a non-theocratic majoritarian rule with minor tweaking of some of the secular laws but effective delineation of the hierarchy of religious communities. The existing system of affirmative action may be diluted in a series of small steps. For its survival and popular endorsement, this regime would depend on occasional electoral endorsement, informal regimentation of the media,

crushing of dissent, ongoing crusades against 'internal enemies' and a possible military adventure. To sum up, we may be looking at the mutilation of the idea of India.

II

For all these dangers, this challenge also presents us with an opportunity. The struggle against this onslaught must not be a battle for restoration, of going back to an India that existed prior to 2014, for it would simply not succeed. It must simultaneously be a battle for transformation. A successful response to this challenge would open up space to renegotiate settled equations in multiple spheres. It can force a reconfiguration of the party system, making way for the emergence of alternative political forces and a realignment of voters with parties. It can also provide an opportunity to fortify democratic institutions, push through radical electoral reforms, loosen up economic limits to politics, redefine the paradigm of development, reform our clearly flawed practice of 'secularism', and reimagine the existing frame of social justice. This crisis may facilitate, indeed necessitate, a radical rupture with business as usual of democratic politics.

The current challenge has deeper anchors than is normally conceded. Narendra Modi is no doubt the face of this challenge, yet he is not the challenge. He happens to occupy a unique point of intersection of multiple lines and embodies the opposition to the idea of India. As such, he represents a constellation of forces, not all of which draw energy from the RSS-Jan Sangh-BJP lineage.

While there was nothing inevitable about his ascent to power in 2014, Modi is not an accident or aberration. We are not just dealing with someone who happens to have won an election and captured state power. His popularity has faced its first crisis in the fourth year of his government. The BJP's victory and Modi's rise to power has been accompanied by a realignment in the social basis of politics and a shift in the spectrum of public opinion. Thus, the challenge to the idea of India comes from a force that is at once widespread, well entrenched and popular. The Modi regime should be characterised as a hegemonic power since it combines state power with street power, electoral dominance with ideological legitimacy.

The Modi regime wields far greater legal and extra-legal coercive power than enjoyed by any ruling party in post-independence India. It uses every possible constitutional-legal power sans the constraints imposed

by democratic conventions: dismissal of unfriendly state governments, use of CBI and other investigative agencies and, of course, the use of armed forces. This is supplemented by the use of state apparatus for extra-legal coercive measures: harassment and persecution of political and ideological adversaries, protection to vigilante groups and the misuse of anti-terror laws. The most pernicious aspect of the BJP's use of coercive state apparatus is the silent, everyday form of surveillance, intimidation and infiltration.

This coercion draws its legitimacy from the BJP's growing electoral dominance. The BJP may not match the Congress in its heyday of one-party dominance, but it does resemble the Congress during its one-party salience period in the 1980s. Despite reversals in Delhi and Bihar, the story of the BJP since its spectacular performance in the Lok Sabha election of 2014 is one of expansion and growth. It has spread to virtually every nook and cranny of India, including the hill states of the North East, and is a force to reckon with even in the coastal belt from Kerala to Bengal, though it is as yet in no position to win elections. The organisational machine, the election machine and the propaganda machine put together make the BJP the most formidable political force to emerge in recent times.

III

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Modi's power rests only on political dominance and a coercive state apparatus. The Modi regime enjoys a hegemonic position because it has also successfully secured moral, cultural and ideological legitimacy. The BJP's and Modi's continuing popularity in opinion polls draws upon something deeper than an approval of its governmental performance. The packaging and positioning of the PM's image as 'hardworking', 'tough', 'selfless' and 'driven by larger national goals' has more takers than many would care to admit.

The BJP has successfully shifted the entire spectrum of public opinion towards its ideology. It has more or less captured key symbols of nationalism, Hinduism and our cultural heritage. The demons invented by the BJP troll brigade – 'anti-national', 'westernised', 'secular', 'enemies within' – have come to acquire a life of their own. To be sure, Modi's legitimacy is categorically different from the deeper ethical appeal of a Gandhi or a Nehru, or even the legitimacy of the Congress in the post-independence era. In a sense, a typical BJP

supporter is saying, 'We may not be ethical as per the highest standards; but what the hell, why do we need to be saints?' A latent societal meanness has found a legitimate political outlet.

It needs to be underlined that the BJP's hegemony is far from total—no hegemony ever is. Its coercive power is frustrated by the endemic inefficiencies and the notoriously modest capacity of the Indian state. Its electoral dominance peters out at the geographical and the social peripheries. The BJP is not a serious contender in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and smaller states like Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and, of course, the Kashmir Valley.

This hegemony is predicated on the exclusion of the Muslims and mostly Christians as well. The inclusion of Dalits is still tentative, the peasantry's association is still tenuous as is its hold over the youth. For all its seeming ideological dominance, it is yet to find acceptance among the intellectual elite, both in English and Indian languages. None of this takes away from the fact of BJP's hegemony. But it does point to spaces available for counter-hegemonic action.

Modi's rise to hegemony has deeper historic causes which we cannot detail here. While certainly not the only possible outcome, long-term failure of political action and imagination combined with structural deficits in our capitalist modernity clearly contributed to it. First, our democratic institutions have always been weak, subject to routine indifference and occasional capture. At the best of times we have shown little respect for the rule of law and institutional autonomy. This was partially made up by a deepening of our democratic practices, especially in the wake of 'the second democratic upsurge'. But the gains of the deepening of democracy were not consolidated. The earlier system was unsettled without being replaced by a new one, thus opening the space for a sudden capture.

Second, the failure of economic growth to deliver well-being to a vast majority of our population created a political constituency that could be easily mobilised by populist promises. Rising inequality and growing media density in a society gradually coming out of absolute poverty in the post-liberalisation era has created a class whose aspirations are completely out of sync with reality. This underclass is an easy prey for miracle masters as well as hate mongers.

This was reinforced, third, by the cultural logic of modernity in a post-colonial society. The imitative character of India's modernity created a shallow public sphere marked by envy and anxiety. The modern Indian citizen, pushed into urban experience, craved for a sense of belonging and self-respect. The failure of the so far dominant liberal-secular ideology to fulfil this need gave rise to a huge vacuum.

Fourth, the weakening of the existing instruments of political action contributed to the vacuum which Modi occupied. Over the last few decades, political movements have declined and are forced to exist in an agitational mode, useful for sectoral gains but not worthy of general trust. This period has also witnessed a hollowing out of political parties as they essentially turn into election machines, indispensable yet illegitimate.

Finally, the sudden death of modern Indian political thought in post-independent India resulted in a drying up of intellectual resources in politics and disjunction of political ideology from popular imagination. The task of making sense of reality was left to university based academics and high-end media with little feel for or touch with ground realities. The challenge of shaping public opinion was thus completely neglected, leaving the field open to low-brow media, ever amenable to propaganda, hate speech and myth-making.

IV

Cogent thinking about what is to be done must begin with clarity on what is not to be done. So far, this clarity has eluded Modi critics. It is a sign of our times that those who seek to uproot the republic are proactive, innovative and energetic, but the defence of the republic is reactive or kneejerk, if not lethargic or paralysed. Opposition to the Modi regime is marked by an inability to fathom the extent of the challenge it poses, unwillingness to recognise its deep roots and failure to think beyond quick-fixes. No wonder, anger at history has replaced serious criticism, fear mongering is the only response to hate mongering, fright has prevented any farsighted action.

So far, the Modi regime has evoked a series of predictable responses from its opponents: a passive wait for the bubble to burst; simple-minded anti-Modiism, attempts to take on the regime on its own turf, and trying to build a grand anti-BJP coalition. None of these strategies is likely to succeed.

The actions, or rather inactions, of the Congress party symbolise the first approach, i.e. wait for an unravelling of the Modi regime by its own blunders, for the Modi bubble to burst thanks to the sheer magnitude of its original lie. Now, it is true that Narendra Modi made irresponsible and impossible promises—*achche din*, Rs 15 lakh in each account—giving rise to unreal expectations. Even as the public is sharp enough to perceive the gap between promise and delivery, it is also quick to scale down its expectations to 'realistic' levels and overlook some rhetorical excesses of a power seeker.

By now the Modi regime has accumulated a big heap of blunders, arguably bigger than its counterparts in the recent past. Even as its mismanagement of the economy is staggering—with incontrovertible evidence of all-round economic failure such as falling growth rates despite a favourable climate, job shrinkage, aggravation of agrarian crisis, decline in manufacturing and fall in exports made worse by the demonetisation disaster and GST mismanagement—the government's failures in other domains are only waiting to be exposed, be they of its highly publicised missions or of its foreign policy initiatives to yield results when needed or indeed the counter-productive nature of its internal security measures.

Yet, a blunder is a blunder only when seen to be such and there are layers of mediation between reality and popular perception. The Modi government's 'brilliant' management of perceptions to turn the demonetisation disaster into at least short-term political dividends is a textbook illustration of this eternal truth of politics. Besides, usually, governance blunders have political consequences only when there is an assurance that an alternative would be better. There are occasions when the people could not care less for an alternative, when they just want to 'throw the rascals out' as they believe than no one can be worse than the incumbent. But it would be fanciful to think that the Modi regime's popularity has already hit that point.

When the opposition graduates from not doing anything to doing something, more often than not it takes the form of simple-minded 'anti-Modiism'. A typical opposition tactic in competitive politics, it involves countering the ruling party in anything and everything that it does in the hope that some of the criticism will stick. The luxury of playing opposition obviates the need for coherence and consistency in these oppositional manoeuvres. So, the opposition can criticise the prime minister for spending time abroad; if he did not, he would be accused of

relinquishing his international responsibility.

Deeper maladies that have afflicted the country across all regimes—railway accidents, malnutrition, farmers suicides—are now attributed to the Modi regime as if they are happening for the first time. The Congress party that drafted and pushed for a GST (Goods and Services Tax) not too different from what this government has implemented, can happily blame the BJP for its consequences. Unfortunately, such short-sighted criticism soon loses legitimacy as the public begins to see it for what it is—opposition for the sake of opposition. These tactics may work once the regime has lost public confidence, but cannot be deployed to undermine the legitimacy of an otherwise popular government. In fact, they could end up eroding the legitimacy of the opposition.

V

A more proactive and consistent form of anti-Modi politics has tried to take on the BJP on its own turf. Over the last three years, ideological and political opposition to the Modi regime has focused on its jingoist nationalist rhetoric, its anti-minority stance and its promotion of obscurantism. Hence, the campaigns against cow vigilante-led lynching, *award wapasi* to protest against the murder of rationalists, opposition to the move for a uniform civil code, questioning of the ‘surgical strikes’, a critique of brutality by security forces in Kashmir Valley and elsewhere, mobilisation against the murder of Gauri Lankesh and rejection of anti-Romeo squads, and so on. There is no doubt that each of these acts of opposition is in itself worth undertaking and necessary. Yet, taken together, an obsessive focus on these issues plays into the hands of the Sangh Parivar. The Modi regime might even welcome criticism on these counts, as it would bring desired publicity for the regime. An indictment of the Modi regime for its anti-minority orientation sends a positive signal to the majority community that the regime stands with them.

The opposition to a uniform civil code usually ends up as evidence of politics of ‘minority appeasement’. Any questioning of the regime for its jingoist nationalism ends up reconfirming its nationalist credentials. It is not that the regime cannot or should not be confronted on its cultural agenda. The present essay goes on to suggest several long-term measures to this end. Yet, we must admit that as of now the opposition does not possess cultural weapons to match the BJP in this battle. A premature battle on this ground can be counterproductive.

Finally, much of the oppositional politics falls back on forging a grand coalition of anti-BJP parties. As we inch towards 2019, this anti-BJPism (to replace anti-Congressism) seems to be the default strategy, or perhaps a response of helplessness that the opposition is drifting towards. The logic is self-evident. On the face of it, there is an arithmetic advantage to a pre-election coalition in a first-past-the-post system. Aggregation of non-BJP votes can help the opposition edge past the BJP, even if it retains its peak vote share of the 2014 parliamentary elections. This can be decisive in states like Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka where the non-BJP parties enjoy a distinct and complementary vote base, provided it is transferable. Besides actual aggregation, opposition unity can also help create a perception of winnability and the possibility of an alternative to the BJP at the national level.

VI

But these possible advantages of opposition unity may not translate as well in a real life scenario. For one, the benefits from an aggregation of votes are overstated. First, opposition unity is irrelevant in a large number of states. These states either witness a direct BJP-Congress contest, with virtually no other party for the Congress to align with, or do not have the BJP as one of the top two parties. Second, the mechanical advantages of aggregation of votes may be overstated in many cases where votes of non-BJP parties are either non-complimentary (Congress and JDS in Karnataka) or non-transferable (CPM and Congress in WB and Kerala, also SP and BSP in UP?). Third, the benefits of opposition unity may be uncertain when possible allies—parties like TRS, TDP, DMK, JKNC, BJD and BSP—could as easily shift their loyalty to the BJP in a post-poll scenario.

Moreover, the calculus of arithmetic advantage of opposition unity fails to add up some serious minuses. One, unity of major parties (e.g. RJD and JDU in Bihar, regional party and Congress in Odisha, Telangana and Andhra) tends to create a void, as many voters of either party feel ‘orphaned’. This space vacated by the opposition could result in a consolidation of votes in favour of the BJP. Two, the perception of everyone ‘ganging up’ against Modi can create sympathy for him. He could well improvise upon the famous retort used to deadly effect by Indira Gandhi vis-à-vis the Grand Alliance against her in 1971: ‘Woh kehte hain Indira hatao, main kehti hoon garibi hatao.’ The bottom line on a grand anti-BJP alliance is simply this: a carefully crafted unity of major oppositional forces may yield some dividends for

opposing the Modi regime in 2019, but a ragtag coalition of all non-BJP parties cannot be an alternative to Modi; an electoral alliance cannot substitute for a coherent vision, a credible leadership and a clear road map.

VII

What, then, is to be done? In one word: think. Those of us who are serious about taking on this challenge to the foundations of the republic urgently need to move from kneejerk reactions to a plan of action that incorporates smart tactics which draw upon a coherent anti-hegemonic strategy that reflects an alternative vision. While much of the action aimed at countering the Modi regime will understandably focus on the Lok Sabha election of 2019, it is critical to reserve some mind space for the deeper challenge beyond Modi, beyond electoral politics and beyond 2019.

If the understanding of the challenge proposed here has any merit, it is here to stay with us in one form or another, irrespective of the outcome of the 2019 polls. Therefore, we need a more coherent and calibrated response. The plan of action must link various fields and sites of action. The tactics need to weave the familiar moves with new and surprising manoeuvres. The strategy must harmonise the immediate with mid-term and long-term. The vision that guides it must recast the foundational vision of the republic for our times.

Let us begin with a short-term perspective on what can be done to preserve some available spaces and open up possibilities of resistance within the current regime. There is some space available for a battle of institutional autonomy. As mentioned earlier, the judiciary, media and universities constitute three sites where complete control still eludes this regime. While the Modi regime has succeeded in curbing judicial independence more than any other regime since Indira Gandhi in the 1970s, the presence of judges with conscience and spine and the residual strength of procedures and precedents in an otherwise liberal constitutional system, sustain the possibility of resistance.

While the owners of private media are more compromised than ever before, an average journalist feels suffocated and a majority of the opinion makers are still not aligned with the regime. These are silent allies in the battle for truth. Notwithstanding the regime's massive investment in dominating social media, the very nature of this media resists control and provides avenues for alternative articulations. While most university

administrators have caved in all too easily, the faculty remains circumspect, if quiet for now. The real resistance has come from the students, both in the form of organised groups and as a community.

All these three are critical sites, especially for their impact on many other sectors and sections of the population. Thus a well thought out action here could have a multiplier effect. This may not take the form of organised protests; techniques of silent solidarity are more likely to be effective here. Equally, action for institutional autonomy cannot afford to be silent on the rather shoddy record of the earlier regimes, including the Congress and the left, on this score.

Picking another low hanging fruit would entail mobilisation of spontaneous outrage against political and cultural excesses of the Modi regime, especially among youth and marginal social groups. These include protests against lynching and other restrictions in the name of cow protection; building on the youth unease with attempts to impose 'love jihad' or vigilante activities of anti-Romeo squads; Dalit upsurge against atrocities and caste based discrimination; and local unrest against killing of rationalists and dissenters like Gauri Lankesh. As mentioned above, all this has to be done with caution, or else it could backfire. Even as these local and sectional protests cannot be the fulcrum of counter-hegemonic action, as they may not enjoy widespread support, yet, a careful stitching together of such protests could bring to the fore our home-grown liberalism and prove critical to defending the republic.

A relentless and credible expose of corruption at all levels could also be a critical element in countering the hegemony of the Modi regime. The Lokpal movement created a legitimacy crisis for the previous regime and paved the way for BJP's rise to power. However, more than three years into its term, this government has little to show by way of an anti-corruption record. On the contrary, it has diluted anti-corruption laws and institutions: amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act, non-implementation of Whistleblower Act, appointment of compromised officers to the Central Vigilance Commission and non-appointment of a Lokpal are cases in point.

At the ground level, there has been little difference in the experience of everyday corruption, or in the persecution of incorrupt officers. Gradually, various corruption scandals of this government are beginning to

breach the media's wall of silence. To be sure, we should not expect a repeat of the Lokpal movement type of anti-corruption agitation, yet a consistent and credible campaign can take off the residual moral sheen of the Modi regime.

The thrust of counter-hegemonic action, however, needs to be on pro-active mobilisation of two key constituencies: farmers affected by agrarian distress and the unemployed youth. There are good reasons why, unlike communalism and nationalism, these two issues have put the regime on the backfoot. One, agrarian distress and unemployment are not short-term difficulties arising out of a faulty policy or poor execution; both flow out of the nature of economic policies pursued in the post-independence period. In both cases the condition has got much worse under the current regime.

Two, both these issues are very hard to address in the short run; it is virtually impossible for the Modi regime to improve the outcomes on either of these fronts in the next year and a half. Three, unlike many other issues, agrarian distress and unemployment have a clearly identified social group—farmers and youth respectively—that can be mobilised for action. Both these groups are large enough to make a difference. Their mobilisation is among the best antidotes to possible polarisation along communal lines. Finally, the regime's commitment is suspect on both these counts. The BJP was always seen to be a party of urban traders, even though it has now acquired a fair share of the farmers' vote. The youth has always been attracted more to the left than to the right. All this makes it easier and more rewarding to build counter-hegemonic mobilisation on these two issues.

VIII

If there is one class whose 'objective' interests almost entirely match the political project of counter-hegemony, it is the farmers. Structural contradictions of the economy make it impossible to incorporate and retain farmers within the fold of the new hegemony. It so happens that at this juncture, the farmers' movement is poised at a historic turn. This coming together of the 'objective' and the 'subjective' situation means that in the short to medium run, the ongoing farmers' movement across the country offers the greatest possibility for mass mobilisation against the Modi regime.

The agrarian crisis—a combination of economic, ecological and existential crisis—has been around for a

long time. But an overlap of climate, market and policy induced disasters in the last three years has pushed the agrarian crisis to a flashpoint. The response of the central and state governments is no match to what the farmers need; the governments have continued with business as usual governance, platitudes for policy and indifference where political will is needed. That is why the spontaneous eruption of farmers' protests across the country since June this year and the formation of an umbrella coalition to fuse these could prove to be a turning point in the history of farmers' movements. After a very long time the stage has been set for an all-India farmers' movement.

The realisation of this possibility depends upon successful fusion of two streams of agrarian struggle that we have inherited from the 20th century: 'farmers' movements' for inter-sectoral parity between agriculture and non-agriculture domains on the one hand, and 'peasant struggles' for intra-sector justice for small farmers, share-croppers and farm labour. The growing and starkly visible rural-urban disparities, increasing pauperisation of all sections of peasantry, including the erstwhile well-off sections, and the increasing overlap between farm labour and sharecropper farmer has created objective conditions for this political unity of the 'big' and 'small' farmers with sharecroppers and farm labour. The point now is to turn this possibility into a reality.

This requires a historic project of uniting farmers' movements across different regions, varying cropping patterns, different classes and both genders, various ideological shades and conflicting charters of demands. Specifically, it would mean bringing 'green' as well as 'red' flags together, getting the farmer green to speak to the ecological green, bringing Dalit and Adivasi struggles within the fold of farmers movement and foregrounding women farmers cutting across all divisions.

All this is not just in the realm of a theoretical possibility: this fusion has already begun. The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) has already brought both shades of green with red, along with Dalit, Adivasi and women farmer organisations under one umbrella. Farmer's movements all over the country, even those outside the fold of AIKSCC, have adopted the twin agenda of remunerative prices and freedom from debt.

Forging this unity will also be an ideological challenge: the traditional farmers' movement needs to acknowledge

that marginal farmers and women farmers are the typical Indian farmers; and the left wing peasant movements need to set aside the tendency to view class distinctions within the peasantry as the principal contradiction. There is a real danger of the farmers' movement degenerating into typical trade union style 'economism'. Thus, the political challenge before it is to become an all-encompassing movement for regeneration of rural India. Such a movement can be the vanguard of counter-hegemonic politics to defend the republic.

IX

Unemployed youth are at once more powerful and more difficult agents of counter-hegemony at this point in history. The youth movement is more powerful by virtue of the sheer energy, speed and visibility that it can bring to counter-hegemonic politics. Yet, it is also currently much weaker and more fragmented than the farmers' movement. Consequently, it is difficult to find issues and sites that can bring together the various sections of the youth.

The 'objective' conditions appear ripe as in the case of farmers: an extended period of jobless growth, possible shrinkage of job opportunities, contractualisation of organised sector employment, widening gulf between work conditions of organised and unorganised sector workers, an educational system that fails to provide skills or knowledge and growing disparities in educational opportunities.

The 'subjective' conditions are also, on balance, favourable. The crisis is seen and felt by the affected group: take any opinion poll and unemployment tops the chart of problems that the youth would like the government to address. There is enough evidence of a latent youth unrest that occasionally comes out in campus protests across the country. Clearly, a significant section of the youth is uncomfortable with the cultural politics of this regime.

The real challenge at this moment is to marshal this latent energy into counter-hegemonic politics. Campus politics is in a deep freeze: since elected student unions are an exception in the institutes of higher education, politics has long been an episodic aberration. While there are thousands of student organisations across the country, there has been a marked decline in vigorous and ideologically oriented all-India students' organisations.

There are very few independent organisations of the

youth other than students that could launch a nationwide movement for employment. A new generation of youth leadership is emerging from among women, Dalits, Muslims and other marginalised communities. But there is no large platform for this leadership. The creation of a nationwide youth movement on the two issues of equal access to quality education and dignified employment to all is thus a historic possibility and a historic challenge.

X

In the last instance, the success of counter-hegemonic politics depends not so much on the short and medium term action plans and strategies mentioned above, but rather on its capacity to offer an alternative vision. We need a long-term strategy of counter-hegemonic ideology. The heart of the challenge lies in the creation of a new vision of India that can capture the popular imagination. This requires careful deliberation, as the defenders of the republic need fresh moral, cultural and intellectual resources. Today it would be imprudent to foreground counter-hegemonic politics on issues of nationalism, secularism and culture since any contestation on conventional terms would end up strengthening the Modi regime. But an inability to take on these issues for long would be fatal to counter-hegemonic politics.

Fortunately, we need not begin in thin air. Many of the resources needed for the counter-hegemonic project are available. Modern Indian political thought is an extraordinary repository of moral, intellectual and cultural resources that can help us collectively negotiate our present. This tradition can help us access the wisdom of our cultural traditions and also the heritage of modern European thought. But we can draw upon this tradition only if we give up the insistence on any of the 20th century ideological labels or icons as the starting point. We must recognise that many of the ideological battles of the 20th century—violence vs non-violence, state vs market, class vs caste—are pointless today. Instead of carrying on the deadwood, we need to learn from all the major streams of modern Indian political thought.

Specifically, we need to bring together two strands in 20th century Indian political thought: on the one hand the modern egalitarian strand represented by the socialists, communists, Ambedkarites and feminists, and the indigenous strand represented by Gandhians, sarvodayaites and environmentalists on the other.

What we need is a new ideological integration of both these strands under a capacious concept like 'Swaraj'.

This alternative ideological vision must not be tied to any one thinker or text. Instead, the Constitution must become the key symbol for a counter-hegemonic ideology. Such an ideology would enable us to renegotiate some of the key issues that have been deployed by the Modi regime to achieve hegemonic status. This would also result in rethinking some of the key social and economic policies, such as redesigning policies of social justice beyond caste as the only criteria and reservations as the only mechanism, or rethink egalitarian economic policies to move away from an obsession with the state and allow intelligent use of market with sensitivity to ecological concerns. But let us focus on some of the key issues that need urgent and radical reorientation.

Recovering the lost ground of nationalism has to be a key agenda of counter-hegemonic politics. Nationalism continues to be the currency of politics in a post-colonial society as ours; allowing the Sangh Parivar to appropriate the nationalist plank is at the heart of the political setback for the idea of India. Thus, an unapologetic embrace of the legacy of the freedom struggle and proactive propagation of Indian nationalism as a distinct, non-chauvinist, strand of anti-colonial movement must be placed at the heart of the counter-hegemonic project. Instead of handing over the cultural legacy of nationalism to jingoism, we need to recover the idea of a nation centred around the people and their unity internally, and with other post-colonial societies externally.

Instead of simply decrying jingoism and critiquing shallow symbols of nationalism, we need to develop deeper, positive yardsticks of measuring nationalism: willingness to unite Indians across caste, region and religion, sharing the pains and problems of all Indians, assertion of national sovereignty in the face of neo-colonial domination and protection of genuine national security interests without bullying our neighbours. We also need a new concept for this form of nationalism – perhaps *desh prem* instead of *rashtra bhakti*.

This must be accompanied by a concerted attempt to reclaim the cultural heritage of traditions suited for our times. We must acknowledge that the westernised English speaking elite—including liberal, left and progressive sections—has done a disservice to the idea of India. We must give up the ignorance and suspicion of traditions that mark most modern secular Indians, invest

deeply in multiple cultural and religious traditions, and be willing to engage in an open-ended conversation with traditions (not just an instrumental and selective appropriation of some elements that fit the modern imagination) and view these as building blocs of our own modernity. This must be accompanied by a shift in our cultural vocabulary and policy. A counter-hegemonic project would involve an advocacy of Indian languages including both non-scheduled languages and classical ones like Sanskrit, Tamil and Persian, as well as support for an ‘Indianisation’ of educational curricula that draw upon our context, our needs and intellectual traditions.

A vigorous counter to the hegemony of majoritarian politics would require a recalibration of the politics of ‘secularism’ so as to distance it from pro-minorityism and establish connections with the multiple religious traditions of India. We need nothing short of an open disavowal of a deracinated and culturally empty secularism. Secular politics must publicly distance itself from the exclusive demands of the Muslim leadership and focus instead on their insecurity, disadvantage and discrimination in jobs, housing and education that they suffer. Our secularism must draw upon syncretic traditions or traditions of religious coexistence and assiduously avoid the rhetoric that goes out of its way to offend sensibilities of followers of any religion, including the Hindus.

Finally, counter-hegemonic politics needs a new political instrument. Clearly, none of the established political parties are fit for this purpose. But the need is not merely to create a new party or a new alliance. What we need is a new kind of political formation that subsumes a party, which is a party but not just a party. Such a political formation will have to simultaneously perform several functions that are assigned to different organisations today. Contesting elections will of course be one of those functions, but not the only one. This will have to be accompanied by organising agitations and struggles, carrying out constructive work for realising an alternative vision, intervening in politics of knowledge by way of creating new concepts, theories and policies while also creating space for a meaningful relationship with the inner self of the political actor.

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The Ego of Doing Good

Prem P. Verma

When we question the purpose of life, the reason for our birth, the goal of why we were put in this world, we start wondering that it must be not merely to earn a living and look after our family but one for a greater purpose. We come to the conclusion that there must be a greater role for us than just day-to-day living and that it has to include making the world a better place for all. We need to look around and challenge injustice meted out to the vulnerable and the neglected, we must help the weak and the disabled to find their rightful place in the society, we must constantly endeavour to convert our earth to a better place for future generations. As they say, "Did you leave the earth a better place than what you found?" We must rise beyond self and work for the betterment of others round us and thus spare a thought for those less fortunate.

In this process of introspection a number of people choose a non-traditional path to tread, sometimes at great loss to their own self, but of great satisfaction in their lives. They willfully choose to serve others rather than themselves and stand apart from others in braving the risks and dangers that lie ahead. Their lives are filled with a missionary zeal in the pursuit of their altruistic goals and they may sometimes win adulation from the general public at large. This praise works like a tonic in propelling them further and faster on the non-traditional path they have chosen and the ego of doing good takes its birth.

These sincere do-gooders start thinking of others as inferior beings who are merely content to fill their bellies and pursue materialistic pleasures. The altruistic soul on the other hand assumes a superiority complex and feels closer to the Almighty in carrying out His desires. The pursuit of doing good fills us with the thought that somehow we are the chosen one and the others have sold their souls to the devil inasmuch as they are obsessed with the comforts of materialism. This ego generated

from doing good then becomes dangerous since our pursuit of the goal of helping others is coloured by our own imagined elevation to a higher plateau of existence. This results in our soon forcing our thoughts and action on others and trying forcibly to convert them to our own supposedly superior path of life.

This is so contrary to the teachings of Gita and the Buddhist philosophy which enjoins us to be humble and to treat all actions of ours as God's will of which we are merely instruments that carry them out. Who are we to assume a superior role when we do something good for the public welfare? The very purpose of fighting injustice and inequality is defeated if we assume ourselves to be more equal than others simply because we are living for others whereas the rest of the world is content with their own self.

This ego of doing good slowly eats into our soul and makes us look at all others as people not worthy of living. In the process of genuinely fighting against inequality we ourselves are creating inequality by derisively looking at others pursuing a materialistic philosophy as being sub-human. Sooner or later, we start searching for the untrodden path because it will make us unique in the eyes of others. We long to get recognized and if that does not happen, frustration is bound to set in.

On the other hand, if we pursue the altruistic path with the thought that God is merely using us as an instrument and we are fortunate to have been chosen so, then the credit is Almighty's and we are not in any way superior to others. To pursue a benevolent path is a neutral act and does not endow us with an aura of superiority as we falsely believe. The true joy is in the act of giving without any return and this philosophy only can prevent us from believing that we are somehow more worthy to live in this world. The ego of doing good has to be replaced by the humility of neutral thought. As the

famous Indian saying goes, "Neki kar aur dariya me daal" (do good and throw it in the river).

The ego of doing good is more dangerous than the ego that comes from becoming powerful or wealthy or materialistically successful. We must be aware of this

danger and insulate ourselves with the cloak of humility to selflessly pursue the path of common good. To bring happiness to the maximum number, as Bertrand Russell proclaimed as his goal, is a noble idea but nobler still is to carry out this mission with all humility, unheeded and unnoticed without any ego of superiority.

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Western Railway Employees Union

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

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

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

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

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Budget: All Hype Again

Neeraj Jain

This year's budget speech of the Finance Minister is remarkable for the fact that it contains absolutely no mention absolutely of India's external accounts situation. That is simply amazing, as a key aspect of our economic policy making for the last nearly three decades, ever since India began globalisation in 1991, is tackling our foreign exchange crisis. By the late 1980s, the Indian economy was entrapped in an external debt crisis (our foreign debt was nearly \$84 billion dollars) and was on the verge of external accounts bankruptcy. And so in mid-1991, the Indian Government, in return for a huge foreign loan to tide over the foreign exchange crisis, signed an agreement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, agreeing to implement what are known as neoliberal economic policies. Since then, each and every government that has come to the Centre has been implementing these economic reforms; the Modi Government has been implementing these economic reforms at an even more accelerated speed.

There is a reason why there is no mention of our external debt or current account deficit in the Finance Minister's budget speech.

That is because the situation is going from bad to worse. Our external debt crossed \$495.7 billion in September 2017, making India one of the world's most indebted countries. 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 in several of our writings, 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). 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.

In financial year 2017-18, our external accounts situation is getting worse. During the first half (H1) of this financial year, India's current account deficit (CAD) rose

to \$22.2 billion, or 1.8% of GDP, as compared to \$3.8 billion or 0.4% of GDP during H1 of 2016-17. Our trade deficit for the first six months of this year zoomed to \$74.8 billion from \$ 49.4 billion in H1 of 2016-17.

Regarding growth figures too, the Finance Minister continues to behave like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand to hide from realities. He continues to claim that the economy is doing very well. The fact of the matter is, even after the government twice revised the methodology of calculating GDP growth rate to make the GDP growth figures look good and above 7%, GDP growth rate started falling again from 2016 onwards. It fell consecutively for six straight quarters, from 9.2% in first quarter of 2016 to 5.7% in the second quarter of 2017. Now, the government claims the economy has started recovering once again, it grew at 6.3% in the third quarter of 2017 and is expected to grow even faster after that.

In actuality, this claim of the growth rebounding is based on incomplete data, and so is not correct. That is because this official estimate of the economy growing at 6.3% is based on quarterly data, and this quarterly data is largely based on information provided by the organised sectors of the economy only. It does not include data from the unorganised sectors of the economy, and this sector contributes to 93% of the employment and 45% of the total output. Data for the unorganised sector is collected by the government through periodic surveys. This unorganised sector that was hit hard by first demonetisation (announced in November 2016) and then by GST (rolled out in July 2017). However, the government has carried out no

surveys to estimate the impact of these policy measures on the unorganised sector. Therefore, the data used by the government to estimate the quarterly growth rate of the economy does not include the shock experienced by the unorganised sector. This means that the official growth rate figure given by the Finance Minister at best shows that the organised sector growth accelerated from 5.7% in the second quarter to 6.3% in the third quarter. Data provided by private surveys point to a large negative rate of growth for the unorganised sectors. Combining the two, the rate of growth of the economy for not just the third quarter of 2017, but for the first and second quarter too, is probably only around 1%, and not the 5 to 7% being claimed by the government.

There is no formal data to show the job creation in the economy—the government very conveniently does not collect this data. Unofficial studies show that job growth in the economy has probably fallen to its lowest ever level since Independence, with formal job growth plummeting to near zero.

With the Finance Minister not willing to admit that the economy is in crisis, he is obviously not concerned about increasing government spending, specially in the social sectors, to give a boost to economic growth. He has reiterated the fraudulent fiscal deficit theory in his speech, stating that the government attaches utmost priority to controlling fiscal deficit, and therefore he promised to bring it down from the revised estimate of 3.5% in 2017-18 to 3.3% in 2018-19. As had been demonstrated by Keynes several decades ago, the economic theory that governments must balance their expenditure with income and bring down the fiscal deficit to near zero is plain humbug. The reason why global capital and

India's foreign creditors are insisting on the government reining in its fiscal deficit is because it serves as an excuse to cut our social sector expenditures. And that is precisely what the government has done in this budget too. The budget speech as usual makes tall claims about the government's concerns for the poor and improving the social sectors to provide everyone an opportunity to 'realise their full potential'. But as has been the norm for all of Jaitley's budgets so far, this is not matched by financial allocations. We shall be discussing this in greater detail in subsequent issues of Janata.

The finance minister also claims that his government is committed towards welfare for farmers, but again, this is a big lie. What matters is not claims but financial allocation, and the allocation for the Department of Agriculture has been increased by only 5%—a cut in real terms!

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Awards Losing their Sheen

Kuldip Nayar

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan-

Unique Symbol of

Non-violence and Brotherhood

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

**BJP onslaught on
Primary Education**

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Awards Losing their Sheen

Kuldip Nayar

I do not find the enthusiasm which marked the early Republic Days. I recall how we would get up early in the morning to be ready to line up on the Rajpath leading to India Gate where different battalions of Army, Navy and the Air Force personnel and armed police displayed their martial prowess.

The President comes down in a buggy, drawn by horses from Rashtrapati Bhawan to the saluting dais. Prime Minister receives him. He takes the salute. Normally, India invites one Guest of Honour from a foreign nation and he or she is hosted with all pomp and show.

But this year, the Republic Day had several guests of honour, mostly from the ASEAN countries. To accommodate all the guests the dais, which used to be about 35 feet, had to be stretched to 90 feet. A huge departure, one should say. The invitations to all ASEAN heads was "to celebrate our long-standing friendship" and the government of India has made elaborate arrangements to strengthen the bonding with these countries.

Republic Day is also the day when awards are given to the people who have excelled themselves in various fields, especially to the services personnel who have shown gallantry in times of troubles on the border and those who had sacrificed their lives defending India. These are deserving people

But over the years, the other awards have come to be given to the workers of the ruling party, at present, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). This is, however, contrary to the thinking of framers of the

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

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

I recall that initially the Republic Day awards, started some 60 years ago, were under the Ministry of External Affairs which Nehru headed. Subsequently, the job was entrusted to the Home Ministry which gave the responsibility to one deputy secretary. He had too many things on his plate. He passed on the task to the Information Officer attached to the ministry. That is how I came to handle the job because I was then the Home Ministry's Information Officer.

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

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

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

The entire process was so haphazard that the Supreme Court had to intervene to ask the government to constitute a selection committee, including an opposition leader as its member. Some order came to prevail once the committee was in position. Yet, preparing the citation was my task. The draft gazette notification of names was issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I recollect that once the name of Ms Lazarus was suggested by the President. We, in the home ministry, thought that the honour had been conferred on the then famous educationist Ms Lazarous. Accordingly, the gazette notification was made public.

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

already in the public domain. That year two Lazarous' were given the awards.

In the past, when the Congress was in power it conferred the Padma Bhushan award to the US hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal despite some criminal cases pending against him. There was a furore in the country but home ministry justified his selection on the plea that he was a known Indian who had served the cause of the country abroad. But there are several cases of eminent people refusing to accept the award on the ground that the panel of selectors was not capable enough to judge their work.

The lesson to be learnt is whether there should be any award at all. The experience is that the ruling party tends to give "recognition" to the people who are either members of the party or are connected with it in some way. The real purpose is lost because the recognition is extended only to those who are close to the party.

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

When the Constitution has banned awards why should they be there. They violate the spirit of the constitution and the general understanding. Even their introduction was wrong. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should initiate the debate in the country to know whether the awards should continue or not.

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Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In the article captioned 'Gujarat Elections' (Janata: December 31, 2017) by my esteemed friend, Justice (Retd.) Rajindar Sachar, the year in which the Congress Socialist Party walked out of the Congress and renamed it as the Socialist Party has been inadvertently mentioned as 1946. It was 1948.

The same article mentions that Dr. Lohia was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1964-65 (only one year can be mentioned). The fact is that Dr. Lohia first contested the election to the Third Lok Sabha in 1962 against Pandit Nehru from Phulpur constituency in Allahabad District but lost. Later in 1963 he was elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-election from Farrukhabad. He was re-elected to the Fourth Lok Sabha in 1967 from Kannauj (UP) but unfortunately passed away the same year on October 12.

I beg to differ with Justice Sachar in his assertion that the relations between Dr. Ram Mahohar Lohia and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru 'never became low'. There was a time when as the Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru was so impressed by the young Lohia when he returned from Germany with a Ph.D. degree that even though Lohia was only aged 26 Nehru appointed him as Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Department in the AICC in 1936. They were close to each other. But after the Socialists left the Congress in 1948, the relations between the two leaders gradually started deteriorating. We need not go into the details here. In the late 1950s, Dr. Lohia started calling him as 'Nehru Pandit' instead of Pandit Nehru. Those familiar with the rural areas of eastern UP and Bihar will

know that the word 'Pandit' is used after the name of poor and less educated Brahmans given to performing poojas at the homes of their jajmans and preparing janmapatris or kundalis. The episode in the Lok Sabha where Dr. Lohia incorrectly traced the ancestry of Pandit Nehru is well known. He thought it fit to mention that the grandfather of Pandit Nehru was a chaprasi (peon) in Delhi. Pandit Nehru gave a repartee: "I am grateful to Dr. Lohia for acquainting me with my ancestry. To put the record straight, my grandfather was the City Kotwal of Delhi. However, even if he had been a peon it would have been a matter of pride for me and it would have been a matter of pride for Indian democracy that the grandson of a peon could become the Prime Minister of India." The House roared in laughter and Dr. Lohia had to cut a sorry figure. Such personal remarks were not considered becoming from a great intellectual like Dr. Lohia.

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Janata

is available at

www.lohiatoday.com

Tribute to Badshah Khan on his 128th birth anniversary

Khan AbdulGhaffar Khan- Unique Symbol of Non-violence and Brotherhood

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan nicknamed Badshah Khan or Bacha Khan (1890-1988) was a unique leader of the Indian freedom movement. The Frontier Gandhi will be ever remembered as the true inheritor of the Gandhi legacy. There is no parallel in world history to the miracle achieved by him in converting the dreaded gun-toting Pashtoons into firm believers in the twin principles of non-violence and satyagraha. There may be a solitary case of the dreaded dacoit Angulimaala of Sravasti, so named because he used to chop off fingers of those whom he looted and wore a garland of those fingers, who surrendered before Bhagawan Buddha and became His disciple, or there may be stray cases of such metamorphosis scattered in pages of world history, but the phenomenon of conversion of the Pashtoons into non-violent KhudaiKhidmatgars (servants of God) in such huge numbers (about one lakh) is indeed nothing short of a miracle.

During the freedom struggle there were several outstanding selfless devotees to the philosophy of satyagraha and non-violence who were popularly known as the Gandhi of a particular Province or even a district including my home district Basti in eastern UP. But there were only two national leaders with whose names the title Gandhi was inseparably linked: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan aka Frontier Gandhi and Khan Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai aka Balochi Gandhi (1907-73). I was privileged to have seen Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the other two Gandhis identified with him.

Badshah Khan was born on

February 6, 1890 in village Utnmanzai near Charsadda in NWFP. His father, Bahram Khan, was a local landlord. The erstwhile British Province is now renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan and Charsadda has been made into a district. He died at Peshawar on January 20, 1988 at an unusually ripe age of 98. A citizen of India for 57 years he was forced to accept the partition of his motherland and decide to live in his homeland as a Pakistani citizen for 41 years a significant part of which he had to spend in Pakistani jails fighting for democracy and justice.

His elder brother, Abdul Jabbar Khan famously known as Dr. Khan Sahib (1883-1958), nearly eight years older than him and a medical doctor, was a shining star of the freedom movement. He will be remembered as the popular Premier of the NWFP at a time when the Muslims practically all over India were emotionally blackmailed by the Muslim League slogan of 'Islam in danger' and voted for the Muslim League candidates from the seats reserved for the Muslims in 1946 elections to the Provincial Assemblies under the pernicious scheme of separate electorate designed by the British to 'divide and rule'. In that vicious atmosphere all the Congress Muslim leaders including Rafi Ahmad Kidwai were defeated in UP. The only exception was Bijnor District from where Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim and two of his Congress colleagues won all the three Muslim seats. In the whole country the North West Frontier Province stood like a bedrock of nationalism, the Congress winning the majority of the Muslim seats and Dr. Khan Sahib anointed as the

Premier of the Province. After Partition the two brothers decided to stay on in Pakistan among their own Pushtoons. But they were soon imprisoned. However, Dr. Khan Sahib joined the Central Cabinet of Muhammad Ali Bogra as Minister for Communications in 1954. This led to his split with his brother, Badshah Khan. Dr. Khan Sahib also became the first Chief Minister of West Pakistan in October 1955, later founded the Republican Party, in June 1957 was elected to the National Assembly of Pakistan from Quetta and was assassinated on May 9, 1958 at Lahore.

For the biographical details of Badshah Khan Wikipedia provides a good reliable source. Two other important sources are: (i) Freedom Movement and Indian Muslims by Prof. Santimoy Roy (National Book Trust, 1979), pp. 58-59, pp. 61-70 (ii) My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as narrated to K.B. Narang.

The years 1945-47 were very tumultuous in the history of the twentieth century India and in the history of the freedom struggle of our motherland. The Second World War had ended. In the latter half of 1945 the national leaders lodged in Ahmednagar Central Jail were released. These included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana AbulKalam Azad, Acharya Narendra Deva, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others who were all arrested at Bombay on August 9, 1942 when Mahatma Gandhi asked the British rulers to 'Quit India' and gave his countrymen the call 'Do or die'. The sad news of the fatal accident of Netaji on August 18,

1945 at Taipei airport was still fresh in the minds of the Indian people who were greatly inspired by the saga of the INA formed by Netaji in order to liberate India from the British rule. There was fervour all around among all the sections of the people-- the peasants, the working class, the students and the youth, the writers and the poets. The naval ratings revolted against the British officers in Bombay. The war-time hero of Britain, Sir Winston Churchill, had been ousted and the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee saw the writing on the wall and decided to leave India. But the British Government laid out a plan to divide India as if following a scorched earth policy. Till the end Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to the division of the country on the basis of the Two Nation Theory.

At the session of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay on June 3, 1946 the proposal for partition of India was adopted. The only three members who opposed it were Badshah Khan, Babu Purushottamdas Tandon and Sri Jayaprakash Narayan. When the Congress declared its acceptance of the partition plan without consulting the Khudai Khidmatgar leaders, he felt very sad and told the Congress: "You have thrown us to the wolves." At that juncture great national leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had acquiesced into the British plan of partitioning India into India and Pakistan and setting up of an Interim Government. An uncharitable view of the situation is that both Patel and Nehru were anxious to become the first Prime Minister of India. However, when the occasion arose Gandhiji is reported to have preferred Nehru to Patel. The process of formation of the Interim Government was accelerated on account of the 'Direct Action' plan of the then wily Premier of Bengal, HasanShahidSuhrawardy, leading to mass killings and cruelties in

communal riots triggered by the Muslim League. In the first flush of the riots Hindus of Calcutta were reported to be the main victims but soon reprisals followed in Calcutta and elsewhere, mainly in Bihar. All kinds of rumours were afloat. In Allahabad where I was a student the rumour reached that a well-known Marwari Seth had announced a reward of Rs.500 to anyone who would bring the head of a Muslim and that professional killers were commissioned from Mirzapur in UP. (A rumour similar to the Buddhist story that the Hindu King of Ayodhya, PushyamitraShunga, had announced a reward of one gold coin to anyone bringing the head of a Buddhist monk.)

In those disturbed conditions the Interim Government was sworn in on September 2, 1946 with the following twelve Ministers: Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister), Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Sarat Chandra Bose, C. Rajagopalachari and Jagjivan Ram (Congress nominees); SardarBaldev Singh, CH Bhabha and John Matthai (representatives of three minorities); Asaf Ali, Sir Shafat Ahmad and Syed Ali Zaheer (three Muslim representatives while two seats for Muslims were left vacant). The Muslim League observed September 2 as the Black Day. Later the Muslim League realised its mistake and the loss it had caused to itself and joined the Coalition Interim Government on October 25, 1946 necessitating the reshuffle of the Interim Government with the following 14 Ministers: Congress (6): Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Asaf Ali and Jagjivan Ram; Muslim League (5): Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, AbdurRabNishtar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and J.N. Mandal; Minorities (3): John Matthai, C.H. Bhabha and Baldev Singh. This Coalition Interim Government proved a miserable failure. The Muslim

League Ministers merely created obstacles and I presume they were awaiting creation of a separate Dominion Status of Pakistan in less than ten months.

The latter part of 1946 witnessed some of the worst communal riots India had ever seen, in Noakhali (now in Bangladesh) and Bihar. On August 16, 1946 the All India Muslim League proclaimed Direct Action Day in Calcutta as part of their demand for a separate state for Muslims. In the city about 4,000 people were killed. These riots triggered communal violence across the country. Serious and large scale riots occurred in Noakhali District from October 10 to 21, 1946 which provoked violence in Bihar. Earlier riots over local issues had taken place in Bihar in June and September but the largest riots of the year occurred from October 27 to November 6 during which period a large number of Muslims were killed by Hindus in retaliation for the Noakhali riots. The riots were severe enough that Jawaharlal Nehru, then the head of the Interim Government, threatened to bombard rioters from the air. On 5 November, Mahatma Gandhi, who was in Calcutta, visiting riot-stricken areas, stated that he would fast unto death if the violence in Bihar did not stop within 24 hours. His statement was broadcast nationally by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. At the time, official reports stated that 400 people had been killed. The Muslim League stated that Hindu mobs had killed 30,000 people in the province. Historians have referred to the Great Calcutta Killings of 1946 as the first explicitly political communal violence in the region.

Mahatma Gandhi's Noakhali padayatra has historical importance. He started for Noakhali on November 6. On November 9 he embarked on his padayatra for seven weeks, covering 116 miles

and 47 villages. He organised prayer meetings, met local Muslim leaders and tried to win their confidence. He discontinued his mission halfway and started for Bihar on March 2, 1947.

In his mission to restore peace and stop communal riots Mahatma Gandhi took with him very few selected companions and the foremost among them was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. I had the privilege of having his darshan at Allahabad Central Station when he and the INA hero Major General Shah Nawaz Khan were accompanying Mahatma Gandhi to Bihar in 1946 to restore peace and provide succour to the riot victims, the Muslims. It was a memorable occasion for me as I requested Babu for his autograph. In those days one had to contribute Rs. 5 to the Harijan Fund for getting his autograph. I could not have afforded Rs. 5 in those days. My maternal cousin, the daughter of the Additional District Magistrate of Allahabad, had given me her autograph book and Rs. 5 for the purpose. Babu asked me: "Poisha de diyahai?" With folded hands I replied: "Haan, Babu, paisa de diyahai." Then he signed in Devanagari: Mo. Ka. Gandhi.

I got another opportunity to see Badshah Khan from closer quarters at the Meerut Congress in November 1946 where I was working as a volunteer of the All India Students' Congress and our camp was close to the camp of the KhudaiKhidmatgars. His son, Wali Khan (1917-2006), President of the NWFP Students' Congress, also stayed in the same camp. While all the other members of the Congress Working Committee stayed in well furnished tents near the venue of the Congress session Badshah Khan stayed with his KhudaiKhidmatgars in an ordinary tent at a place far from the venue PyareLal Sharma Nagar. (Sri PyareLal Sharma was a prominent Congress leader of

Meerut and was the Education Minister of UP in 1937.) One cannot believe today how simply Badshah Khan lived. His belongings comprised only three pairs of salwars and long Pathankurtas of grey colour known as 'militia', he would himself wash his clothes daily and did not bother if the clothes he wore were ironed or not.

A remarkable fact about this important Congress session at Meerut on November 23, 1946 is that except Mahatma Gandhi all the important national leaders and Ministers of the Interim Government (barring of course the Muslim League Ministers) were present there. It is only Mahatma Gandhi who attached more importance to his padayatra mission in Noakhali than to this historic Congress session. The same stoic attitude in the Mahatma was discernible when he refused to attend the Independence Day celebrations in Delhi. Only Babu was capable of doing so.

When the Partition became a reality Badshah Khan decided to stay with his people and suffered incarceration by successive Pakistani Governments. When he was invited by India on the occasion of the birth centenary of his mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, in 1969 he visited many places, condemned the communal riots going on at Ahmedabad and elsewhere, appealed for sanity and peace and criticised those Congress leaders who had accepted the Partition plan. He said at several places: "We fought for the freedom and unity of India but you threw us before wolves."

Badshah Khan's son, Khan Wali Khan, followed the legacy of his father, was imprisoned five times in Pakistani jails and survived several assassination attempts in his 48-year long political career. He nourished the National Awami Party

founded by his father in 1956. He valiantly carried on his struggle for autonomy for his Pashtoon people and for restoration of democracy. Wali Khan's son, Asfandyar Wali Khan, had strayed from the path of non-violence in his younger days but today, at the age of 68, he too is carrying on the torch of his father and grandfather. He is a Member of Parliament and President of the Awami National Party. He got his land renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. But he has not forgotten the torture inflicted on him in prison by the ZA Bhutto regime and his conviction for 15 years. I recall that at the ShahidiDiwas observed by the Society for Communal Harmony and the Khudai Khidmatgar organisation at Sabka Ghar in Okhla, Delhi, on November 18, 2018 I had observed that in my view maximum sacrifices for the country were made by two families, those of Badshah Khan and Sardar Bhagat Singh. It is gratifying that my friend Faisal Khan and his band of idealistic youth drawn from various corners of India have revived the old spirit of sacrifice and service of the poor by restarting the KhudaiKhidmatgar movement since 2011. One has to visit SabkaGhar in Okhla area of Delhi to see how these young and idealistic followers of Babu and Badshah Khan belonging to different faiths lead a commune-like life with perfect understanding and peace and engage themselves in several constructive activities in the service of the poor and the deprived. I was privileged to attend the inaugural function of Sabka Ghar on January 18, 2017 and the All India meet of KhudaiKhidmatgars at Rajendra Bhawan, New Delhi, on November 26, 2017. May its workers prove true to the ideals preached by Babu and Badshah Khan.

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Fact Finding Report of Bhima Koregaon Riots

Bhima Koregaon is situated on the eastern side of Pune on the Pune –Ahmednagar highway, 25 km from the city of Pune, on the banks of Bhima River. Its population is about 7000-8000.

Bhima Koregaon valour day was initiated by Dr B.R. Ambedkar 90 years ago in 1927, to commemorate the Battle of Bhima-Koregaon on 1 January 1818. From 1927 to 2018 the size of the crowd consisting of depressed classes from all over Maharashtra went on increasing from a mere thousand to about 15 lakhs this year. Prior to this year's gathering, many conferences were held all over Maharashtra in which hundreds of anti-caste groups under the banner of Elgaar had participated, which included our group too, Rashtra Seva Dal. These conferences had facilitated the record crowd at Bhima-Koregaon this year. The administration was well-informed about these developments.

In 1990-91, on the occasion of the death anniversary of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and the birth centenary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a decision was taken to celebrate certain historical events, such as the establishment of the first women's school at Bhidewada, Pune, the birth place of Savitribai Phule at Naygaon, Pune, the first statue of Gautam Buddha installed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at Dehu road near Pune, and the victory memorial of the battle of Bhima-Koregaon initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on 1 January 1927.

The war at Bhima-Koregaon was fought between the British and the Peshwas, in which Peshwas had 20,000 soldiers and the British regiment known as Bombay Native Infantry, 2nd battalion, 1st regiment had only about 1,000 soldiers but was armed with superior

ammunitions. This regiment had a majority of Mahars in it. The battle was won by the British which ended the Peshwai. During the Peshwai, the caste system was at its climax in which women and Dalits were victims of caste-oppression and humiliation. The Dalits were required to carry a pot hung from their chest for spitting and a broom was tied to their waist while walking on the streets. This humiliation was one reason why the Mahars fought so bravely on the side of the British. This is the reason why Ambedkar started celebrating this event as a victory day.

Another version of this history is that the end of Peshwai did not result in the end of caste oppression but rather, after 1857, the British assured the Brahmins and Muslims that they will not interfere in their religious affairs. They disbanded the Mahar regiment in accordance with this assurance. Hence we should look at the British strategy with suspicion and refrain from celebrating this day as a day of valor which amounts to appeasement of the British and is therefore anti-national. The heirs of the Peshwas and some Hindutwawadi forces hold on to this view and had approached the court to ban celebration of this day as a day of valor which was rejected by the court. The war memorial however is at that place for the last 200 years and the names of martyrs are inscribed on it, which include the names of not only Mahars but also names of a few Marathas and other backward caste soldiers.

A few kilometers away from this memorial is located the samadhi of Chatrapati Sambhaji at a place called Wadhu (Budruk). A famous historian V.C. Bendre had discovered this samadhi in 1939 which is situated in the Maharwada. Sambhaji was a scholar of Sanskrit

which became an eyesore for the Brahmins since knowledge of Sanskrit was prohibited for the non-Brahmins on the basis of Manusmriti. It is the Brahmins who advised Aurangzeb to punish Sambhaji in accordance with the code of Manusmriti, which called for his eyes to be taken out for the crime of reading the Vedas, his head be cut for memorising them and his body be cut into pieces. A fatwa was also taken out that no one should cremate his body parts. However Govind Mahar took the responsibility of his last rites and cremated his body after sewing up these parts. Historians V.C. Bendre, Kamal Gokhale and Sharad Patil have corroborated this version.

However there is another version coming from Hindutwawaadi forces, which claims that the body parts were not sewed by a Mahar but was done by a Maratha. Hence the Marathas of the village are claiming that it is the ancestor of a Maratha family named Sevale who had performed the last rites of Sambhaji. The Hindutwawaadi forces in western Maharashtra are giving this twist to the story of punishment to Sambhaji for the last 25 years which has added fuel to fire in the riots on January 1 this year.

On 28 December 2017, the present family members of Govind Mahar had put up a hoarding indicating the direction towards his samadhi. Some miscreants from the same village gathered and removed the hoarding. They also removed and threw away the tin shed over the samadhi of Govind Mahar. The family of Govind Mahar lodged a complaint in the police station and 49 people were arrested from the village. On 1 January 2018 a rumour spread that there was something suspicious over Sambhaji Maharaj Samadhi. A Hindu Aghadi

organisation was active for quite some time in this area. They had been holding public meetings for the last three weeks and were giving warnings to people that those who would assemble on January 1 are anti-nationals. One of them held a press conference on 28 December 2017 at Pune and said that India is probably the only country where some anti-national people can celebrate the victory of a foreign power.

On 29, 30 and 31 December 2017 there was complete peace in Bhima-Koregaon, Wadhu (Budruk) and Sanaswadi. However some unknown people were found loitering around in these villages. The Bhima-Koregaon gram panchayat had passed a resolution to observe a bandh in Bhima-Koregaon on 1st January 2008 and had submitted a copy of the resolution to the Police station at Shikrapur. The police underestimated the situation and ignored it.

On 1 January this year, people were approaching Bhima-Koregaon from all sides. The open space around Bhima-Koregaon were filled with vehicles parked by those who had come to celebrate the Bhima-Koregaon memorial of valour. After parking their vehicles, the people which included women, children and elders came walking 3-4 kilometers to the memorial.

On the other side, thousands of people with saffron flags had assembled at Vadhu (Budruk) at 10am. They launched their attack on the people who had come to pay their respects to the Bhima-Koregaon memorial with stones and other weapons at about 11am. Hundreds of vehicles were burnt down. Petrol was freely used to burn the vehicles. The rioting crowd then went towards Sanaswadi and Chakan-Shikrapur road. They burnt a shop belonging to one Salim Inamdar. A godown belonging to Salim Khan was put on fire. A tyre

shop belonging to Asgar Ali Ansari was burnt. His younger brother who had taken shelter inside the shop fled when the shop was put on fire. A cylinder in the next hotel burst which burnt the adjoining shop Sarvesh Autolines belonging to Bhausahab Khetre. Two trucks (nos. MH-12-786 and MH-12-2757) in front of Razzak Bhai's garage were put on fire. A shop Ranabhai Marble belonging to Shivraj Prajapati was looted. A godown of firewood belonging to Haribhau Darekar was burnt down.

At about 6 pm, a crowd attacked the house of a Dalit by the name of Sudam Shankar Pawar. He is a project affected person who has been rehabilitated in Sanaswadi and has received two acres of land. There is cane sugar cultivation in 1 and ½ acres of this land, and in the rest of his land he has built a Buddha Vihar and a meeting hall along with an open space. He has also built 29 one room row houses (chaal). The crowd entered his field, put on fire his sugar-cane field from all sides, damaged the vehicles parked in the open space and also broke the glass panes of the Buddha Vihar. The houses and the fields of Darekar and Hargude that are located just in front of his house were left intact. From this fact, it is apparent that the rioters targeted Sudam Pawar's house and field because he was Dalit. Similarly they pelted stones at the houses of Ravi Kamble and Athwale. The studio of a famous painter and sculptor, Elvin Fernandes was also burnt. The property of Mutha Jain was put on fire. People were stopped and harassed on the Pune-Ahmednagar road. A fire brigade vehicle was also put on fire. In all, a total of 5,000 vehicles were destroyed. 50 cars and luxury buses were burnt.

A few questions can be raised regarding the whole incident.

1. Who took the decision for the bandh on 1 January 1918? How come a village which claims to

provide hospitality to outsiders every year gave a call for bandh on this day this year, as a result of which visitors did not even get a glass of water to drink.

2. We noticed a tremendous fear psychosis among the common people in Bhima Koregaon. They requested us repeatedly not to write their names in our report. Due to this same fear, the present family members of Govind Mahar of Wadhu (Budruk) who had filed a case have now taken it back. All 49 people who were arrested in the case of destruction of Govind Mahar's samadhi have now been freed. What is the cause of this fear psychosis?

3. The Hindutwawadi forces clearly involved in this entire episode are roaming free, giving interviews and circulating clippings distorting facts on the social media, putting all the blame on the Dalits for the incident. What is the administration doing?

4. This whole episode is clearly an attempt to divide the Dalits and the Marathas, and is aimed at disrupting the social fabric of Maharashtra. Why are the law and order agencies not paying attention to this grave polarisation taking place in front of their eyes?

Our demands

- 1) Arrest immediately the main culprits involved in the riots of Bhima-Koregaon.
- 2) A judicial enquiry be immediately instituted and its report published forthwith.
- 3) The role of the police and the administration be enquired upon and the guilty persons be punished
- 4) The role of the media in the entire episode be investigated.

Team members of Rashtra Seva Dal who conducted this fact finding: Dr Suresh Khairnar (President), Allauddin Sheikh, Vinay Sawant, Feroz Mithiborwala, Puja Badekar and Shivraj Suryavanshi, in association with Bharat Patankar and Kishor Dhamale.

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BJP onslaught on Primary Education

Pannalal Surana

It must be borne in mind that in far off villages, attendance is going to be limited because the parents themselves are illiterate and hard pressed for earning means of livelihood. It is necessary that sustained efforts must be put in by social organisations and teachers to persuade the children to attend schools. Closing down schools is not at all warranted.

One is forced to arrive at the conclusion that it is the national policy of the BJP to revive the old system which had kept doors to education closed to poorer sections which are also socially backward. A real revival of Manuwaad seems to be on their cards!

The BJP is bent upon spreading the red carpet to corporate lords even in the field of education. Great social reformers of the 19th century, like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Ramasamy Periyar and so many others had

suffered a lot at the hands of orthodox people in their endeavour to spread education for women and the downtrodden sections. Mahatma Gandhi had lent great support to all these efforts. Saintry persons like Gadge Maharaj and Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil had built up large networks of schools and colleges in the rural areas. The cultural nationalism of BJP seems bent upon undoing all this and turn the wheels backward.

In a number of States, there is a ban on filling the vacancies in the secondary schools and colleges caused by retirement. The usual argument advanced is that there is paucity of funds. But the governments are spending lavishly on propagandist advertisements, pompous ceremonies, etc.

It is high time all progressive forces to join hands to pull down this regressive regime.

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The Unemployment Crisis: Reasons and Solutions

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In their invitation, Smt Asharfi Khan and Priyanka Varma, convenors of the Madhya Pradesh convention referred to above, have mentioned that according to a CAG report, 4811 schools are without teachers, another 5000 have only one teacher per school, there is no library in any school, no water in 5176 and no playground in 45,000 schools. If the State Government is so negligent in providing basic amenities, how can it dare to complain about poor student attendance?

Sensitive Issues Bangladesh Faces

Mrinal Biswas

Elections in Bangladesh are due to be held towards the end of this year. The country is facing several important issues whose repercussions extend to even beyond her borders. It is important to address these issues. But the issues nevertheless will persist in some forms or others with whatever the outcomes of the elections.

First of course is how far Myanmar is prepared to take back the staggering number of 6,88,000 Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh after a severe army counter-insurgency operation against the Rohingya people that followed the August Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) strikes on Myanmar military establishments on August 24. The international outcry on the fast developing refugee issue was caustically articulated by Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussain, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as 'a textbook example of ethnic cleansing'. He even saw elements of genocide in the attack on the Rohingyas while speaking at the UN Human Rights Council last December at Geneva. (UN defines genocide as acts intended to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part).

The Rohingya extremists' violent attacks on Myanmar's military establishment had missed international attention till the refugee crisis began. After that, the potential of it assuming the character of pan-Islamic extremism has made India and some countries quite concerned. India then moved in multiple directions. It asked Myanmar to exert restraint while dealing with Rohingya extremism, helped Bangladesh in her relief

operations during refugee influx, struck an agreement with Myanmar to provide help in economic development of Rohingya-concentrated Rakhine province, looked positively at the Bangladesh-Myanmar agreement for repatriation of refugees, while making it known that some 40,000 Rohingyas taking shelter in India will be sent back to Myanmar.

The Bangladesh government of Sheikh Hasina will politically gain both domestically and internationally if it can effectively implement voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees in the next two years, as agreed. The first phase of repatriation set to start on 23 January was held up for lack of preparations on both sides. There are reports of continued army operations in Rakhine. But the Hasina government is understandably keen to send back a sizable number of Muslim Rohingyas before the elections to circumvent any possible opposition ploy of exploiting the situation pregnant with Islamic fundamentalism. This is a hard test for Bangladesh.

For Bangladesh, and for the Hasina government in particular, it wants to resolve with India the issue of accessing Teesta river water before the coming elections. After former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's failure to conclude an agreement for sharing of the river waters because of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's intransigence, his successor Narendra Modi could only go a half way to assuage Bangladesh's feelings of deprivation. The present rulers of Bangladesh are hardly enthused by Modi's assurance to his

counterpart Sheikh Hasina Wajed for an eventual agreement on the Teesta river water. Since elections are not very far away, Bangladeshi leaders belonging to Awami League want some tangible results to prevent the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its diehard anti-India ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, from alleging that Sheikh Hasina is a pawn in the hands of India and thus benefiting in the polls.

In the coming elections, it is certain that BNP will enter the election fray, and will not take a poll boycott stand this time. After Begum Khaleda Zia's failure to win India's support for her demand that the next Bangladesh elections be held with a caretaker government, that is, without Sheikh Hasina's Awami League being at the helm, Begum Zia's BNP has not only hardened its attitude towards the Awami League government, it has also launched an anti-India tirade to the satisfaction of Jamaat-e-Islami. Significantly, both Awami League and BNP seem eager to hold talks with the Modi Government. BNP, sensing a declining Hindu support for its traditional attachment for the Awami League, is trying to balance its political moves so as to prevent the 12 percent minority votes from going to the Awami League.

Insecurity surrounds the Sheikh Hasina's government, considering that reports of coups keep emanating from Bangladesh time and again. Apart from some military men wanting to directly involve themselves in government affairs, the Islamist radicals remain a potential threat. Most of them are rallying under Jammāt ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh and

Ansarullah Bangla Team. Even Myanmar's Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is quite active in Bangladesh and Rohingyas are known to provide foot soldiers to all these extra-parliamentary parties which are continuing their clandestine armed operations with or without the support of Pakistan's ISI and ISIS of the Middle East. Indeed, ARSA appears to be the headache of Myanmar, Bangladesh and India all at the same time. Bangladesh claim of demolition of all anti-India terror camps is significant in this context. The serial murders of professed secularists and bloggers have presently stopped, but there is no knowing when they may begin again.

The manner in which Sheikh Hasina has handled her differences with the Chief Justice S.K. Sinha of Bangladesh's Supreme Court is a severe blot on Bangladesh's democracy. This judge belonging to the minority community was made the chief of the judiciary at Hasina's promptings but lost her confidence when Justice Sinha approvingly referred to a Pakistan court order that led to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's disqualification from office. Soon after, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came down heavily on the Supreme Court Chief Justice S.K. Sinha. Reports began circulating in the media about Justice Sinha's involvement in corruption; the President too called all judges of the Supreme Court, barring the Chief Justice, and handed over to them a list of charges against the Chief Justice. This concerted attack forced Justice Sinha to go on long leave to Australia on leave, and a month later, he resigned. It is obvious that Bangladesh's judicial independence has been compromised, which bodes ill for the country's future.

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Admiral Ramdas' Personal Testimony: Judge Loya's Case

Subject: Why Am I filing a Writ Petition and PIL on the Judge Loya case? How and Why am I concerned?

1. I have always been and remain a great believer in and follower of the Constitution of India which guarantees independence of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.
2. The Constitution guarantees every citizen various freedoms, including the freedom of speech, freedom to practice the religion of their choice, and Right to life.
3. Several events in the years since Independence have been indelibly imprinted on my mind from the time that I witnessed at close quarters, the horrors of Partition as a young lad growing up in Delhi in the 1940s. To mention a few - the ruthless slaying and pogrom let loose against the Sikhs in 1984; the inexplicable destruction of places of worship including the Babri Masjid in 1992, and the deliberate killing of large numbers of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. I continue to watch with mounting dismay, the current and continuous violations of basic human rights, attacks on minorities - especially Muslims and Dalits, and the systematic weakening and debilitation of all our established institutions, including the judiciary. As we celebrate the 68th anniversary of our Republic - each of these events listed above, represents a serious violation of the Constitution, for which I hold the Governments of the day accountable. It is certainly a

time to take serious stock of where we have reached and how do we make the necessary course corrections before it is too late.

4. I retired as Chief of the Naval Staff in 1993 after 45 years in the service of the Nation. I moved soon thereafter to live in a small village, Bhaimala, in rural Maharashtra. I have constantly and continuously maintained a critical position about these continuing attempts to undermine and weaken the Constitution and the Democratic framework of the country, and how these affect the most marginalised. I have never hesitated in expressing my views and my unhappiness at these developments in unequivocal terms. These have often taken the form of letters addressed to the topmost leadership in the country.

5. These include one written in October 2015 to the then President and the Prime Minister - expressing my shock at the series of events taking place around the country; then one in 2017 to Shri Ram Nath Kovind jee, the Honorable President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, soon after his election, concerning the growing intolerance and deteriorating civil military relations among other matters.

6. The latest letter was written by me to the CJI and the CJ -

Bombay High Court, written in November 2017, raising my concerns about the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Judge Loya , as outlined in the Caravan Magazine in Nov 2017. This was mainly to urge the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court to constitute a high level Judicial Enquiry /SIT into the matter and to thus restore public confidence in the image of the judiciary and the highest court in the land – ie the Supreme Court.

7. I have been motivated primarily by an abiding consciousness of my duties as a citizen of India and a proud member of our Armed Forces. I have always sought to communicate my views and disquiet on matters of state, directly to the leadership of our nation from time to time, or whenever, in my perception, we seem to be losing our way and moving away from the broad pathway or Dharma as laid down in the Constitution – which has always been my guiding light.
8. So it is in this present case. I have already written expressing my strong discomfort at the series of disclosures and conflicting versions regarding Judge Loya's sudden and untimely death. The recent Press conference by four of the senior most Judges of the SC only confirmed my own fears that all was not well – and therefore this writ, as a Public interest Litigation, seeking the Courts Directive to set up a high level judicial Enquiry under the direct monitoring of the SC. I am hoping that by so doing, I would add further weightage to the pleas already made , to

inquire into this matter without further delay and further damage to our institutions.

9. I am sharing my reasons for taking this action of seeking direction from the Highest Court in the land, primarily to allay possible allegations of vested interests that might have motivated me. I am 84 years old – and have been keeping indifferent health. I could just as well have kept silent and enjoyed my retirement. However, do I feel deeply that each of us has a duty and a responsibility to work towards realising the dream of building an open, tolerant, inclusive and diverse India – as envisioned in that great document -the Indian Constitution.
10. My experience as a Lok Pal. It was this belief that led me to accept the responsibility of the role of Lok Pal of the Aam Aadmi Party from its inception till I was no longer required ! In keeping with my principled notion that such a role required complete and uncompromising objectivity and non partisan functioning, I never became a member of AAP or any other political party.
11. I have never held a post retirement paid post – either in Government nor in any private for profit entity. I live primarily on my pension and interest on my few savings – and this has enabled me to play the role of an independent voice and critic without any fear or favour. Born in Mumbai; domiciled in Maharashtra; I am perhaps one of the few retired Former Chiefs who continues to live on the land allotted to me for my gallantry award of Vir Chakra after the 1971 operations.

12. My wife and I have cultivated what was banjar land, and we continue to learn about organic farming and the struggles of our rural and farming community – the greatest education we could have had. For nearly twenty five years, we have worked with local communities and children in a number of educational activities ; have led struggles against take over of irrigated farmlands. We have both been deeply involved with work for Peace – in our region, especially with Pakistan, and for a Nuclear free India, a Nuclear free Asia and Nuclear Free World.

Laxminarayan [Ramuj] Ramdas
31 January 2018
Email: lramdas@gmail.com

(Admiral Ramdas filed a petition in the Supreme Court on January 30, 2018 asking the Supreme Court to investigate the death of Judge Loya and the circumstances around it)

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Indian Intellectual Slavery

E.P. Menon

government they wanted to rule over them.

Where is this kind of intellectual honesty today in favour of the poor and illiterate? If more than 1500 MPs and MLAs are reported to be 'criminals', what right do they have to sit in those respectable Houses and make laws for the poor and exploited millions?

Two incidents often come to my mind when I think about our Glorious Culture about which we trumpet a lot. I met a young French woman tourist on the Bangalore University campus some time ago. I asked her a simple question: 'Please tell me your very first impression of India as soon as you landed.'

After thinking for a while, she said: 'India is a Be-Iman country.' 'How come?' I wondered. 'Can you explain?' 'Yes, on the very first evening I took a stroll, saw a small shop and a huge bunch of ripe colourful bananas hanging. Felt hungry. "How much," I asked the man standing and selling. "One three rupees," he said with his fingers. I gave a ten rupee note and said: "Give me three." His hand went to the top, pulled three small bananas and gave them to me, and then he folded his hands in namaste and smiled. A few seconds later, I walked away wondering: why didn't he give me the big bananas and also the balance one rupee back? Then I remembered a fellow Indian woman passenger on the plane sitting next to me telling me: "You should be very careful, this is a Be-Iman country. This is how I learnt the first Hindi word Be-Iman and its meaning Dishonest."'

The second incident was in a me his car and driver for the visit. After an 8 hours drive, I enjoyed the great hospitality of the village and started hearing stories of their claim that 'Ravana had brought Sita to this village first.' A young boy of 14 asked me a question: 'Mr Menon, why do you people in India tell thousands of

lies to your children for years? Will any child in the world believe that there was a man called Ravana with ten heads?' I agreed with him and congratulated him for asking such frank question. deep forest village of Sri Lanka where I had gone for my anthropology study. I was curious to read about a village called Ravanaguda and the director of the museum offered me his car and driver for the visit. After an 8 hours drive, I enjoyed the great hospitality of the village and started hearing stories of their claim that 'Ravana had brought Sita to this village first.' A young boy of 14 asked me a question: 'Mr Menon, why do you people in India tell thousands of lies to your children for years? Will any child in the world believe that there was a man called Ravana with ten heads?' I agreed with him and congratulated him for asking such frank question.

What is happening right now? The Union Government has sent a proposal to the Parliament for approval that the monthly salary of Supreme Court and High Court judges should be raised from the existing Rs 90,000 to 250,000 with retrospective effect starting from January 1, 2016!!! Is this not a fraud on the poor and illiterate people of India by the intellectual law makers? I would rather call it as Official Judicial Bribery In Advance.

What can be done? Where to begin to free India from Corporate Colonialism And Intellectual Slavery?

May be, we should begin by folding up the present National Anthem (Jana gana mana . . .), keep it in the museum. I offer an award of Rs 10,000 to any young man or woman who will write a new National Anthem For The Future Of India to encourage our honest law-makers to work for a society where Social Equality And Economic Justice Will Be Available To All. What do the intellectuals say?

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**Muslims in India :
Appeasement
or Discrimination**
Ram Puniyani

**Amending the
Constitution of India**
Vinayak Davray

**Brutal Experiment
of Abolishing**
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Security for all not Feasible

Kuldip Nayar

Two more policemen died in the valley. This is not the first time that there is casualty in Kashmir. But the disconcerting aspect is that killings are taking place at regular intervals. New Delhi has not been able to quell violence. Probably, the cause is eluding the Narendra Modi government at the center that has to be tackled if violence has to be stopped.

That at least two militants could sneak into the hospital complex to free the jailed LeT terrorist from Pakistan is alarming, indeed. This means there is no safe place in the valley. But the worst is the terrorists have no consideration for even the sick. At the same time, it also exposes our security set up when the 22-two year old Mohammad Naveed Jhutt, who was arrested in Kulgam in Kashmir in 2014, managed to escape with the assailants during broad daylight from outside the government-run hospital, where he had been taken for medical check-up.

The terrorists seemed to have had a foolproof setup working in the valley to know when and where Jhutt would be taken as they have

been lying in wait in the hospital's parking lot before opening fire when he was brought along with other prisoners. Jhutt is believed to have been involved in multiple attacks, including on some civilians and army personnel.

In fact, every political party has someone to inform it about the arrival of any outsider in Srinagar. The terrorists and others line-up resistance according to the danger posed. The intelligence system is too porous. The Mehbooba Mufti's government admits to its failure. All the stone-pelters have been released, apparently as a goodwill gesture. But the real reason behind the release is the popular support they have.

The situation is such that the old militants like Yasin Malik or Shabbir Shah have become irrelevant today. The youth is leading and making no secret of the fact that they want a separate Islamic country of their own. They are neither pro-Pakistan, nor pro-India. They are pro-themselves and have made it clear to Islamabad that their movement is to prepare for their own entity.

New Delhi realizes it but has

no alternative to offer to them. Its answer seems to be security forces which are suffering more and more casualty. Strangely the former chief minister Farooq Abdullah introduced religion by declaring that the youth is the new identity of Islam. They are Muslims he says. But thank god, he doesn't question Srinagar's accession to New Delhi.

Pakistan understands that the entire partition formula would come to be questioned if it underlines the entity factor. Therefore, it emphasizes that the two countries should sit across the table and find solution which is acceptable to both. That, in fact, means Islamabad does not want to face the fact. The reality is that the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is sought to be a separate Islamic country.

New Delhi has made it clear that it would not have talks until it is assured that Pakistan would not give shelter to terrorists, nor would it be a party to militancy. But this is only a pipedream. True, Islamabad's proxy war in the shape of mercenaries, the ISI saboteurs and even the armed forces—Pakistan describes all this as 'its moral and diplomatic support' to the militants—has not allowed the state to settle down to normalcy for years. In the last one decade, the interference from across the border has been colossal. Still, frankly speaking, India has had no policy on Kashmir and it has committed a mistake after mistake.

One can go back to the time when Sheikh Abdullah, then Kashmir's sole leader, was detained in 1952 because he wanted India to live up to its promise of autonomy. That meant transferring all powers to Srinagar except those relating to foreign affairs, defence and

communications. Or to 1989, when the state assembly elections were rigged to force the Kashmiri youth infer that the ballot box would not bring them power, but the bullet might.

Pakistan was only looking for an opportunity when the angry young Kashmiris would cross the border to get training and arms. That it smuggled in some of its own armed men to guide them was natural because it had waited for nearly four decades to build an uprising in the valley. In the militancy and the state's response that followed, a large number of Kashmiris and members of security forces lost their lives.

The Kashmiri leaders, particularly the younger lot, have to face the realities. An opportunity is coming their way in the shape of the Lok Sabha election next year. If they are in the same House, they can demand from the nation what has been denied to them even after the 1952 Delhi Agreement, that is, their special status. They can insist on all precautions for a fair election. But they cannot afford to miss the opportunity.

By getting elected to Parliament, the Kashmiri leaders will have an opportunity for disproving the government allegation that their support was primarily because of fear and fundamentalism they have spread in the valley. They should understand these the uncertain situation in Kashmir has led New Delhi to deny the state the liberal economic assistance which it should get. Many packages have been announced in the past decades. It was first Rajiv Gandhi who promised an allocation of Rs 2,000 crore. The successive prime ministers after him have been raising the

figure, but never allocating even a fraction of it. Delhi has also misread to some extent the reason for people's sulkiness there. Had there been economic development in the state, the Kashmiri youth's focus of attention would have been different. One has only to think of the days when they would look forward to the arrival of tourists. After going through intermittent violence, the Kashmiris have realized that there is no go from the tourists who come in large number and spend money.

Today, people are sick of violence. The security forces and the terrorists from across the border have made them live on edge. Poor living conditions have deteriorated further. They want development, not politics, which the Mehbooba government has been lately selling to them vigorously. A responsive, clean and purposeful administration in the state would have lessened their and Delhi's headaches.

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Muslims in India : Appeasement or Discrimination

Ram Puniyani

A democracy should be judged by the parameter of 'how safe and secure the religious minorities are'. In India, from among the religious minorities, Muslims and Christians are singled out for discrimination and physical violence. In addition many misconceptions are spread against them. Muslim minorities have been subject to demonisation in a serious way. They are also victims of communal violence and indiscriminate arrests on the pretext of terrorist violence, while at the same time the misconception that Muslims have been appeased has been widely spread.

With the formation of Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885, many Hindu nationalists opposed inclusion of Muslims in INC. Later during the freedom movement, the people belonging to this ideology accused Gandhi of appeasing Muslims. This propaganda about appeasement became very intense after the Shah Bano case, when the Government brought in Muslim Women protection bill to negate the Supreme Court judgment which granted maintenance to Shah Bano, a divorced woman. It is true that the implementation of secular policies of the ruling Government has been weak. One must add that other parties have also tried to appease fundamentalist Muslim leadership. While the fundamentalist Muslim leadership has been appeased, Muslims in general have been discriminated against; they are a part of the lowest socio-economic strata of society, and thus are far from being appeased.

Muslim Community in India

Islam came to India first through the Arab traders at Malabar Coast in seventh century. Later through Sufi saints many untouchables took to Islam to escape caste tyranny. Those taking to Islam came from the sections which belonged to the lower socio-economic strata in society. With the coming of modern education, elite Muslims took to education in large numbers while not much was done for education of the poor sections of Muslims. To add to the problem, following independence, a large number of affluent and salaried-educated Muslims left for Pakistan, leaving the lower sections here in larger numbers. The Muslim society at large remained in the grip of illiteracy and poverty.

Prof. Mushirul Hasan points out that for the "Muslim communities that remained in India, partition was a nightmare. . . . (While) lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers and civil servants were comfortably ensconced in Lahore or Karachi either in response to Mohammad Ali Jinnah's clarion call or to bolster their career prospects. On the other hand, the so-called Islamic community in India, which had no place in Jinnah's Pakistan, was fragmented, and left vulnerable to right wing Hindu thoughts." (Hasan, 2001, p. 7)

After Independence, communal forces started the propaganda that Muslims are responsible for partition. The communal political groups popularised the biases against Muslims. These misconceptions

against Muslims related to issues like: Muslim kings destroyed Hindu temples; Muslim kings spread Islam on the strength of the sword; etc. Their social conditions related to poverty, like poor hygiene, also became the butt of misconceptions against them. These misconceptions formed the base of the communal violence. The majority of victims of violence were from among the poorer sections of society, and the majority among them were Muslims. Communal violence in turn led to their ghettotisation, and the Muslim community started becoming inward-looking in nature. Due to repeated violence against them, their focus on security took precedence over equity issues. This led to neglect of education. In the last couple of decades, particularly after 9/11 2001, in several cases of terror attacks, many innocent Muslim youth have been arrested.

There was a trend of the police authorities arresting college/university students on charges of terrorist acts, and then letting them rot in jails for long periods before the courts come to their rescue. Towns like Azamgarh and Bhatkal were propagated to be dens of terrorists. Madrassas have also been looked down as places breeding terrorists. At times, many parents scared of the prospect of their children being implicated by the police recalled them back from colleges. The careers of many Muslim youth who were pursuing their studies in professional colleges or were practicing as young professionals got ruined. This again added to the

tendency of Muslim community to withdraw into their own shells. There is another parallel phenomenon that has taken place during the last four decades: that of Muslim youth seeking and getting jobs preferentially in the Gulf countries. This section did become slightly more affluent, but is only a small segment if we look the situation from an all India perspective.

Muslim Appeasement

This propaganda is so strong that reality gets lost from popular perception. As per official data, the employment of Muslims in government jobs is abysmally low. For example, table 1 shows Muslim employment in Central services. Though their ratio in population is more than 14%, their share in government jobs and private employment is not more than 3%.

As far as the representation of Muslims in the private sector is concerned, it is no better. A study done some time ago showed that in the private sector, including the two top business houses of the Tatas and Birlas, Muslim employment was only 8.16%, while for the Scheduled Castes it was 11.5%. In the executive cadre Muslims were only 1.5% while in the clerical class they were 8.28%.

Table 1: Muslim Employment in Central Government Services, 2000

Group	Estimated Strength	% of total strength	Muslim % in 1992
A	77,680	2.05	1.61
B	1,74,675	4.63	3.00
C	23,87,625	63.22	4.41
D	11,36,686	30.09	5.12
Total	37,76,666	100.00	

Source: Omar Khalidi, Muslims in the Indian Economy, Three Essays Collective, New Delhi, 2006, p. 45.

Muslim Artisans

A large section of Muslims is associated with a number of handicrafts and related trades. Here they tend to be employed as workers, while the retailers and exporters belong to other communities. Khalidi provides the following statistics, quoting from a 1991 survey, that provide information about Muslim employment in various handicrafts in the state of Uttar Pradesh: art metalware (76%), zari, gold thread/brocade and zari goods (89%), embroidery (87.5%), cotton rugs (67%) and woodwares (72%). In several other states too, Muslims are engaged in similar artisanal activities in large numbers. Yet, the State appears to have done little to help Muslim artisan families and communities.

On the contrary, the economic policies have led to a worsening of conditions of artisans over the last few decades; consequently, Muslim artisans too have been badly affected together with artisans from other communities. Thus, earlier, there were over 5,00,000 weavers living in and around Varanasi, weaving silk saris mainly for the domestic market. But since the 1990s, these silk handloom weavers have seen their markets vanish. Similar is the fate of other textile centers like Bhivandi,

Malegaon, etc., where Muslims were employed in large numbers. There are many reasons for this decline, such as increasing competition from power loom weaving, changes in government protection policies, rising prices of raw silk and shifts in market demand. In the past many years, there has also been a change in import policies allowing imports of cheap silk fabric from China.

Muslims: Socio Economic Condition

Muslims have also not been able to take advantage of various government schemes for groups such as small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural laborers, landless laborers, etc. This is partly because of discrimination and indifference on the part of planning and implementation authorities, and partly because of lack of awareness and knowledge of such schemes among Muslims. Consequently, the limited progress that some sections of Muslims have been able to make in recent years owes almost wholly to their own efforts. Overall the economic conditions of most Indian Muslims are unenviable, to say the least. Most of them eke out a hand-to-mouth existence either by way of self-employment in petty trade or by working in the unorganised sector. They are engaged mostly as construction labourers, rickshaw, taxi and truck drivers, handcart pullers, coolies, barbers, tailors, carpenters, pavement hawkers, or at best as mechanics, fitters, plumbers, electricians or welders.

The Muslim ghettos which have come to be formed in the aftermath of violence are islands of deprivation, generally cut off from civic facilities, economic provisions, good schooling, etc. The banks and

big companies are reluctant to open their offices in these areas. The only reason why Muslims stay in these areas is because they see these as an arrangement for protection.

Gopal Singh, Sachar Committee and Ranganath Mishra Reports

In the light of worsening economic condition of Muslims, the Congress and later the UPA Governments appointed various panels / commissions, such as the Gopal Singh Committee, Sachar Commission and the Ranganath Mishra Commission to study the socio-economic backwardness of Muslims. All these reports pointed out that far from appeasement, the condition of the Muslim community is worsening.

Let us see for example what the Sachar Committee says (November 2006). The committee after extensive home work found that the Muslim minority is way behind the national averages in most parameters of social development, its economic status has been sliding seriously, its representation in jobs and bank loans is abysmal, and its representation in the political process has been very poor and worsening. In sum and substance, the Muslim community is under-represented in most of the arenas of society barring the jails. The Gopal Singh committee had also affirmed the poor status of this minority. The Muslim community has also suffered disproportionately in riots as compared to its percentage in population. The Sachar Committee recommended that an Equal Opportunity Commission should be set up, a national data bank should be started, a nomination procedure should be started to ensure the participation of Muslims in public bodies, a procedure must

be evolved to evaluate text books to purge them of material that may impart inappropriate social values, especially religious intolerance, etc.

State Response to Reports of Minority Commissions

The report of the Gopal Singh committee was never implemented. Two decades later, in response to the Sachar Committee report, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated in the National Development Council that we need 'to devise innovative plans to ensure that minorities, particularly the Muslim minority, are empowered to share equitably in the fruits of development, they must have the first claim on resources.' This statement was followed up by a statement in Parliament by the minister of minorities affairs that the government will implement the recommendations of Sachar Committee. This was proved to be an illusion. The BJP came down heavily on this statement, asserting that the Prime Minister's statement smacks of rank communalism. The RSS combine also launched a vicious propaganda offensive. All this demolished any hope that the State will pick up the courage to take proactive affirmative action for Muslim minorities.

The pressure of communal propaganda and opposition from Hindu 'nationalists' killed any chances of the recommendations of these reports being implemented. The government did try to contemplate steps short of reservations to improve the lot of the Muslim minorities. One of the important steps that it did consider implementing was the idea of Equal Opportunity Commission to improve the lot of minorities. As it turned out, the government could not muster enough courage to implement

any of these steps to alleviate the lot of Muslim community. With the Modi sarkar coming to power in 2014, the chances of any such steps being implemented have receded far into the background.

Last Three Years

During the last three years, ever since Modi has come to power, despite the talk of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas (with all, for development of all), the government has systematically implemented policies to break the back of the Muslim community. One prominent example of this is the policy related to beef ban and closure of meat shops, on the ground of their being illegal. The already existing laws on cow slaughter and beef ban have been tightened. A social atmosphere has been created around 'Holy Mother Cow'. The implementation of this seems to be guided more by hatred of Muslims than love for cows. An atmosphere of terror has been created by the lynching of innocent Muslims by cow rakhshaks (protectors), who are Hindu nationalists ideologically inspired by the RSS-BJP. Such an intimidating atmosphere has been created that even those transporting cattle and dealing with meat/beef are too scared to pursue their business. Muslims are being relegated to second class citizenship at great speed.

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Amending the Constitution of India

Vinayak Davray

The Constituent Assembly

The national movement, by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, had begun to espouse the demand for the right of Indians to frame their own constitution. In May 1928, at the initiative of the Congress, an All Parties Conference was called which appointed a committee to determine the 'principles of the Constitution of India'. The Nehru Report, submitted in August 1928, was in effect an outline of a draft Constitution of India. (Many of its features were later included in the Constitution of India.) In the early 1930s, the Civil Disobedience Movement saw hundreds of thousands on the streets and tens of thousands in jail; the demand that Indians must have the right to frame their own Constitution began to gain huge public support. And along with this, the idea began to gain ground that this should be done through a Constituent Assembly elected for this purpose on the basis of widest possible franchise, and not through a conference as was the case with the Nehru Report.

An idea for a Constituent Assembly of India was first proposed in 1934 by M. N. Roy, a pioneer of the Communist movement in India. Soon after, the Congress too voiced the demand for a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage or as near it as possible. The demand for a Constituent Assembly was repeated frequently thereafter. The British partially conceded this demand first in August 1940, and then through the

Cripps proposals of March 1942, but both were rejected by the Congress. The Congress then launched the historic Quit India movement in August 1942; the famous resolution of the All India Congress Committee of 8 August 1942 exhorting Indians to 'Do or Die' also said that the provisional government of free India would evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly. The mass upsurge that followed made it clear to the British that they could not reject this demand much longer. Following the end of the Second World War, in March 1946, the British Government sent a Cabinet Mission to India to resolve the whole issue of freedom and constitution making. Under the scheme proposed by it, accepted by the Congress after intense discussions, members of the Constituent Assembly were to be elected through indirect elections, by the recently elected legislative assemblies of the provinces. The total membership of the Constituent Assembly was to be 389, out of which 296 members were to be from British India, and 93 from the Indian Princely States. However, as a result of the partition under the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947, a separate Constituent Assembly was set up for Pakistan and representatives of some Provinces ceased to be members of the Assembly. As a result, the membership of the Assembly was reduced to 299.

Initially, the Constituent Assembly comprised only of members from British India. Elections of these were held in July-August 1946. The first session of the Constituent

Assembly of India was held in New Delhi on 9 December 1946, with Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, its oldest member, as its provisional chairman. On 11 December, 1946, the Assembly elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its permanent chairman, an office later designated as President of the Assembly. On 13 December, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the famous Objectives Resolution. Jurist B.N. Rau was appointed Constitutional Adviser to the Assembly.

The Assembly's work had five stages:

- Committees presented reports on issues.
- B.N. Rau prepared an initial draft based on these reports and his research into the constitutions of other nations.
- The drafting committee, chaired by B.R. Ambedkar, presented a detailed draft constitution which was published for public discussion.
- The draft constitution was discussed, and amendments proposed and enacted.
- The constitution was adopted, with a committee of experts and played a pivotal role.

The Constituent Assembly appointed a total of 22 committees to deal with different tasks of constitution-making. Out of these, eight were major committees and the others were minor committees. The major Committees and their

chairmen were:

1. Union Powers Committee – Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Union Constitution Committee – Jawaharlal Nehru
3. Provincial Constitution Committee – Sardar Patel
4. Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas – Sardar Patel. This committee had the following sub-committees:
 - i. Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee – J. B. Kripalani
 - ii. Minorities Sub-Committee – Harendra Coomar Mookerjee,
 - iii. North-East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded & Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee – Gopinath Bardoloi
 - iv. Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than those in Assam) Sub-Committee – A. V. Thakkar
5. Rules of Procedure Committee – Dr. Rajendra Prasad
6. States Committee (Committee for Negotiating with States) – Jawaharlal Nehru
7. Steering Committee – Dr. Rajendra Prasad
8. Drafting Committee – Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

The Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and seventeen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution

for Independent India. It held its last session on 24 January 1950. During this period it held eleven sessions, sitting for a total of 165 days. The Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of India on 26 November 1949, which became effective on 26 January 1950.

The Constitution of India is the fundamental or supreme law of the nation. The procedure for amending the constitution is laid down in Article 368 (Part XX) of the Constitution. This procedure ensures the sanctity of the Constitution of India and keeps a check on arbitrary power of the Parliament of India.

Checks and Balances

The framers of the Constitution, that is, the Constituent Assembly, established a three-pillar system for governance of the country—the Legislature (the Parliament), the Executive (the Council of Ministers) and the Judiciary (the Supreme Court). The Constitution of India has conferred the power of amending the Constitution to the Parliament and the power to interpret the Constitution to the Supreme Court. This is the classic ‘check and balance’ system. The Parliament would like to exercise discretionary power to amend the Constitution, while the Supreme Court would like to restrict that power. This has led to the laying down of various doctrines or rules in regard to checking the legality of an amendment, the most famous among them being ‘the basic structure doctrine’ laid down by the Supreme Court in the case of *Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala*.

The Constituent Assembly did not favour either the Parliament to be ‘supreme’ like in Britain, nor did it set up a rigid special procedure

for amending the Constitution. It adopted a combination of ‘the theory of fundamental law,’ that underlies the written Constitution of the United States, and the ‘theory of parliamentary sovereignty’ as exists in the United Kingdom. The Constitution of India vests constituent (amending) power upon the Parliament, subject to the special procedure laid down in Article 368. The Constitution of India does not have procedures such as a referendum. It is only for amendments of specific matters—which are only few—that the ratification of the State Legislatures is required. All other articles of the Constitution can be amended by the Parliament. The only limitation is that this should be done by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of each House present and voting and a majority of the total membership of each House. It is difficult to conceive a simpler method of amending the Constitution.

Amendment Procedure

With its 395 articles, 12 schedules and two appendices, the Indian Constitution is one of the longest written constitutions in the world. The procedure to amend the Constitution is partly flexible and partly rigid. An amendment to the Constitution can be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill in either House of Parliament. The Bill must then be passed in each House by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting. There is no provision for a joint sitting in case of disagreement between the two Houses. The Bill, passed by the required majority, is then presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill. If

the amendment seeks to make any change in any of the provisions mentioned in the proviso to article 368 itself, it must be ratified by the Legislatures of not less than one-half of the States. Only after this ratification is completed can the amending Bill be presented to the President for his assent.

Categories of the Amendments

The Constitution provides for three categories of amendments. The first category includes those provisions of the Constitution that can be amended by a **simple majority**, that is, a majority of the members of each House present and voting (similar to the ordinary legislative process). These include: admission or establishment of new states; allowances, privileges and so on of the president, the governors, the Speakers, judges, etc.; salaries and allowances of the members of Parliament; rules of procedure in Parliament; and other such provisions. These amendments are excluded from the purview of article 368, which is the specific article dealing with the power and the procedure for amending the Constitution.

The second category includes amendments that can be effected by Parliament by a prescribed '**special majority**;' and the third category of amendments includes those that require, in addition to such 'special majority,' **ratification by at least one half of the State Legislatures**. These last two categories of amendments are governed by article 368.

Amendments under Article 368

Article 368 (1) [Part XX] of the Constitution of India grants constituent power to the Parliament

to amend the Constitution by way of **addition, variation or repeal** of any provision according to the procedure laid down therein. Article 368 has been amended by the 24th Amendment in 1971 and 42nd Amendment in 1976.

Full text of article 368

The following is the full text of Article 368 of the Constitution, which governs constitutional amendments:

368. Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and Procedure therefor:

- (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article.
- (2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in each House by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill:

Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in –

- (a) article 54, article 55, article 73, article 162 or article 241, or

- (b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or
- (c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or
- (d) the representation of States in Parliament, or
- (e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislatures of not less than one-half of the States by resolutions to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent.
- (3) Nothing in article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article.
- (4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of section 55 of the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground.
- (5) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article.

There is no provision for a joint sitting in case of disagreement between the two Houses. Total membership in this context has been defined to mean the total number of members comprising the House

irrespective of any vacancies or absentees on any account vide Explanation to Rule 159 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. The Bill, passed by the required majority, is then presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill. If the amendment seeks to make any change in any of the provisions mentioned in the proviso to article 368, it must be ratified by the legislatures of not less than one-half of the States.

Ratification is done by a resolution passed by the State legislatures. There is no specific time limit for the ratification of an amending Bill by the State legislatures. However, the resolutions ratifying the proposed amendment must be passed before the amending Bill is presented to the President for his assent.

Role of State Legislatures

The role of the States in constitutional amendment is limited. State legislatures cannot initiate any Bill or proposal for amendment of the Constitution. They are associated in the process of the amendment only through the ratification procedure laid down in article 368, in case the amendment seeks to make any change in any of the provisions mentioned in the proviso to article 368. The only other provision for constitutional changes by State legislatures is to initiate the process for creating or abolishing Legislative Councils in their respective legislatures, and to give their views on a proposed Parliamentary bill seeking to affect the area, boundaries or name of any State or States which has been referred to them under the proviso to Article 3. However, this referral does not restrict Parliament's power

to make any further amendments of the Bill.

Role of Union Territories

Union territories have no say in constitutional amendments, including the ratification process which is only open to States. Delhi and Puducherry are two union territories that are entitled, by special constitutional amendments, to have an elected Legislative Assembly and a Cabinet of ministers, thereby enjoying partial statehood powers. Both of these territories can participate in the ratification process.

Limitations of Parliament's Powers

The Constitution can be amended by the Parliament, and only in the manner provided. Although Parliament must preserve the basic framework of the Constitution, there is no other limitation placed upon the amending power, meaning that there is no provision of the Constitution that cannot be amended. In the case of Abdul Rahiman Jamaluddin v. Vithal Arjun (AIR 1958 Bombay, 94, (1957)), the Bombay High Court held that any attempt to amend the Constitution by a Legislature other than Parliament, and in a manner different from that provided for, will be void and inoperative.

The Supreme Court first struck down a constitutional amendment in 1967 on the basis that it violated Article 13, ruling in the case of Golaknath vs. State of Punjab that Parliament had no power to amend any of the provisions of Part III of the Constitution, so as to take away or abridge the fundamental rights enshrined therein. Parliament responded by enacting the **Twenty-fourth Amendment** of the Constitution of India (in 1971),

which amended Article 368 to declare that "nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment of this Constitution."

The Supreme Court, ruling in the case of Kesavananda Bharati v. The State of Kerala, held that although no part of the Constitution, including Fundamental Rights, was beyond the amending power of Parliament (thus overruling its judgement in the Golaknath case), the "basic structure of the Constitution could not be abrogated even by a constitutional amendment". Parliament attempted to remove this limitation by enacting the **Forty-second Amendment** (in 1976), which inserted clauses (4) and (5) to Article 368, effectively declaring, among other provisions, that "there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend . . . this Constitution." But the Supreme Court in the case of *Minerva Mills v. Union of India* struck down these clauses, on the grounds that these clauses destroyed the essential feature of the basic structure of the constitution.

Conclusion

To summarise, the Constitution of India can be amended under article 368 by a two-thirds majority in each House of the Parliament; however, the Parliament must preserve the basic framework of the Constitution; and every such amendment is subject to the scrutiny of the Supreme Court. While trying to establish the authority of Parliament over the Supreme Court, the Parliament has nullified the ruling of the Supreme Court twice: by Twenty-fourth Amendment in 1971 and by Forty-second Amendment in 1976. Both the times the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had mustered more

than two-thirds majority in each house of the parliament.

Therefore, although the method of amending the Constitution appears a simple one, it is not easy to tamper with the Constitution, unless an Executive manages to gather a two-thirds majority in each house of the Parliament. Secondly, the existing law forbids legislators to play around with the 'basic framework of the Constitution.' Thirdly, having vested with the power to interpret the Constitution, the Supreme Court is the final custodian of the Constitution. Thus it is a check to maintain the balance.

However, that does not mean that the citizens can rest in peace that the Constitution will never be tampered. They need to be vigilant to ensure that no forces should even think of playing around with the Constitution. An ideal democracy needs a strong opposition. Therefore there is a need to enhance the awareness among the citizens regarding our Constitution and the provisions thereof, including its amendment procedure.

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A Well-Kept Open Secret : Washington Is Behind India's Brutal Experiment of Abolishing

Dr. Norbert Haering

In early November, without warning, the Indian government declared the two largest denomination bills invalid, abolishing over 80 percent of circulating cash by value. Amidst all the commotion and outrage this caused, nobody seems to have taken note of the decisive role that Washington played in this. That is surprising, as Washington's role has been disguised only very superficially.

US-President Barack Obama has declared the strategic partnership with India a priority of his foreign policy. China needs to be reigned in. In the context of this partnership, the US government's development agency USAID has negotiated cooperation agreements with the Indian Ministry of Finance. One of these has the declared goal to push back the use of cash in favor of digital payments in India and globally.

On November 8, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the two largest denominations of banknotes could not be used for payments any more with almost immediate effect. Owners could only recoup their value by putting them into a bank account before the short grace period expired, which many people and businesses did not manage to do due to long lines in front of banks. The amount of cash that banks were allowed to pay out to individual customers was severely restricted. Almost half the Indians have no bank account and many do not even have a bank nearby. The economy is largely

cash-based. Thus, a severe shortage of cash ensued. Those who suffered the most were the poorest and most vulnerable. They had additional difficulty earning their meager living in the informal sector or paying for essential goods and services like food, medicine or hospitals. Chaos and fraud reigned well into December.

Four weeks earlier

Not even four weeks before this assault on Indians, USAID had announced the establishment of Catalyst: Inclusive Cashless Payment Partnership, with the goal of effecting a quantum leap in cashless payment in India. The press statement of October 14 says that Catalyst 'marks the next phase of partnership between USAID and Ministry of Finance to facilitate universal financial inclusion.' The statement does not show up in the list of press statements on the website of USAID (anymore?). Not even filtering statements with the word "India" would bring it up. To find it, you seem to have to know it exists, or stumble upon it in a web search. Indeed, this and other statements, which seemed rather boring before, have become a lot more interesting and revealing after November 8.

Reading the statements with hindsight, it becomes obvious that Catalyst and the partnership of USAID and the Indian Ministry of Finance, from which Catalyst originated, are little more than fronts which were used to be able to prepare the assault on all Indians using cash without arousing undue suspicion.

Even the name Catalyst sounds a lot more ominous, once you know what happened on November 9.

Catalyst's Director of Project Incubation is Alok Gupta, who used to be Chief Operating Officer of the World Resources Institute in Washington, which has USAID as one of its main sponsors. He was also an original member of the team that developed Aadhaar, the Big-Brother-like biometric identification system.

According to a report of the Indian Economic Times, USAID has committed to finance Catalyst for three years. Amounts are kept secret.

Badal Malick was Vice President of India's most important online marketplace Snapdeal, before he was appointed as CEO of Catalyst. He commented:

'Catalyst's mission is to solve multiple coordination problems that have blocked the penetration of digital payments among merchants and low-income consumers. We look forward to creating a sustainable and replicable model. (...) While there has been (...) a concerted push for digital payments by the government, there is still a last mile gap when it comes to merchant acceptance and coordination issues. We want to bring a holistic ecosystem approach to these problems.'

Ten months earlier

The multiple coordination problem and the cash-ecosystem-issue that Malick mentions had been analysed in a report that USAID commissioned in 2015 and presented in January 2016, in the context of the anti-cash partnership with the Indian Ministry of Finance. The press release on this presentation is also not in USAID's list of press statements (anymore?). The title of the study was Beyond Cash.

'Merchants, like consumers, are

trapped in cash ecosystems, which inhibits their interest' in digital payments, it said in the report. Since few traders accept digital payments, few consumers have an interest in it, and since few consumers use digital payments, few traders have an interest in it. Given that banks and payment providers charge fees for equipment to use or even just try out digital payment, a strong external impulse is needed to achieve a level of card penetration that would create mutual interest of both sides in digital payment options.

It turned out in November that the declared 'holistic ecosystem approach' to create this impulse consisted in destroying the cash-ecosystem for a limited time and to slowly dry it up later, by limiting the availability of cash from banks for individual customers. Since the assault had to be a surprise to achieve its full catalytic effects, the published Beyond Cash report and the protagonists of Catalyst could not openly describe their plans. They used a clever trick to disguise them and still be able to openly do the necessary preparations, even including expert hearings. They consistently talked of a regional field experiment that they were ostensibly planning.

'The goal is to take one city and increase the digital payments 10x in six to 12 months,' said Malick less than four weeks before most cash was abolished in the whole of India. To not be limited in their preparation on one city alone, the Beyond Cash report and Catalyst kept talking about a range of regions they were examining, ostensibly in order to later decide which was the best city or region for the field experiment. Only in November, did it become clear that the whole of India should be the guinea pig for a global drive to end the reliance on cash. Reading a statement of Ambassador

Jonathan Addleton, USAID Mission Director to India, with hindsight it becomes clear that he had stealthily announced this four weeks earlier:

'India is at the forefront of global efforts to digitize economies and create new economic opportunities that extend to hard-to-reach populations. Catalyst will support these efforts by focusing on the challenge of making everyday purchases cashless.'

Veterans of the war on cash in action

Who are the institutions behind this decisive attack on cash? Upon the presentation of the Beyond Cash report, USAID declared: 'Over 35 key Indian, American and international organizations have partnered with the Ministry of Finance and USAID on this initiative.' On the ominously named website <http://cashlesscatalyst.org/> one can see that they are mostly IT- and payment service providers who want to make money from digital payments or from the associated data generation on users. Many are veterans of what a high-ranking official of Deutsche Bundesbank called the 'war of interested financial institutions on cash' (in German). They include the Better Than Cash Alliance, the Gates Foundation (Microsoft), Omidyar Network (eBay), the Dell Foundation, MasterCard, Visa and Metlife Foundation.

The Better Than Cash Alliance

The Better Than Cash Alliance, which includes USAID as a member, is mentioned first for a reason. It was founded in 2012 to push back cash on a global scale. The secretariat is housed at the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in New York, which might have its reason in the fact that this rather poor small UN organization was glad to

have the Gates Foundation in one of the two preceding years and the MasterCard Foundation in the other as its most generous donors.

The members of the Alliance are large US Institutions which would benefit most from pushing back cash, i.e. credit card companies MasterCard and Visa, and also some US institutions whose names come up a lot in books on the history of the United States intelligence services, namely Ford Foundation and USAID. A prominent member is also the Gates Foundation. Omidyar Network of eBay (founder Pierre Omidyar) and Citi are important contributors. Almost all of these are individually also partners in the current USAID–India–Initiative to end the reliance on cash in India and beyond. The initiative and the Catalyst-program seem little more than an extended Better Than Cash Alliance, augmented by Indian and Asian organizations with a strong business interest in a much decreased use of cash.

Reserve Bank of India's IMF–Chicago Boy

The partnership to prepare the temporary banning of most cash in India coincides roughly with the tenure of Raghuram Rajan at the helm of Reserve Bank of India from September 2013 to September 2016. Rajan (53) had been, and is now again, economics professor at the University of Chicago. From 2003 to 2006 he had been Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington. (This is a CV item he shares with another important warrior against cash, Ken Rogoff.) He is a member of the Group of Thirty, a rather shady organization, where high ranking representatives of the world's major commercial financial institutions share their thoughts and plans with the presidents of the most important central banks, behind

closed doors and with no minutes taken. It becomes increasingly clear that the Group of Thirty is one of the major coordination centers of the worldwide war on cash. Its membership includes other key warriors like Rogoff, Larry Summers and others.

Raghuram Rajan has ample reason to expect to climb further to the highest rungs in international finance and thus had good reason to play Washington's game well. He already was a President of the American Finance Association and inaugural recipient of its Fisher Black Prize in financial research. He won highly endowed prizes of Infosys for economic research and of Deutsche Bank for financial economics as well as the Financial Times/Goldman Sachs Prize for the best economics book. He was declared Indian of the Year by NASSCOM and Central Banker of the Year by Euromoney and by The Banker. He is considered a possible successor of Christine Lagard at the helm of the IMF, but can certainly also expect to be considered for other top jobs in international finance.

As a Central Bank Governor, Rajan was liked and well respected by the financial sector, but very much disliked by company people from the real (producing) sector, despite his penchant for deregulation and economic reform. The main reason was the restrictive monetary policy he introduced and staunchly defended. After he was viciously criticised from the ranks of the governing party, he declared in June that he would not seek a second term in September. Later he told the New York Times that he had wanted to stay on, but not for a whole term, and that premier Modi would not have that. A former Minister for Commerce and Law, Mr. Swamy, said on the occasion of Rajan's departure that it would make Indian

industrialists happy:

'I certainly wanted him out, and I made it clear to the Prime Minister, as clear as possible. (...) His audience was essentially Western, and his audience in India was transplanted westernised society. People used to come in delegations to my house to urge me to do something about it.'

A disaster that had to happen

If Rajan was involved in the preparation of this assault to declare most of Indians' banknotes illegal—and there should be little doubt about that, given his personal and institutional links and the importance of Reserve Bank of India in the provision of cash—he had ample reason to stay in the background. After all, it cannot have surprised anyone closely involved in the matter, that this would result in chaos and extreme hardship, especially for the majority of poor and rural Indians, who were flagged as the supposed beneficiaries of the badly misnamed drive for 'financial inclusion'. USAID and partners had analysed the situation extensively and found in the Beyond-Cash report that 97% of transactions were done in cash and that only 55% of Indians had a bank account. They also found that even of these bank accounts, 'only 29% have been used in the last three months'.

All this was well known and made it a certainty that suddenly abolishing most cash would cause severe and even existential problems to many small traders and producers and to many people in remote regions without banks. When it did, it became obvious how false the promise of financial inclusion by digitalisation of payments and pushing back cash has always been. There simply is no other means of payment that can compete with cash in allowing everybody with such low hurdles to participate in the market

economy.

However, for Visa, MasterCard and the other payment service providers, who were not affected by these existential problems of the huddled masses, the assault on cash will most likely turn out a big success, 'scaling up' digital payments in the 'trial region'. After this chaos and with all the losses that they had to suffer, all business people who can afford it are likely to make sure they can accept digital payments in the future. And consumers, who are restricted in the amount of cash they can get from banks now, will use opportunities to pay with cards, much to the benefit of Visa, MasterCard and the other members of the extended Better Than Cash Alliance.

Why Washington is waging a global war on cash

The business interests of the US companies that dominate the global IT business and payment systems are an important reason for the zeal of the US government in its push to reduce cash use worldwide, but it is not the only one and might not be the most important one. Another motive is surveillance power that goes with increased use of digital payment. US intelligence organisations and IT companies together can survey all international payments done through banks and can monitor most of the general stream of digital data. Financial data tends to be the most important and valuable.

Even more importantly, the status of the dollar as the world's currency of reference and the dominance of US companies in international finance provide the US government with tremendous power over all participants in the formal non-cash financial system. It can make everybody conform to American law rather than to their

local or international rules. German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has recently run a chilling story describing how that works (German).

'Employees of a German factoring firm doing completely legal business with Iran were put on a US terror list, which meant that they were shut off most of the financial system and even some logistics companies would not transport their furniture any more. A major German bank was forced to fire several employees upon US request, who had not done anything improper or unlawful.'

There are many more such examples. Every internationally active bank can be blackmailed by the US government into following

their orders, since revoking their license to do business in the US or in dollars basically amounts to shutting them down. Just think about Deutsche Bank, which had to negotiate with the US treasury for months on whether they would have to pay a fine of 14 billion dollars and most likely go broke, or get away with seven billion and survive. If you have the power to bankrupt the largest banks even of large countries, you have power over their governments too. This power through dominance over the financial system and the associated data is already there. The less cash there is in use, the more extensive and secure it is, as the use of cash is a major avenue for evading this power.

Failing the Child won't Revive the Failed System

Ishu Gupta and Sandeep Pandey

The system is again set to fail the children who were brought into the system without promising access to quality education. With hardly any empirical evidence of the impact of no detention policy on degrading learning outcomes and choosing to turn a blind eye to the continuous negligence of the state towards public schools, 'No Detention Policy' (NDP) is going to be scrapped. With no attention to associating learning with the assessments, our children will again be put to stressed examination process. A 2015 World Bank report shows there are 28.86 lakh children in India who are out of school. Net enrollment rate in primary schools is 92.3% of relevant age group and same figure for secondary schools is 61.8%. This implies that in addition to the above mentioned children who don't see the inside of a school there is a large number which doesn't make the transition from primary to secondary

stage. The high dropout rate in India has been a major problem to which the government has not been able to find a solution yet.

The purpose of NDP of not failing students till class VIII stage was to ensure better enrollment at secondary stage. This is also the stage at which child is developing interest in education and getting to be more independent. Soon s(he) has to decide which subjects s(he) would choose for further study. A child dropping out of school before reaching the secondary stage is most likely going to continue in the labour job that her/his parents have traditionally been doing. The opportunity of breaking this vicious cycle is lost once the child is out of school.

A misunderstanding has been created by a segment of society which intends to use the tool of examination to block the passage

of children of masses through the education system to maintain the upper class-caste hegemony and hold over the benefits which come with education for their children by propagating the view that the NDP is responsible for falling standards of learning. The present Bhartiya Janata Party government, which is a representative of this elite segment, is preparing to bring an amendment to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 to remove this provision, thereby exposing children to examinations at elementary level, possibly holding some of them back for poor performance. It is obvious that axe will fall on children, especially more so on first generation learners - children from weaker socio-economic backgrounds. Hence the withdrawal of NDP is an anti-poor and retrogressive step which should not be taken by any government which gives priority to inclusive development. The character of the BJP government which wants to perpetuate the traditional caste-class-religio-gender dominance is again brought out by this proposed amendment. ASER 2017 highlights the higher drop-out rate of girls, and this move might further reduce the gender parity at the primary level.

Are children responsible for poor learning outcomes? If learning is not taking place, and a recent World Bank Development report rightly says that 'Schooling without learning is not just a wasted opportunity, but a great injustice', it is because the teachers lack the motivation and skills. Effectively then, the children will pay the price for truant behavior of the teachers. The real problem of our public education system, especially at school level, is how to make the teachers teach? If serious teaching starts taking place, learning will be an automatic outcome. Unfortunately, except for Delhi government no other government in the country is at present actively doing anything to improve the

quality of its schools. In the past Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh governments have exhibited some significant advances in this direction.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, credited to a committee chaired by Professor Yashpal, recommended an internal school based system of assessment that could provide information on a child's overall development on a continuous and comprehensive manner, which was included in the RTE Act. A number of states modified their assessment methods to what they understood of 'continuous and comprehensive evaluation'. But broadly everybody understood that cognitive skills alone are not important. Social and emotional skills too were to be included in the curriculum. Although for most states the non-scholastic aspect of education always took a back seat. For example, whereas all evaluations were to be done in terms of grading, some states continued with the practice of allotting marks for scholastic subjects and grades for others.

Most took 'continuous and comprehensive evaluation' to mean simply conducting tests continuously, thereby taxing the students even more. The NCF recommended an evaluation system integral to the teaching learning process to avoid any undue pain, anxiety, harassment and humiliation to help children grow as social beings. But the mindset behind withdrawing 'no detention policy' makes the children the victims.

It may not be out of context to mention that the same government which does not want to subject itself to Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international survey meant to test the skills and knowledge of 15 years old students, to save itself the embarrassment of poor performance

compared to other 72 countries in which it is conducted, wants to subject its own 6-14 years old children to examinations!

The BJP government has undone the progressive steps taken earlier to de-emphasise the role of examinations in our education system, including making the class X Central Board of Secondary Education examination optional.

Nowhere in the world such large scale fraud is committed in the examination process as in our country. In some states open use of unfair means as mass copying with the collusion of education department officials and school management takes place that reduces the activity to farce. The problem of little learning or no learning does not just exist at the elementary level. Most students completing their class X or XII board examinations or sometimes even those completing their degree level education also have very poor levels of learning. This goes to show that there is no guarantee of learning just by an examination driven system.

It would have been better if the government instead of focusing on withdrawing the NDP had instead concentrated on implementing the system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. That would have produced the desired result of improving the learning levels. Re-introducing the examination system does not guarantee that.

If real learning has to take place in the sense of acquiring knowledge, it can only take place when importance of examination is delinked from the process of education. And there are schools in this country, like the Krishnamurti Foundation schools and other less known schools which have accomplished this.

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Kuldip Nayar

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Dr. Malika B. Mistry

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Republic and Chai-Pani**

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shining, Bharat suffering?**

Preeti Mahurkar

**The Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown
Continues Unabated**

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If Modi Believes Palestine-Israel Problem Is Tractable Why Not India-Pakistan?

Sandeep Pandey

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat has claimed that their organisation can raise a combatant force in three days whereas it'll take the Indian Army about six to seven months to prepare for a war. What can be better than this? The country will save on its defence expenditure. The disciplined patriotic volunteers of RSS will serve to defend the country with great commitment. The RSS should be given the task of making volunteers available for this cause. Now it is their government so Mohan Bhagwat should make a formal proposal.

We hear about the dedicated volunteers of RSS ever ready to sacrifice for the nation. However, before they can be asked to defend the country we must verify their credentials of bravery. Now there is no proof from the freedom struggle, as RSS chose not to participate in it. Sole prominent person associated with RSS V.D. Savarkar who went to jail because of patriotic zeal was released when he tendered an

apology to the British. Another person inspired by RSS ideology was Nathuram Godse who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, till date the most popular Indian and with whom India's identity is associated globally. In 1992, when the political wing of RSS, the Bhartiya Janata Party was in power in Uttar Pradesh its volunteers demolished the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya which they had failed to do during Samajwadi Party's rule three years earlier. People inspired by the RSS ideology were behind five incidents of bomb blasts in the country in which Lieutenant Colonel Srikant Purohit and retired Major Ramesh Upadhyay were also involved which shows RSS has already infiltrated the Army. Now when the BJP is in power at the centre various vigilante groups motivated by the RSS thinking attack and sometimes kill isolated people who are suspected to have participated in cow slaughter, of having consumed beef, are accused of indulging in Love Jihad, or simply believe in an ideology which is

critical of Hindutva. The common victims are mostly Muslims and dalits while some intellectuals have also been targeted. People inspired by RSS ideology see bravery in these acts and sometimes they think they are serving the cause of nationalism when committing these crimes. When one of the accused in the case of murder by mass lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri died his body was wrapped in tricolour. Now, these incidents do not inspire enough confidence that the security of the country could be handed over to the RSS.

On the other hand, there was an occasion when Pakistani terrorists held the country hostage for three days in Mumbai in November 2008 but RSS workers were conspicuous by their absence. If all the RSS volunteers along with the Shiva Sena workers, who demonstrate ample aggression otherwise against people from north Indian states and non-Marathi speaking individuals, ready to take on anybody anytime, had come out in large numbers to storm the Taj Hotel the entire episode would have been over on the first day itself. However, RSS-Shiva Sena lost their only chance to exhibit real valour. Considering that RSS headquarter is in Maharashtra, when the enemy invaded their home, it is inexplicable why the RSS workers were mere spectators? The Army which Mohan Bhagwat says will require six to seven months actually wound up the operation in three days including capturing one of the terrorists alive.

The politics of RSS produces unnecessary tension and violence which is harmful to us. Since Narendra Modi has become Prime Minister our relationship with

Pakistan has deteriorated. There are more infringements from across the border. We were made to believe that India carried out some kind of decisive 'surgical strike' but our soldiers continue to be killed in attacks by militants or Pakistani security forces even after that. All we can do in response is kill some Pakistani soldiers or terrorists. Who benefits from these skirmishes except for the countries which sell arms to both India and Pakistan? India's relationship with China is also not very friendly. But at the Chinese border both sides take care that no soldier or civilian is killed on either side. It almost seems to be an unspoken, unwritten understanding.

It would have been better if instead of exhibition of aggression by the RSS-BJP combine India would have achieved a similar understanding with Pakistan. What the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is saying about the need to talk to Pakistan is very common sense. If the Modi government would not make it a prestige issue and talk to Pakistani government it would save valuable lives of soldiers and civilians on both sides. When Narendra Modi wanted he landed in Pakistan enroute from Afghanistan. That didn't appear to be any adversarial relationship between him and Nawaz Sharif. He participated in a private event of Nawaz Sharif's family and even gifted a shawl to his mother. Now if Narendra Modi desires to have a friendly relationship with Nawaz Sharif why should not our soldiers be given a similar opportunity? It would be better to exchange gifts rather than fire across the border. And it entirely depends on the leadership of the two countries as to what kind of relationship they want

to have. If such a choice exists why not prefer friendship over enmity?

Narendra Modi has taken a commendable stand in favour of Free Palestine during his recent visit to West Asia. He has clearly sent out a message to Israel that India may be the largest buyer of Israeli arms but it doesn't mean it'll give up its commitment towards the idea of a free Palestine. He highlighted the need for a peaceful resolution to the Palestine-Israel conflict. India-Pakistan conflict is of a very similar nature as that of Palestine-Israel. Incidentally both problems have a history of same duration and are the creation of the British. If Narendra Modi thinks that resolution of Palestine-Israel tangle is possible through dialogue why is it not possible to adopt a similar approach in the case of India-Pakistan imbroglio?

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Economics of Politics

Kuldip Nayar

It's understandable that this year's budget should have an eye on rural India which constitutes some 70 percent of voters. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had no compunction in mixing politics with economics. In the past whenever the budget was mixed with electioneering, political parties would protest against such a practice.

Over the years, economics has got mixed with politics. And, unfortunately, there is no getting away from this. The emphasis is on bettering the lot of those living in villages, the rural poor. The drubbing of BJP in Rajasthan by-polls shows that the voters are not convinced with the intent of the ruling party, in all the three by-elections, including one for the assembly, the Congress has won. Whether the party would continue to get the same results is yet to be seen, but the climate is pro-Congress.

A sort of pattern has come to emerging. Where the Congress is in power, the BJP has won and it is the other way round in the BJP-ruled states. The voters have no choice except choosing between the two parties. The third front has sought to be created but it is confined to some states alone. The front does not seem to go across the country.

In fact, the third front is reduced to the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Janata United of Nitish Kumar in Bihar and the Rashtriya Janta Dal of Lalu Prasad, however limited in sway in the state. The Congress which is spread all over the country has only one opponent:

the Bhartiya Janata Party.

This is a strange phenomenon in a secular India because the credentials of BJP are too well known. A soft Hindutva has come to engulf the country. This looks odd in India where the constitution uses the word 'secular' in its preamble. One may blame Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, for dividing the country into two nations, but the resistance from the people was minimal.

Not long ago when I discussed the subject with Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, he blamed Jinnah for the partition. He said that the then Prime Minister Clement Richard Atlee was keen on having some sort of unity between India and Pakistan. Lord Mountbatten told me so when I met him after many years.

He said he had invited Mahatma Gandhi first to have a look at the partition formula. The Mahatma walked out of Mountbatten's room when he heard the word partition. Jinnah welcomed the partition, when Mountbatten asked him if he would have some connection with India, he categorically said no, adding "I don't trust them." That ended the dream of united India which Atlee wanted.

To envisage a budget for united India is a difficult proposition. No party, except the Congress, has its presence in all the states. And the Congress itself is losing its hold state after state. The BJP is slowly filling the vacuum, but on communal lines. Its pronounced tilt towards Hindutva means that the budget would have 80

percent of benefits for Hindus.

In the circumstances, the 'Modicare' which assures health insurance to 50 crore individuals with coverage of up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year appears to be a masterstroke. Describing the scheme as "the world's largest state-funded healthcare programme" the Finance Minister also announced one medical college in every parliamentary constituency. It would mean the country would have approximately 180 medical colleges and as many hospitals available to them.

To make it a successful proposition, the Centre is expected to involve state-run hospitals in a big way for smooth takeoff of the scheme. This is the third major insurance programme of the NDA government after Prime Minister's Fasal Bima Yojna for farmers and the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna. The crop insurance scheme launched by the government a couple of years ago has turned out to be a success with business growing to around Rs 25,000 crore.

The tragedy is that Muslims have withdrawn instead of confronting Hindutva with all its force. When I asked a top Muslim leader the reason for such a move, he said: "We want safety of our lives and properties. We are not interested in fighting the Hindutva forces." Thus, the BJP is capturing the imagination of Hindu population.

This means that if the Prime Minister Narendra Modi could win the next general election. It would

be his personal victory and not that of the BJP. He has cast his spell over the Hindu voters, particularly in rural India. Some respite is on the horizon. The assembly election in Gujarat, Modi's stronghold, has shown lessening of BJP's strength because the Congress has increased its tally in the state, although with the help of a few like-minded parties.

This must have come as a big jolt to the BJP, particularly Prime Minister Modi and party president Amit Shah. They had taken Gujarat for granted. The Congress is jubilant because it has bearded the lion in its own den. Whether the party can keep the winning trend in the future is difficult to say, but the Maha Front which Nitish Kumar is trying to build with all non-BJP parties may challenge Modi at the centre.

One drawback, however, is that Nitish Kumar is siding with the BJP to save his government in the state after fissures appearing in Rashtriya Janata Dal of Lalu Yadav and his own party. Of course, Lalu is still popular and draws support from even unexpected quarters. He has been imprisoned and lodged in Ranchi jail after he was found guilty in the fodder scam. Yet, he seems to command support from the voters. And Nitish is conscious of it.

Prime Minister Modi doesn't seem too concerned about a fraction of his support going away because he stills commands influence over the voters. But the real picture would emerge only after the results of state elections this year. Whether Modi goes for an early poll next year is in the realm of conjecture. At present any guess would be a shot in the dark.

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How to Provide Universal Access to Health and Education in India?

Dr. Malika B. Mistry

Introduction

Health and education are the human rights of an individual. An egalitarian society would aim at providing universal access to health and education to all its members. In fact an analysis of the historical experience of developed countries reveals that the provision of access to health and education enabled these countries to achieve faster economic growth. In the current literature on economic development of developing countries, a great deal of emphasis is laid on human development, the important components of which are education and health. However, even after seven decades of Independence, Indian state has not been able to provide universal access to health and education to its people, which is a shame. It reflects poorly on the Indian government and the political parties which have ruled and are ruling this country.

The objectives of this paper are : (1) To examine whether universal access to health and education can be made available to Indian people; (2) To undertake some case-studies of successful stories of access to health and education; and finally, (3) To make recommendations based on our study which will have policy implications to promote universal access to health and education in India.

Universal Access to Health: An Experiment in Maharashtra

Community based monitoring

and planning (CBMP) of health services in Maharashtra represents an innovative participatory approach to improving accountability and health care delivery.

The implementation of CBMP includes awareness raising and preparatory activities, capacity building and training of participants, formation and functioning of monitoring and planning committees, community based assessment of health services, organisation of public hearing, which is attended by a large number of community members and diverse stake holders. One core strategy of CBMP is the public hearing which is attended by a large number of community members. In these hearings, people are invited to report their experience of health services in the presence of health officials and panelists from various fields. Around 450 such public hearings have been organised in Maharashtra.

India is a democratic country. CBMP contributes to deepening of democracy by (a) creating fora for direct democracy; (b) expanding representative democracy and ensuring participation of community based actors in local health planning; (c) reclaiming representative democracy; (d) promoting external accountability processes which trigger internal accountability mechanisms.

How did CBMP provide access to health care in the villages of Maharashtra? We list below some

achievements of this experiment:

1) After a public hearing at Saswad Rural Hospital in Pune, the following action was taken.

- A medical officer working at the hospital who was practicing illegally and denying proper treatment to patients was transferred.
- The physical condition of the hospital improved.
- Staff behaviour significantly changed.
- Representatives from the PWD were included in the monitoring committee to ensure their accountability.

2) In Nasrapur PHC, the following changes were effected.

- The serious problem of water supply was solved by installing four water tanks, resulting into direct benefits to patients, cleaner premises and a fully functional laboratory.
- A display board was installed for easy location of the health facility.
- A sanitary worker was appointed to regularly clean the premises.
- A workshop on the role of adolescents for the development of village health was conducted in which school youth participated.

3) Some more positive effects of CBMP are as follows :

- Several sub-health centers were reopened and started functioning.

- The medical officers not staying on the premises came back and started staying on the premises.
- Frequency of ANMs' visits to villages and even to remote hamlets, improved.
- A PHC in a tribal village Moroshi in Thane district was closed to political pressure. Because of CBMP, the PHC was reopened and started functioning.
- CBMP committee could protect women health workers from sexual harassment by male health workers.
- The scope of services was expanded. At the Malshiras village PHC, the treatment for diabetes and hypertension was started.

Shukla and Sinha (2011) who documented the CBMP in Maharashtra conclude as follows:

'It is more likely that effective social accountability of public services can be achieved when the interventions are participatory, evidence-based and sustained, involving multiple actors and able to build broad stakeholder coalitions. There is probably no social context today where democracy is not a significant aspiration of ordinary people; yet how to radically expand democracy and make it real in the context of public services and other spheres of life is a key challenge.' (2011:29)

In the High Level Expert Group Report on Universal Health Coverage for India (2011), the experts have given many recommendations to ensure universal access to health to Indian people. Under the heading,

'Community Participation and Citizen Engagement', they have made the following recommendations, which seem to be very similar to those of CBMP:

1. Transform existing Village Level Health Committees (or Health and Sanitation Committees) into participatory Health Councils.
2. Organise regular health Assemblies. Health Assemblies.
3. Enhance the role of elected representatives as well as Panchayat Raj institutions (in rural areas) and local bodies (in urban areas).
4. Institute a formal grievance redressal mechanism at the block level.

Universal Access to Education: The Case-Study of Finland

Anu Partnen (2011) in the article "What Americans Keep Ignoring about Finland's School Success" documented the universal access to education that Finns enjoy in Finland. Finland's national education system has been receiving praise because in the Finnish students were receiving some of the highest scores in the PISA Survey of the OECD in the world. Their scores were neck to neck with those of super achievers in South Korea and Singapore.

What is so special about these schools? Finnish schools assign less homework and engage children in more creative play. Because of this many foreign delegations come to Finland to visit schools and talk with the nation's education experts.

There are no private schools in Finland. Only a small number of independent schools exist. They too

are publicly funded. None is allowed to charge tuition fees. Also there are no private universities. This means that every person practically in Finland attends public school right from K.G. to Ph.D.

In Finland, there are no standardised tests. The only exception is National Matriculation Exam which every one takes at the end of the upper-secondary school, which is equivalent to American high school.

What about the teachers? In Finland, all teachers and administrators are given good salary, prestige and responsibility. For a teacher, master's degree is a must. The teacher training programmes are conducted in best of the colleges.

Finns believe in cooperation and not in competition. There are no best schools or teachers in Finland. The goal of education programme in Finland is equity and not excellence. Finland believes and implements the idea that every child should have exactly the same opportunity to learn irrespective of family background, income or geographic location.. Education is not seen as a means to produce star performers but as an instrument to even out social inequality. Schools must be healthy and safe for children. It gives free school meals, easy access to health care, psychological counseling and individualised student guidance to all its students. Thus Finland has been producing academic excellence by following the policy of equity.

According to some experts, education policy is more important to the success of a country's school system than the nation's size or ethnic make-up. Why did Finland

resort to the policy of equity in the access to education? Because it realised that it cannot rely on manufacturing or its scant natural resources to be competitive in the world. So it decided to invest in knowledge based economy. To achieve this, a country has to prepare not just some of its population well but all of its population well. To have some of the best schools in the world does not help if there are many children left behind.

The Finnish school system ensures that all children have access to good public education irrespective of where they go to school or what sort of families they come from.

What is the lesson for India? If Finland can provide universal access to education, India too can provide this. For this a strong political will is necessary. And voters need to demand this.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above, here are some recommendations to provide universal access to health and education:

1. In case of health, all the recommendations made by the High Level Expert Group Report on Universal Health Coverage for India should be implemented.
2. The percentage of GDP expenditure on health must be increased to at least 3 (as many experts all over the world have suggested.)
3. In case of education, all the Kothari Commission's recommendations should be fully put into practice.
4. The percentage of GDP

expenditure on education must be increased to at least 6 (as many experts all over the world have suggested.)

5. The mushrooming of international schools and English medium schools must be discouraged.
6. The accountability and transparency must be fixed on teachers and management of the schools. When government is spending so much money on the schools and the teachers salaries, the value of money needs to be extracted. In fact the government schools, as the Kendriya Vidyalayas should become centers of excellence.
7. The above is possible provided there is a strong political will. For this voters have to become active. The discourse of politics has to change. It should have health and education which are very basic needs of humans, become the central focus of politics and politicians. For this political discourse has to change from negative and communal politics to positive and developmental politics.

Conclusion

It is high time that India provides universal access to health and education to all its citizens. It is possible provided there is a strong political will. Health and education, which are very basic needs of humans, must become the central focus of politics and politicians. For this voters have to become active. The political discourse has to change from negative and communal politics to positive and developmental politics. If this can be done, India can achieve even higher economic

growth rate and high level of economic development and truly become a shining example for all the developing nations in the world.

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'Thou need not pay', or, The Indian Republic and Chai-Pani

Dr. Paresh R. Vaidya

This author was born barely four months before the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution in November 1949. Hence I realise that my age is also almost exactly the same as that of the Republic India. Due to this or any other reason, I have been a keen observer of the people of this country and their lives and internalised joys and sorrows of India as a nation. The first few years of a child's life are without comprehension ability and hence one could not have gathered the true impressions. But then a general impression gathered from the literature of the period and discussions in the family or school fills this small gap. In national matters my memory begins with the curtain raiser exhibition organised for the first Five Year Plan. By today's wisdom, I feel that it was indeed thoughtful of the administration to put up a large exhibition in a remote town (Bhuj) on the western border. The way this exhibition enthused the rural and semi-urban visitors about the programmes India intended to have left a deep impression in my mind about the administration. In the first decade of independence, the administration was indeed filled with a nationalistic fervor and had shown innovativeness in many ways.

Some time later, the currency changed in 1957, when we were in the primary school. Ana and old paise made way for the so-called Naya Paisa. We at school were supposed to suddenly forget that an anna was 4 paise and learn that it was 6 naye paise. It took some

time before anas left the stage. Soon after, the pound (ser) made way for the kilogram. The sound of the band at the police parade on 15th August & 26th January renewed our devotion for Mother India twice a year. The flag was then hoisted not by a politician but by the collector of the district (in the case of Kutch, a 'C' State, it was the Chief Commissioner.) Returning home we used to fill our compound and walls with pictures of national heroes and the Tiranga with a desire in the heart to measure up to them, at least to some extent.

Nowhere in this landscape of golden sunrise filled with patriotism and hope was seen a dark cloud of greed or corruption. That began a little later and blossomed further when expediency came to be considered as success during the early 1970s. My first exposure to corruption occurred when I set out to begin my adult life. I was 19 years and was going to Bombay (now Mumbai) for pre-service training from Ahmedabad, where I was studying. It was a rainy evening in August, and there were not many in the reserved coach of the night train starting from Ahmedabad. I boarded and occupied a seat. One is supposed to pay a reservation charge when the TTE comes, which was 50 paise for the seat. I gave him a rupee note. He pocketed the note and gave a receipt for 50 paise and walked away. I understood that he meant to keep the change, but as a lad of 19 years I just could not pick up the courage to protest. It hurt me

all night. There were two reasons for that. Firstly, the source of my money was my father, who was earning Rs 255/- per month and was managing a large family including paying for the higher education of we siblings. Therefore, half a rupee was quite a lot to donate to a sly railway employee. The other reason was that it was the Gandhi centenary year and I happened to spend that year in his city, Ahmedabad, for studies. The influence was fresh and I could not excuse myself for not even protesting the chai-pani which the TTE extricated from me. Gandhiji's dictum that the willful sufferer of injustice is equally responsible for the injustice began crushing my conscience. This was a strange feeling and I almost vowed that this will be the last time that I would pay like this.

It may look incredible, but I can say with satisfaction that after 40 years and considerable length of active life, I have been able to live up to this pledge to a great extent. I can remember only one occasion when someone paid a proxy bribe for me. I had sold my flat and the lawyer hired by my purchaser gave a five rupee note to the chaprasi in a sub-registrar's office. I am yet to reason out why this deviation occurred. Otherwise, I have gone through several delicate as well as dangerous situations and escaped without yielding. It is not to prove a bravado that I write this, but only to indicate that it is possible to resist a corrupt person if there is will. Do not also assume that I escaped corruption because I may be living a life of a Sanyasi. Far from it. I have lived in this megapolis and changed residences ten times. I have transferred my ration cards at least 4 times. I purchased a flat, sold it, purchased another one. I

have travelled by train also several times. I have seen India from Kutch to Calcutta and from Kanyakumari to Delhi or Lucknow. Six times I have gone out of the country. We have an electricity, gas and telephone connections at home. Each one of the above is a potential 'corruption' hazard, some of them a sure case. But by the grace of God and by my strong aversion to paying bribes, I could hold through. Kautilya has suggested four tricks for achieving one's goal—Saam, Daam, Dand & Bhed. Obviously the second weapon (money) was not available to me. The rest I did use inter alia. Different situations demand different approaches, but one thing required almost every time is a message that you are not the one to pay. On rare occasions even a clear but polite statement that 'I do not pay' makes things easy. Some habitual 'takers' know it without your saying so. It is a different thing that some may prepare their action in advance to test your nerve. You must face it.

I admit that my job became easy sometimes because of my being a government servant and at other times because of my so-called social status. Being in a place like Mumbai is also an advantage because the next higher authority is accessible for complaining against those creating obstacles. This favourable factor is not available to those in mofussil areas. I remember an occasion when I received an assessment order from the Income Tax department but the envelope did not contain the cheque for the refund. My friend in a similar situation went to the IT office, paid Rs. 2/- (that was the going rate during the the early 1980s!) and got the cheque. On the other hand, for me, once my file was missing, at another time it was 'lunch time', and so on. I refused to take the clue. When the

refunds piled up for 4 years, I wrote to the IT Commissioner quoting the episode of the then famous TV serial Rajani on IT officers, mentioning that they deserved the offensive episode. The next week the ITO called me and gave me the cheque. However he had the gumption to request me to tip the peon standing at the door. I said, "I do not pay as a principle." He had no defence (I mean offence) available. I walked out with a cheque of Rs. 3200/- in a way a Delhiite may never even dream of! The lesson is simple: resist if you can. Observing non-violence in the face of violence may be difficult and the likes of Gandhi can only do that, but it is not so with bribe. One-sided violence is possible but there cannot be a gratification (bribe) without a giver. Sadly, there are some who pay voluntarily; especially the trader class has this habit. I often feel that if the punishment for those giving bribes is made much more stringent than for those taking bribes, the culture of paying for cornering someone else's quota will soon disappear. A debate whether corruption has come from top to down or vice-versa is only an academic exercise and escapism.

Let us realise that corruption deprives many of the benefits reserved for them by government policies. This is a negation of their democratic right in a way. Unfortunately those who miss out on this are the poor, who can not spare money for paying government staff or politicians. In other words, those are the very people for whom policies are framed. The romantic vision of Gandhiji and Nehru about the free India does not touch those who get their rations only if the ration card is 'purchased' from a petty inspector. (The irony is that constitutionally this inspector

represents the President of India.) If at all we want poor people to rejoice at these silver and golden jubilees of independence and the sovereignty of this country, we must banish corruption. Otherwise how can we fault those who are nostalgic about the British days, where welfare schemes were less, but worked impartially. The social environment was such that those who did not fit into a welfare scheme were not only afraid but also ashamed to claim the benefits. That shame has gone once the benefits went 'on sale'. A buyer is never ashamed. Unfortunately the management mantra now is success, and the successful have no inhibition about this 'convenience payment'. If a generation takes this as a way of life, the evil will no more disturb anyone in the coming generations. Such a loss of sensitivity should be of grave concern for the nation. Doomed will be those whose empowerment we have been talking of since the last 70 years.

Like any crusade or good work, one must be ready to pay a price

to resist this evil; at least on some occasions. Price can be time or effort; ironically sometimes money itself is the price for not paying money! But the cause of combating corruption is certainly a better avenue to spend, than some other social occasions. If we can donate blood for our jawans, why not some 'effort' or 'time' to rejuvenate our republic. Having said that, I must also admit that it is not easy to hold fort. Looking back the past four decades, I relive various situations when the family peace and comfort were compromised. Details can be omitted but someone may say the mental agony or physical discomfort were not worth the money in question. I always had adequate personal money to buy those comforts. But it certainly was worth giving the message to those crooked and greedy souls that there can be occasions when their pressures would not work and they should expect that more often. If they are rid of that feeling of invincibility, or reconcile to hearing 'no' in some form, the poor people who are unable to afford will be benefited. That single motive has

kept me going against odds. At this late age, I hope I am not forced to give up my personal principle of not paying a bribe—it will not only be my defeat but that of the republic which failed to support me to support her.

But I must not end on a pessimistic note. The last 10 years of my 40 years of adult life have been better than the first 10 years because of two factors. One is technology. Arrival of computers has taken away the discretionary power of many officers who otherwise harassed people. Telephones with audio and video recording also have contributed to instilling fear in the minds of the unscrupulous. And it has reduced fear in the minds of the new generation who are about to begin their foray in life. This hopefully will result in a tectonic change in the manner of interaction that takes place between a citizen and a government functionary. Let us wish good luck to those who do not want to pay.

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Failures of Democracy: India shining, Bharat suffering?

Preeti Mahurkar

The miserable performance of India in every area of social sector i.e. poverty and inequality eradication, healthcare, education or gender justice even after 7 decades of democracy shows that something has gone awfully wrong in the path of development in India. Moreover, the rosy picture of India's achievements on the economic front does not give a balanced account of the multitude of failures and shortcomings to

deliver the promise of democracy to its citizens, that is being lost amongst the hype and euphoria of celebrating India's growth by the media, governments and privileged section of society. It is alarming since ignoring these failures or brushing them off as the by-products of rapid growth has already cost us heavily as the crucial years of nation's development have been lost in the game of communal politics,

corruption and public ignorance.

Another failure is the neglect to bring these issues out on the public platform, in public understanding to be discussed, debated and rectified. It has given rise to an apathetic society with democratic failure to address the serious issues that are critical to the national and social fabric of our country.

This brings us to another major paradox that exists in our media and society, the culture of trivia, sensationalism, negativism, TRP and reality shows that overtake crucial issues like poverty, inequality, lack of national vision, corruption, communalism, misplaced concerns and priorities of our power holders. On one hand, we have Bollywood, elites, the rich and powerful and their interesting lives, and on the other hand there are those unprivileged ones who lead boring, insignificant existence and hardly anyone is interested in knowing their plight and woes. Though there are some highly motivated, uncompromising, idealistic media professionals who play fair and take great pains to keep the spirit and ethics of unbiased journalism alive, the majority ignores the facts and is dictated by TRP and sensationalism. The poor and their plight have no place in our media space or even in our collective awareness space.

The media, barring some exceptions, serves the politicians, the rich and the powerful, and caters to the privileged sections. This is obvious in the coverage of headlines, analyses and programs displayed on the channels today. This is perhaps due to the 'political and elite capture' as known in the world. It may be because media today is an expensive field and needs massive financial backup and advertisements to run the show. Most of the channels and papers are owned by the rich and powerful that use money and power to influence the elected and the electorate. It has become a dangerous game as the power of media can be a game changer and the power brokers know how to make use of it to their benefit. No wonder so many crucial news stories and analyses go unnoticed

while insignificant, trivial issues are blown out of proportion to divert the nation's attention.

An example of this is the recent job losses and slow down in growth rate which are the most explosive and crucial challenges our country is facing today. These unfortunately, could not find place in some so called nation's highest TRP channels while insignificant, communal issues or scandals occupied the prime time debates. The fact remains that India that is shown in our media today, by and large, is the India of the affluent and privileged. We are a nation of pretending and sensational reality shows that is ashamed to acknowledge its own reality. We are a nation where a large section is more interested in watching celebrity scandals, pretentious family soaps while the real cries and plights of our lower sections are ignored. We, as a society, are ashamed to acknowledge this suffering Bharat as the other hidden part of the shining India.

The champagne glass economic structure of India as it is called by some experts is an interesting yet somewhat disgusting observation for its peculiarities and weirdness. The top ultra-rich elite has an exciting, happening, shining India that is full of wealth, fun, luxury and opportunities. They live too high in their ultra luxurious mansions and high-rises, travel in private jets and yachts, and are largely disconnected from ground realities. This section is diverse though, where some are hardworking, full of ethics and compassion, socially aware and responsible. They do whatever they can for society and the country. On the other end of the spectrum, we have a society full of Marie Antoinettes' who in their ivory towers do not care for

the lowly, crawling, starving poor and slums don't exist for them. They have invested heavily abroad and are least interested in what is happening in India except for the gossip on Bollywood or page 3 sections. This India is well connected and has a big clout too and sometimes manipulates things in their favour using the power of wealth.

Then there is another section that is not so rich yet a little richer than the rest. This India has created a virtual universe of its own and lives in a bubble with social media, WhatsApp groups, TV soaps, foreign trips, kitty parties and gossip sessions occupying all its time and energy. This section is also out of the public system as it has access to quality education, health and enjoys other services provided by the private sector. Though there is a section that is socially aware, responsible and eager to see changes in the society and quietly works towards that yet, a large section of this India has no time or inclination to learn about or empathise how the other India survives. It is largely protected from political and market fluctuations as it is given enough subsidies, freebies and sops to be occupied and interested in the great India rising and shining saga.

Not that they are at fault and should not enjoy their privileges for they have worked hard for it. The problem is that the ignorance and lack of awareness of this section cost our democracy heavily as they are used as pawns in the highly politicised game of votes. This India is manipulated by various parties using minority or majority cards, party ideologies; resulting in a highly diverse and fragmented society that has divided and polarized the nation. The real issues like poverty,

inequality, unhygienic condition, corruption, pathetic public services and overall public sector failures are sidetracked as trivial matters while high political dramas and tactics occupy nation's attention and precious time. This India is blissfully ignorant and insulated from outside realities. It does not bother that at the other end of the spectrum, there is a suffering Bharat—the bottom 40 % as they are called by the World Bank—that has no access to quality education, basic health and other facilities and that is kept trapped in a vicious cycle that goes on for generations. They have no lobby, are not organised as they are busy surviving and suffer quietly.

As seen during demonetisation, this India living in its happy bubble was not really affected as it had access to credit cards, e-cash, e-stores etc. and was blissfully ignorant and insulated from the outside fires and fumes. They had minimum inconvenience, so there were hardly any complaints, their jobs were secured and homes well stocked. Since they have their own virtual universe of Facebook and social media, their opinions are taken as the common sentiments of the whole Nation. However, those who lived at the bottom rung of the pyramid were severely affected as millions of daily wagers lost their jobs and livelihoods and were thrown back into poverty. They had no money to eat and suffered quietly. They were not counted, as they did not have the energy or time to protest or demonstrate.

Without raising any hue and cry, they are quietly busy surviving, waiting for promised better days to come and take things at face value. They took the blow of demonetisation as a promise for

better days ahead even as it damaged their lives.

They are used to it you see.

They have been ruled and exploited by outer and inner invaders, kings, zamindars, gora and brown sahibs and netas for too long to stand up for their rights. Their passive resilience has become a weakness that is being routinely taken advantage of by those in power. Their ignorance and unawareness of their own rights and power make them easy game for crooked politicians to manipulate and maneuver them for their selfish motives. Every election, every party tries to get their vote by misleading them, bribing in cash or kind or showing big dreams only to abandon them later.

They are being used as pawns by political parties, most of whom have no real empathy or compassion for their suffering or propose any substantial long-term reforms. They make their issues a game of passing the buck or gaining political mileage. But then it is nothing new as it is an old game, played in turn by all successive parties; some win, some lose but the real India pays the price!

The point is not about political parties manipulating the priorities and resources of the nation as per their whims and fancies, which has been done for years by all successive parties in power. The point here is that in a nation where the majority of the electorate is ignorant and easily manipulated by false promises, money power, emotional or communal issues, the role and responsibility of its socially aware and educated citizenry to question and confront the misplaced motives and priorities through social accountability and participation

becomes important. These are the some of the most effective democratic tools that can bring the desired change in the country, but are ignored or rendered useless.

Unfortunately, in a large democracy like India, where the citizens are the primary stakeholder and have the power to elect or reject, there is no move or effort to exercise that power and change the system. Those who are educated and aware, choose to look the other way or get caught in the never-ending petty party politics or communal fundamentalism while those who are ignorant and unaware have no clue or support to stand for themselves and end up being used by various parties for their personal agendas. Regrettably, the potent power of voters is wasted and fails to bring any substantial change in the system. Instead, it becomes an impotent society that is ruled and manipulated by a few smart minds in power or religious miscreants.

In any democracy, the power of its educated, intellectual and socially aware citizens' contribution is invaluable as they form the critical mass that can create a phase transition as seen time and again in various parts of the world. It happened in our country during British rule when some aware, compassionate and educated minds united and created a revolution to turn India's destiny around.

The extent to which the electorate is informed and aware of its rights and roles in national issues, policies and priorities determines the role the government would play in a nation. An ignorant electorate will only play into the hands of power brokers and will be repeatedly taken for a ride. This is seen today during election

time, when votes are bought with cash or kind from gullible, naive rural and urban poor vote banks. Free dinners, drinks, gifts and false promises are used as carrots to bring them to polling booths. This results in highly flawed electoral outcomes as a large section of educated and aware citizens don't feel the need to participate in the process for the sheer lack of motivation, lack of a deserving candidate or out of hopelessness about the state of things in the country. This renders the power of democracy useless.

Every party uses great, elaborated mandates and promises to come in power and every five years India is taken on a hope ride only to come back on earth later to find little or no significant changes. High-level corruption and swindling of large amounts of nation's wealth and resources and stashing away of black money in other countries continues as usual. The leaked lists of culprits and names given by global agencies are never put out in the public domain and brushed under the carpet, no real long term actions are taken against the powerful ones.

And if that's not enough, we find our country increasingly broken and divided over caste and communal politics, which are used to divert attention from real burning issues and problems we are facing today. Parliament is alarmingly becoming the place for playing blame games and passing the buck for missed opportunities and actions, inadequate development, vote bank politics and cover up of scams and corruption. Political parties, instead of playing a constructive role in nation building by debating and finding solutions for prevalent critical issues like massive unemployment, inequality, communalism, poor infrastructure or

services, are increasingly indulging in games of accusation, mudslinging, name calling and eroding the sanctity of parliament. All the crucial issues are hijacked by the politicians, gullible and naive voters play into the hands of few smart people in power; the media along with the nation too gets distracted and instead of questioning and asking for accountability, gets caught in political dramas and the show goes on . . .

Sadly, this is not a cynical take but a reality check on the state of our nation today. No matter how much we choose to ignore or brush it under the carpet to project a happy shining and growing India, we will have to face and address these issues sooner or later if we need real reforms and transformation.

The role of media and citizens, therefore, is of the utmost importance and is going to be catalytic in the future of India. We need to be awake, alert and proactive. After all, governments and bureaucracy are just parts of the system but we, the people of India, are the system! In a true democracy that is of the people, by the people and for the people, we all are the primary stakeholders and must play our roles in nation building. We need to make sure that the objectives of vibrant democracy and inclusive & sustainable development are met successfully and most importantly. We need to contemplate why has it not happened until now? What is missing? What lessons should we learn? As a nation, what are our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

It is time we took stock of things in our country as our ignorance and negligence have already cost

us several crucial years of nation building, that has been lost in petty politics, massive corruption and communalism.

What's most obvious and worth contemplating is that the loss of missed opportunities and resources was definitely not borne by politicians as they had their fill in terms of money and power; it was the citizens and the country that has had to pay the price!

It is high time we woke up, rejected the politics of divide and rule and moved beyond silly trivial communalism and fundamentalist issues that have already created so much damage in our country and focus on the real issues for a change! We cannot afford to lose any more time as these crucial issues of poverty, education, health, unemployment, infrastructure and communalism etc. demand urgent action and we need all the resources to counter and overcome them as soon as possible.

The first step towards that would be to accept and acknowledge those unconscious, old destructive patterns and paradigms that created these issues and replace them with new, vibrant systems and frameworks that would put India on the path of peace, progress and prosperity (inclusive and sustainable development). That is what we need today first and for most, to counter and overcome all ills that exist in our society today.

Let us all come together to identify those misguided beliefs and destructive patterns that are pulling India down and making it unable to reach its full potential.

Email: teamindiaagain@gmail.com

The Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown Continues Unabated

Helen Caldicott

Background to this article :

On March 11, 2011, a massive earthquake followed by a tsunami devastated the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant in Japan. It initiated a complex series of events, ultimately resulting in the meltdown of the nuclear fuel in three of the four reactors of the plant, resulting in massive release of radioactivity into the environment. The accident also damaged the reactor buildings, as well as the cooling systems of the spent fuel pools located at the top of these reactor buildings.

The Fukushima accident is at least as big, if not bigger, than the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Chernobyl stopped releasing radiation into the atmosphere after about 2 weeks; while, we are now nearly seven years into the Fukushima accident and it is still releasing radioactive material into the atmosphere. The radiation from this plant continues to impact not just Japan, but the whole world.

Till before Fukushima happened, in the intervening 25 years after the Chernobyl accident, the global nuclear industry and its apologists were arguing that lessons had been learnt from Chernobyl, the necessary design modifications had been made in nuclear reactors, and no major nuclear accident will occur in the future. Now after Fukushima, they are arguing that this was a one-in-a-million chance occurrence, and there is no need to worry. On the whole, the essence of the argument of these nuclear cheerleaders is that the other nuclear reactors worldwide are safe. This is the claim of India's nuclear establishment too, that our nuclear reactors are very very safe.

The fact of the matter is, nuclear energy is inherently unsafe. No amount of safety devices can completely eliminate the possibility of a nuclear accident. Unless all nuclear reactors operating around the world are shut down, sooner or later, another catastrophic nuclear accident is bound to happen in one of these reactors. And when that happens, its consequences are going to affect entire humanity for the rest of time. This is what has happened with Chernobyl—it not only led to the downfall of the Soviet Union (as Mikhail Gorbachev writes in his memoirs), the radiation leakage from it is going to cause the deaths of lakhs of people, especially across the Northern Hemisphere, from cancer and other diseases for thousands of years. And this is what is happening with Fukushima too—here its consequences are even worse, as the following article points out.

The multi-trillion dollar nuclear industry knows that if the full scale of the tragedy at Fukushima becomes known to the people of the world, it could lead to such an outcry that it could well sound the death-knell for the industry. And so from the beginning of the accident, the global nuclear industry and its accomplices—the governments of pro-nuclear countries from the USA to India—in collusion with the global media, have tried to downplay its potential impact. This is the reason why news about the continuing tragedy at Fukushima is simply not appearing in the media.

Dr Helen Caldicott has devoted the last forty two years to an international campaign to educate the public about the medical hazards of the nuclear age and the necessary

changes in human behavior to stop environmental destruction. In the article below, she explains recent robot photos taken of Fukushima's Daiichi nuclear reactors: radiation levels have not peaked, but have continued to spill toxic waste into the Pacific Ocean—but it's only now the damage has been photographed.

Recent reporting of a huge radiation measurement at Unit 2 in the Fukushima Daichi reactor complex by robots does not signify that there is a peak in radiation in the reactor building.

All that it indicates is that, for the first time, the Japanese have been able to measure the intense radiation given off by the molten fuel, as each previous attempt has led to failure because the radiation is so intense the robotic parts were functionally destroyed.

The radiation measurement was 530 sieverts, or 53,000 rems (Roentgen Equivalent for Man). The dose at which half an exposed population would die is 250 to 500 rems, so this is a massive measurement. It is quite likely had the robot been able to penetrate deeper into the inner cavern containing the molten corium, the measurement would have been much greater.

These facts illustrate why it will be almost impossible to “decommission” units 1, 2 and 3 as no human could ever be exposed to such extreme radiation. This fact means that Fukushima Daichi will remain a diabolical blot upon Japan and the world for the rest of time, sitting as it does on active earthquake zones.

What the photos taken by the robot did reveal was that some of the structural supports of Unit

2 have been damaged. It is also true that all four buildings were structurally damaged by the original earthquake some five years ago and by the subsequent hydrogen explosions so, should there be an earthquake greater than seven on the Richter scale, it is very possible that one or more of these structures could collapse, leading to a massive release of radiation as the building fell on the molten core beneath. But units 1, 2 and 3 also contain cooling pools with very radioactive fuel rods—numbering 392 in Unit 1, 615 in Unit 2, and 566 in Unit 3; if an earthquake were to breach a pool, the gamma rays would be so intense that the site would have to be permanently evacuated. The fuel from Unit 4 and its cooling pool has been removed.

But there is more to fear.

The reactor complex was built adjacent to a mountain range and millions of gallons of water emanate from the mountains daily beneath the reactor complex, causing some of the earth below the reactor buildings to partially liquefy. As the water flows beneath the damaged reactors, it immerses the three molten cores and becomes extremely radioactive as it continues its journey into the adjacent Pacific Ocean.

Every day since the accident began, 300 to 400 tons of water has poured into the Pacific where numerous isotopes—including cesium 137, 134, strontium 90, tritium, plutonium, americium and up to 100 more—enter the ocean and bio-concentrate by orders of magnitude at each step of the food chain—algae, crustaceans, little fish, big fish then us.

Fish swim thousands of miles and tuna, salmon and other species found on the American west coast now contain some of these radioactive elements, which are tasteless, odourless and invisible. Entering the human body by ingestion they

concentrate in various organs, irradiating adjacent cells for many years. The cancer cycle is initiated by a single mutation in a single regulatory gene in a single cell and the incubation time for cancer is any time from 2 to 90 years. And no cancer defines its origin.

We could be catching radioactive fish in Australia or the fish that are imported could contain radioactive isotopes, but unless they are consistently tested we will never know.

As well as the mountain water reaching the Pacific Ocean, since the accident, TEPCO has daily pumped over 300 tons of sea water into the damaged reactors to keep them cool. It becomes intensely radioactive and is pumped out again and stored in over 1,200 huge storage tanks scattered over the Daichi site. These tanks could not withstand a large earthquake and could rupture releasing their contents into the ocean.

But even if that does not happen, TEPCO is rapidly running out of storage space and is trying to convince the local fishermen that it would be okay to empty the tanks into the sea. The Bremsstrahlung radiation like x-rays given off by these tanks is quite high—measuring 10 milirems—presenting a danger to the workers. There are over 4,000 workers on site each day, many recruited by the Yakuza (the Japanese Mafia) and include men who are homeless, drug addicts and those who are mentally unstable.

There's another problem. Because the molten cores are continuously generating hydrogen, which is explosive, TEPCO has been pumping nitrogen into the reactors to dilute the hydrogen dangers.

Vast areas of Japan are now contaminated, including some areas of Tokyo, which are so radioactive that roadside soil measuring 7,000 becquerels (bc) per kilo would

qualify to be buried in a radioactive waste facility in the U.S..

As previously explained, these radioactive elements concentrate in the food chain. The Fukushima Prefecture has always been a food bowl for Japan and, although much of the rice, vegetables and fruit now grown here is radioactive, there is a big push to sell this food both in the Japanese market and overseas. Taiwan has banned the sale of Japanese food, but Australia and the U.S. have not.

Prime Minister Abe recently passed a law that any reporter who told the truth about the situation could be gaoled for ten years. In addition, doctors who tell their patients their disease could be radiation related will not be paid, so there is an immense cover-up in Japan as well as the global media.

The Prefectural Oversight Committee for Fukushima Health is only looking at thyroid cancer among the population and by June 2016, 172 people who were under the age of 18 at the time of the accident have developed, or have suspected, thyroid cancer; the normal incidence in this population is 1 to 2 per million.

However, other cancers and leukemia that are caused by radiation are not being routinely documented, nor are congenital malformations, which were, and are, still rife among the exposed Chernobyl population.

Bottom line, these reactors will never be cleaned up nor decommissioned because such a task is not humanly possible. Hence, they will continue to pour water into the Pacific for the rest of time and threaten Japan and the northern hemisphere with massive releases of radiation should there be another large earthquake.

(This article has been republished here from Greenmedinfo.com.)

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In Memory of Asma Jehangir

Kuldip Nayar

Asma Jehangir, who kicked the bucket last week, was a popular human rights lawyer and social activist of Pakistan. Although her work was confined to Pakistan, her example was followed throughout the subcontinent. The place from where she announced the foundation of Human Rights Commission, an organisation to protect individual rights, also became the venue for meetings to normalise relations between India and Pakistan.

Only a few days ago, she rang me up from Lahore to say that she would now have more time to work for normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan after marrying off her daughter. Maybe, this was her way of telling that she had miles to go to change a religious-oriented society into a secular one. She put in enormous efforts to change religion's influence on society. The bane of problems was because of the mixing of religion with politics.

Asma can have the satisfaction of having India and Pakistan on the same page even though their reluctance to come nearer to each other was apparent. Asma made Islamabad and New Delhi realise

that they had no alternative except to sit across the table and discuss the reasons why the two could not bury their hatchets. Although New Delhi had decided that it would have no talks with Pakistan until it stopped giving shelter to terrorists, Asma believed that there was still some room for a patch-up.

However, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj was unequivocal in her statement that New Delhi would have no discussion with Islamabad until it realised that terrorism and talks did not go together. Asma felt that Islamabad faced certain problems with the military which had to be sorted out before any meaningful meeting could take place. She was very positive about the possibility of such a meeting and she could somehow persuade the powers-that-be to see reason.

But my disappointment is that there was little response in India on the death of Asma even though she had dared her country's military, the sworn enemy of India. It was heartening to see her devotion to the cause of improving relations between India and Pakistan. I always supported her efforts.

I was allotted a bungalow as a member of the Rajya Sabha in Lodhi Estate where Asma would bring girls and boys from Pakistan to meet their counterparts in India. Asma named that place 'Pakistan House'. The boys and girls from Pakistan would shed tears as they would bid farewell to the boys and girls in India. Categorising them as Pakistanis would be unfair because they looked very much a part of the secular society in India. She would also take Indian youth to Pakistan to learn from a society which was tilting towards a particular religion.

Asma, a symbol of Pakistan's human rights and resistance, was also a fierce opponent of military dictators for over four decades. She was also a strong advocate of India-Pakistan peace and was part of several Track-2 delegations to India. Not only that, she also became a very prominent lawyer of Pakistan after beginning her career as an advocate at the judiciary. She was also the chief of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan which indicates her popularity.

Even today the Pakistani judiciary remembers her fight for the restoration of honour to Iftikhar Chaudhry, who was the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The lawyers' movement ultimately achieved its goal and the movement even led to the downfall of President Gen. Pervez Musharraf. That unprecedented movement which saw the lawyers marching in 2007 had given a glimmer of hope that Pakistan was indeed understanding the importance and restoration of democracy. But then every ruler in Pakistan always looked over the shoulders of the military and it is true even today.

I remember Asma taking on the

might of martial law administrator Zia-ul-Haq in the early eighties when she was in the thick of the movement to restore democracy. She was imprisoned for leading the protest movement. Asma soon became a champion activist. There were occasions when her life was on the block but undeterred she braved those threats and continued to stand up against dictators. In the process, she helped establish the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, which she also chaired later. She would often say that it was the Commission's duty to defend all religious minorities. The Commission during her chairmanship also successfully tackled highly charged blasphemy accusations along with cases of honour killings.

Asma also pioneered the women's rights movement in her country at a time when human rights were not considered an issue in Pakistan. Thanks to Asma, today people, particularly women, talk about their rights and even the political parties, including religious parties, realise the importance of women's rights. The credit for this goes to Asma.

One particular issue that Asma stoutly defended was Christians charged with blasphemy. Several people from the minority community faced death penalty as blasphemy is an offence that attracted the severest punishment in Pakistan. She was also instrumental in fighting cases relating to the recovery of missing persons free of cost. A kind-hearted person that Asma was, she would not yield any kind of pressure, including threats from fanatic groups.

Asma not just fought for the people of Pakistan but also for people from all over the world,

including from the Palestine and the struggles that people faced elsewhere. No doubt, she made a lot of enemies at home because of the battles she chose but she viewed the challenges as something that cannot be ignored. That speaks volumes of Asma.

Asma, who was a popular activist around the world, won several national and international awards, including the Ramon Magsaysay Award, the Right Livelihood Award (also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize), the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, and the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights. But for Asma the awards hardly meant anything. Her sole aim was to restore democracy in the country because of her unwavering belief in it.

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Acharya Narendra Deva : The Vision of a Socialist Society

Naveen Tewari

Acharyaji was a unique exponent of socialism in the sense that he does not limit the ideology to a classless and economically and politically equal society. His vision was based on and for the specific context of India and the conditions prevailing in the country. The great cultural gulf between the educated upper classes and castes, and the simple uneducated masses of the deprived classes—castes cannot be filled merely with economic, political and social empowerment. He could see that in the absence of cultural upliftment, the dream of a just society would be only half-fulfilled.

It is easier to share food and shelter with people according to their needs. It is also feasible to share jobs and wealth with the underprivileged according to their needs. Free college and university education can also be made available to those who cannot afford it. Even jobs can be reserved for the deprived. But culture is a much subtler and intangible form of education and it would take generations to get transferred to those who have not been born in an advanced cultural milieu. It will require sustained efforts under a well-designed program to bring about a cultural revolution.

The collective culture of a given society creates a milieu, an oasis of values and virtues. A social movement to educate people in the true sense of the word would result in removing the invisible barriers of class and caste and truly empower the hitherto deprived masses. It will set free the creative spirit of the society, enabling it to soar and culturally and

collectively developing the whole society. The culture clubs envisaged by Acharyaji in the universities show a conscious effort on his part to initiate a movement in that direction.

Acharyaji realized that culture is the most important ingredient of an evolving society. All other privileges and securities of life may make a person much worse in character if he is not growing inwardly. He may suffer from a false sense of empowerment and security. He may become healthier in body but weaker in mind. He may become intolerant and arrogant, may end up being less considerate towards his fellow human beings. His sense of responsibility towards his surroundings may not grow and he may destroy his health and well-being by overindulgence.

An individual would be a lesser human being if he is not exposed to the higher dimensions of life. What if he does not sacrifice the temptation of sensuous gratification, does not willingly choose a path of discipline? What if he does not channelise his energies and reach an equilibrium in mind?

If he does not develop a taste in fine arts and music, he remains only half-educated. If he doesn't grow in curiosity and quest for learning and if his scientific temper is not honed by constant observation, his growth gets stunted. If he fails to form a reasonably clear world view and a meaningful interpretation of life in its myriad forms and expressions, he fails to evolve as a harmonious human being. Such a person will not

only not be at peace with himself but will also create a discord around him. He may acquire his share in the wealth of the country, but his contribution to society and the country remains limited. He may fulfill all his material needs, but fails to find fulfillment in life.

A cultured person may enjoy life in its various forms but the joy he pursues doesn't leave him impoverished and hungry. It enriches him and makes him a healthier person in body and mind. It's a joy one can share with others and the sharing of which would enhance and accentuate happiness rather than diminish or fade it.

Acharyaji's emphasis on cultural revolution is founded on very sound reasoning. A socialist society is not only a society based on social, economical and political equality but is also anchored in an equilibrium of a common cultural ethos and shared social values. For, economic upliftment may raise the level of a plumber to that of a professor in the material sense, but bereft of cultural refinement, a plumber can not lift himself psychologically, inwardly. This would invariably result in the continuance of the class system and social differences would remain, albeit with some difference.

These differences in the ways of life and conditioning of minds would cause friction between different classes and keep the society in a state of constant unrest.

Although we cannot imagine a state of perfect equality in this

matter, but the gap between the culturally emancipated and culturally deprived should be narrowed as far as possible. Acharyaji himself argued on the basis of a more practical and pragmatic reason. In the absence of a cultural revolution, political power will be shared with hitherto unprivileged people who would form an incongruous alliance with those coming from a better background. Of course the political empowerment ushered in by a democratic system would uplift the economically and socially backward class, but that alone would not be enough to ensure a government each member of which represents a progressive and emancipated society.

Also, the leaders emerging out of unprivileged and socially backward classes may not be able to handle the sudden empowerment bestowed upon them, and the deep down insecurity and inferiority complex may lead to a reckless use of power and privilege. Acharyaji, while talking about culture in his famous 'message', takes a cue from Ravindranath Tagore and gives a very deep and meaningful definition of 'culture'. The culture he talks about is as much an essential element for the privileged class as it is for the unprivileged. The former needs it for a renewal while the latter needs it as an initiation. Mere academic progress and distribution of wealth can not lead to a homogeneous social structure. It is only by holistic

education and cultural grooming that we may bring down the walls separating classes.

Acharyaji gives utmost emphasis to education and cultural evolution of all. This is the true spirit of socialism. This is a holistic movement towards socialism. Evolution from the present state of deprivation and depravity to a higher human level is the real revolution, and that alone can bring about true fraternity in society and result in social harmony. This harmony and order can't be established by force or legislation. Nor can just political or economic revolution pave the way to this ideal state.

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Anxiety and Hope

Varughese George

On 27th December 2017 I was listening to an interview on BBC with the Nobel Prize novelist, Orhan Pamuk, about the political and cultural crisis in his country, Turkey. The state apparatus had become repressive and the pluralistic character of state and society in Turkey was on the wane, he opined. On the previous day, news came in from the central election commission of Russia that the only valid nomination for the post of presidency is of Putin and the lone rival candidate is disqualified. On Christmas day, a Member of Parliament in India suggested that the word secularism should be deleted from the Indian Constitution. President Trump a fortnight ago suggested Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel, thus repudiating the equal claim of Palestine for the holy city. The question that arises is

whether the world is returning to the period of tyrants like in the 18th century or is the present civilisation showing signs of decay. A liberal humanistic and pluralistic society was the fundamental character of global society since the French Revolution. Sartre wrote, 'As democracy tolerated all opinions, even those which aimed expressly at destroying it, republican humanism which was taught in schools made tolerance the primary virtue.' Now this character is being questioned by the white-only American days of President Trump.

The second concern is about the growing inequality in global society. The Human Development Report of the United Nations says that 20% of the world population appropriate 80% of the world's resources. The National Family Health Survey of

India, a government initiated survey, says that 40% women and children are malnourished in the country. But with the passage of time, the corporates have amassed huge wealth due to a liberalised economic regime. The annual income of some corporate houses is larger than the national income of a dozen countries together. The UN had appointed a commission to look into the causes and background of the global recession that occurred in 2007–09. This commission mainly consisted of social scientists. The theologian Francois Houtart was also nominated by the President of the General Assembly as special representative to this commission. The commission opined that the belief that the market will regulate and correct itself was a great mistake. 'The belief that economic agents are rational, that governments

are inherently less informed and less motivated by sound economic principles and their interventions are likely to distort market allocations, and that markets are efficient and stable with a strong ability to absorb shocks' affected macro economic policies. It suggested that governments should strengthen key sectors of economy by more capital investment and increased public expenditure. Inequality is growing within nations also. To make the life of the millions living in poverty dignified and decent, the state should adopt protective welfare policies and put a ceiling on the accumulation of assets.

The third concern is about technological rationalism that considers that progress in technology will automatically lead to progress in human life. But experience proves that in an unequal global order, assimilation and application of technology will also be asymmetrical. The Trade and Development Report of the UN says that India and Brazil spend only 0.8% of their GDP on R&D and there is a technological lag with other developed countries and it reflects in trade and investment of these two countries. Contemporary society is known as knowledge society. Unlike in the past, the future is in the hands of those who possess knowledge. But the digital divide is ever on the increase. Though food production has increased due to new technologies, malnutrition and poverty is also in the increase. Medical technologies are expensive because of which the poor are sidelined and destined to their fate.

The fourth problem is the violence in societies. Society has become more violent and the untold misery in Syria aided by the war machine has made international peacekeeping

difficult. War, ethnic and racist violence has created millions of refugees, and women and children are the worst affected. Reconciliation is considered a weakness. During the Indo-China and Indo-Pak war periods, Acharya K.K. Chandy used to invite citizens to Manganam Ashram in Kerala to deliberate on the idea of reconciliation. The people of these countries have no hostility against each other, the nations may have. His movement was known as Fellowship of Reconciliation. Many years later, the senior journalist Kuldeep Nayyar, taking a cue from such ideas, established the forum Indo-Pak Peoples' Friendship. Citizen representatives from both countries regularly interacted and arranged exchange visits. This helped build confidence measures among the people of both countries to initiate dialogues. After years of racist violence, when South Africa became free, the Constitution began with this proclamation, 'South Africa belongs to all, black and white.' Can we build a non-violent and reconciled society in the near future?

The final aspect is the alienation of the cultural place. Man or woman has become more individualistic and his/her alienation from society is exacerbated by new technologies. Chris Hedges calls this 'narcissistic escapist individualism' in an 'Empire of Illusion'.

Thus, politics of authoritarianism and economics of neoliberalism join hands with violence and depoliticising cultural elements to create fascism in a refashioned way. The new technology is geared to the needs of the rich who form the social base of the new subtle fascism. Dissent is no longer endured. The hope of the New Year is that amidst despondency, individual and micro-

level resistance is increasing. The group named ICAN was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace this year for their consistent campaign against nuclear arms. The land grab by the state from the farmers is being fiercely resisted in many regions of the world. When the state deserts its social responsibility, self-help groups and sharing communities are growing in large numbers so that poor are taken care of.

Let us have the courage to face the challenges ahead. Last year marked the centenary of the Champaran Struggle of farmers in Bihar. It was Mahatma Gandhi's first experiment with truth in India. His constant effort in Champaran was to purge fear from the minds of people. The people were afraid of the indigo plantation owners, the British government, the Magistracy and the police. When they rid themselves of fear, people became courageous. Derrida once wrote that the most agonising search in his life was to understand how one man can establish his authority over another.

Fr. Kappen asks to us affirm the forces of life, such as love, friendship, co-operation and the solidarity of all, and to fight the forces of death-illness, poverty, egoism, hatred, injustice, inequality and oppression. Rabindra Nath Tagore always taught us to celebrate life, not negate it.

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What Gandhi Said in Ayodhya: Violence Is a Mark of Cowardice, and the Sword Is a Coward's Weapon

Krishna Pratap Singh

Gandhi visited Ayodhya on February 10, 1921, the first of his two visits to the place associated with Rama. He had just two messages to give—on Hindu–Muslim unity and non-violence.

It would take anybody by surprise to know that Mahatma Gandhi, who was inspired to ceaselessly strive for Ram Rajya throughout his life, visited Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama, just twice. However, through the messages he communicated on both occasions, he underlined the enormous significance of those visits.

The news of Gandhiji's first visit to Ayodhya, on February 10, 1921, sent an unparalleled wave of excitement through the twin cities of Ayodhya and Faizabad, say those who have kept track of local history. Hours before his train arrived, huge crowds had lined the roads and terraces all the way from the railway station to the meeting ground where he was to speak. Everybody had but one desire—to be blessed by a mere glimpse of him. The historic clock-tower gracing the magnificent Faizabad chowk was resonating with the strains of shehnai. The words on everybody's lips were these: Gandhiji is coming to set us free.

The venue of the meeting was a maidan located to the west of the Jalpa nallah which lies between Ayodhya and Faizabad. In 1918, the British had celebrated their World War One victory at this maidan, and

the Congress had chosen the venue precisely for that reason—to show the British the difference between them and Gandhiji's way.

As the train trundled into the station, two local Congress leaders, Acharya Narendra Dev and Mahashay Kedarnath, holding the Congress flag aloft, made their way to Gandhiji's compartment. They were totally unprepared for the scene that met their eyes. It turned out that as soon as the train had entered Faizabad district, Gandhiji had asked for all the windows in and around his train compartment to be shuttered. Moreover, he had refused to meet or speak to anyone. He was upset about the fact that the farmers' movement in Awadh, attuned more to the battle cry of aggression than to ideals and principles, had turned violent. Those in the movement did not see much value in ahimsa. The farmers of Faizabad in particular were on the warpath—in Bidahar, events had taken a violent turn, with the farmers setting fire to and looting the houses of talukdars and zamindars.

The situation was intolerable for Gandhiji, but he eventually gave in to entreaties that he should address the meeting even if it was to make his displeasure known. He was accompanied by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and also the Khilafat leader Maulana Shaukat Ali. The latter, following the Lucknow Congress resolution of Hindu–Muslim unity as well as the coming together of the Non-Cooperation Movement and the

Khilafat Movement, had set out on a joint tour with Gandhiji.

However, as Gandhiji sat in the car and the procession started moving, he came face to face with a group of Khilafat supporters waiting to welcome him, naked swords in hand. He decided then and there that he was not going to mince words in reprimanding the violent farmers as well as the men with swords in their hands in his speech.

At sundown, the crowds surged to the maidan which was neither well-lit nor had an efficient public address system. His first message to them was that instead of taking to the path of violence, they should learn to bear the hardships of struggle. Then, in severe words brooking no ambiguity, he condemned the farmers' violence as well as the procession of sword-bearers, saying that violence was an attribute not of bravery but cowardice and that the sword was a coward's weapon.

It is worth noting that Gandhiji chose to deliver these two mantras to his fellow Indians in Ayodhya—the Ayodhya of King Rama, whose rajya remained an ideal for him throughout his life. His stay had been arranged in such a manner that allowed him to take rest and made it possible for an unending procession of people to file into the room for his darshan.

That night, thousands of farmers, with tears of repentance in their eyes, made a silent plea to their liberator

for forgiveness. The following morning, after bathing in the Sarayu river, Gandhiji set out for his next halt. But the pain caused by the farmers' violence, which had not only dealt a blow to the movement but was cause for shame, refused to leave him. He urged Jawaharlal Nehru to guide the farmers who had wandered off the right path.

Some days later, Nehru addressed a gathering of the rebellious farmers and got them to publicly accept collective blame for their misdeeds. So much so that many of them who admitted to their wrong-doing said they were prepared to give themselves up and serve long jail terms as well.

This episode tells us something about the force of conviction that propelled Gandhiji's advocacy of a freedom struggle based on the moral and principled yardsticks of satya and ahimsa. The manner in which he suspended the entire Non-Cooperation Movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident is well known.



It is noteworthy that by the time Bapu visited Ayodhya for the first time, Tilak, the leader who gave the resounding slogan 'Freedom is our birthright', was no more. The mantle of steering the freedom struggle, giving it a new momentum, now rested on Gandhiji.

One of the aims of Gandhiji's visit to Ayodhya on February 10, 1921 was to meet the sadhus of Ayodhya and persuade them to join the freedom movement. Gandhiji's decision to meet them was significant considering that his attempt to turn the Khilafat Movement into an

opportunity to promote Hindu-Muslim unity had started bearing fruit. (The Khilafat movement was started to influence the British prime minister to refrain from abolishing the Turkish caliphate, a move seen as a threat to Islam and hence to the religious freedom of Muslims under British rule.)

At that time, Gandhiji was not only engaged in moulding the Khilafat movement in accordance with his principles, he was also trying to remove the obstacles the British were placing in the way of Hindu-Muslim unity. The biggest obstacle was the issue of cow slaughter which the British were busy giving a communal colour. It was only natural that he would want to speak frankly on this issue in Ayodhya. The way he put the British government in the dock on this issue and made Hindu-Muslim unity an imperative for cow protection, only he could have accomplished it.

It was telling that Gandhiji, who did not take his eyes off other concerns of the freedom struggle while focusing on this issue, did not take any cognizance whatsoever of the so-called Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. No matter that this was his first visit to the birthplace and kingdom of his Rama.

Physically exhausted by the previous evening's long meeting, when Gandhiji reached the Sarayu ghat the following morning to attend a meeting of sadhus being headed by Pandit Chandiram, he found it difficult to speak standing. He began by asking the gathered sadhus to forgive him for his physical weakness which forced him to be seated as he addressed them. Then he proceeded to hold up a mirror

to them: 'It is said there are 56 lakh sadhus in India. If all 56 lakh of them are ready to sacrifice their lives, then I am confident that with the power of their tapasya and prayer they can liberate India. But they have strayed from their path. So have the maulvis. If at all the sadhus and maulvis have achieved anything, it is to make the Hindus and Muslims fight with one another. I say this to both . . . even in circumstances where you are rendered devoid of your faith, become heretics or obliterate your religion, there is no such command of god that permits you to create enmity between two individuals who have committed no wrong against one another.'

Gandhi did not stop there. He continued: 'I said to the sadhus of Haridwar that if they want to protect the cow, they should be ready to give their lives up for the Muslims. Had the British been our neighbours, I would have advised you to request them that although their religion does not prohibit them from slaughtering cows and consuming their meat, they should consider stopping the practice for our sake. . . . But they raise their hand [against us] and say they are the rulers and that their rule is like Ram Rajya for us. My appeal to the sadhus is that if you want to protect the cow, give your lives up for Khilafat. . . . Those who kill Muslims for slaughtering cows should abdicate their religion. There are no such directives given to Hindus anywhere.'

Gandhiji continued to give advice in this vein. He said: 'These days the Hindus want the municipality to put an end to cow slaughter. I call it stupidity. On this issue, some Marwari friends in Calcutta were misled by thoughtless advisors into

asking me to save 200 cows from being slaughtered by butchers. I told them point-blank I would not save a single cow until such time as the butchers were not told which other occupation to adopt because they do not do the work they do to hurt the sentiments of the Hindus. . . . What happened in Bombay? The butchers had hundreds of cows but no Hindu approached them. The members of the Khilafat committee went to them and said what they were doing was not right; they should let the cows go and buy goats instead. The butchers gave up all the cows. . . . This is called protecting the cow.'

He clarified that the object of cow protection was not animal protection: 'The concern was for the protection of the weak and the helpless—only by doing this do we get the right to pray to god for our protection. Praying to god for our own protection is a sin as long as we do not protect the weak. . . . We need to learn to love the way Rama loved Sita. As long as we do not observe our dharma conscientiously and with utmost faith and steadfastness, we shall not be able to destroy this demonic government. Neither shall we attain swaraj nor will the rule of our dharma prevail. It is beyond the power of Hindus to bring back Ram Rajya.'

He concluded his address by saying this: 'I do not want to say too much. I see students of Sanskrit here. I urge them to sacrifice their lives for Muslim brothers. . . . Every student who is desirous of obtaining knowledge for a livelihood should realise that acquiring knowledge from the British is akin to drinking from a poisoned cup. Do not drink from the poisoned cup. Come back to the right path. . . . There is an

idol here, which receives offerings of foreign cloth. If you do not want foreign cloth for yourself, then you must end this practice. Adopt swadeshi. Use the thread spun by your brothers and sisters. I am hoping that the sadhus will give me a part of what they have. . . . Sadhus are considered to be pious; let them give within their means. It will come in useful in the struggle for swaraj.'

The English translation of this speech is preserved in the Uttar Pradesh state archives in Lucknow. It was placed in the category of confidential documents at the time. The previous evening too, after throwing light on his South Africa satyagraha, he had given a call to the people to engage in peaceful non-cooperation against the British government, boycott government-aided schools, give up wearing foreign cloth and spin yarn on the charkha instead. He refrained from giving the same call in his Ayodhya meeting saying he did not want to merely repeat what he had said the previous evening.



In 1929, Gandhiji came to his Rama's capital Ayodhya for the second time to seek contributions for his Harijan Fund. In a meeting held in Faizabad's Motibagh locality he was given a silver ring for the fund. He decided to auction it there and then.

To provide an incentive for high bids, he announced that he would personally put the ring on the finger of the individual who bid the highest. One gentleman bid fifty rupees and the auction ended with him. Gandhiji kept his word and put the ring on his finger. The gentleman had a hundred

rupee note with him. Offering it, he stood there to get fifty rupees back. Gandhiji left him speechless with a comment that he was a baniya after all; a baniya never parted with the money that came his way—all the more so if it was a donation. The gathering burst into laughter and the gentleman made his way back in a happy frame of mind.

During this visit, Gandhiji visited the first Gandhi ashram in the country, which had been established in Akbarpur by Dharendra bhai Majumdar. It was on that occasion that he delivered his famous message 'Hate the sin and not the sinner', exemplifying his statement by staying in the house of an English priest called Sweetman. In the ashram meeting, he urged the people gathered there to get organised, give up wearing foreign cloth, spin the charkha, confront the oppression of zamindars with non-violent resistance, dedicate themselves to the cause of liquor prohibition and boycott government schools.

Thereafter, even Awadh's rebellious farmers gave up the path of violence. Not just that, by facing police atrocities and excesses resolutely, they no longer provided an excuse for the British government to unleash its army's oppressive force on them on the grounds that it was justified.

Courtesy : The Wire

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Is it Possible for Gandhians and Ambedkarites to Engage in a Dialogue?

Yogesh S.

The third national convention of Dakshinayan Abhiyan, called Samas, took place on 29 and 30 January 2018. On the opening day, Ganesh Devy, the founder of Dakshinayan Abhiyan, explained the relevance of the chosen name, '[Samas means to] connect units of meaning to produce new meaning; and, since [this] Nagpur convention is [about] bringing [various] thoughts together, it is called Samas.'

Prakash Yashwant Ambedkar, grandson of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, and Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, addressed the convention in Gandhi's Sewagram Ashram in Wardha and in Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur respectively. The convention was a coming together of writers, activists and artists from across the country, all of them united under the banner 'Where the Mind is without Fear', taken from the poem Chitto Jetha Bhoyshunno (Where the Mind is without Fear) by Rabindranath Tagore.

Both the historical figures, Ambedkar and Gandhi, are being appropriated by the current BJP government. As Ali Khan Mahudabad says, 'Political icons are easily appropriated . . . For some time now, and over the last two years in particular, a noticeable feature of the BJP's political rhetoric has been its appropriation of political figures whose views would sit uncomfortably with those of its own.' The ideologies and works of both these figures are a vehement critique of the anti-secular, anti-

constitutional and violent ideology of the BJP and RSS. The government, which has been cracking down on the spaces of dissent in universities has to go back in history to look at the role of Sangh Parivar in the freedom struggle and their contribution (or the lack of it) in building a democratic India. Those who opposed Ambedkar's Constitution and those who celebrated the death of Gandhi are now ruling the state, openly attacking constitutional rights and killing the democratic and secular spirit of this country.

Caught up in the debates and differences between them, we often forget to notice that despite their differences, Gandhi and Ambedkar continued to engage in a dialogue with each other and did not resort to violence. It is extremely crucial for us to remember this legacy of dialogue between differing opinions that existed in this country. It is crucial because it helps us be more reflective about the systematic attack on this legacy of dialogue today.

Gandhi's and Ambedkar's approach to fighting the oppression of the caste system, both politically and socially, was different. Gandhi opposed Ambedkar's proposal—provision for a separate electorate for Dalits—and he declared that he would go on an indefinite hunger strike to protest against a separate electorate. This resulted in the Poona Pact, which was signed by Ambedkar and Gandhi on 24 September 1932 in Poona (now Pune). The Pact denied a separate electorate but guaranteed reservation of seats for Dalits in the

legislature. The differences between the two, along with the hunger strike that led to the signing of the Poona Pact, is widely cited to highlight the differences and disagreements between the two.

Debates around caste based discrimination today seem to begin and end on the question of the provision of reservation of seats for certain sections, as if caste only extends to reservation policy and the resulting job opportunities. Prakash Ambedkar said that even if Gandhi had agreed to Ambedkar's terms, the VHP would have opposed it vehemently. In agreement with this statement, Rajmohan Gandhi said, 'With the guidance of the leadership of both Gandhi and Ambedkar, the Constitution of India took a shape . . . the Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and expression is under threat today because of this dispensation whose ideologues were active in the 1920s and 1930s.'

Prakash Ambedkar, in his opening address, said that Gandhi was not against reservation; he was against separate electorate for Dalits that had been proposed by Ambedkar. He also acknowledged that they held differing views on the manner in which reservations must be implemented. But he went on to point out that this difference between the two—Gandhi and Ambedkar—is increasingly being used to place the politics governed by their respective ideologies in opposition to each other.

He admitted that it is true that Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi

represented the views of different sections of the Indian populace. Ambedkar was a strong voice against the structural violence ingrained in Hindu society in the form of its Varna Ashram, and the associated discriminatory caste practices. He led the fight against the inhumane practice of untouchability. Then there was Gandhi, a leader of the freedom struggle in India, who, based on the principles of nonviolence, led a powerful mass movement against the British colonial rule in the country. Both were important leaders with a mass following; but they were standing on very different planes. They had differing world views and politics.

Prakash Ambedkar said, while addressing the gathering in Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram on 30 January, the death anniversary of Gandhi, 'Ambedkar was from a downtrodden and the exploited caste. Mobilising people for a movement against the caste was possible.' Ambedkar also highlighted Gandhi and Ambedkar's differing opinions on the Hindu religion. The latter called on all Dalits to reject Hinduism all together, and converted himself, along with lakhs of Dalits, to Buddhism. Having highlighted these differences, Prakash Ambedkar then made an important observation about the two leaders' relationship with each other. 'Both Ambedkar and Gandhi were not in agreement with each other. They were on very different planes. But they never let their differences stop the conversation between their ideas.' It was this dialogue that has enabled us today to observe, understand, analyse and fight forms of oppressions.

Rajmohan Gandhi, in his turn, also talked about the debates and differences of opinions between Ambedkar and Gandhi, but also

mentioned the things that they agreed on. He said, 'Freedom of speech, freedom to believe, freedom to be an atheist, to believe in non-violence; these were certain things that both of them would not compromise.' Reflecting on the increase in violence today in the country, Rajmohan Gandhi pointed out that Ambedkar always spoke about asserting oneself through struggle, debate, and fighting, and not through the 'use of lathis and guns, but through nonviolent modes.'

Applauding the success of Samas in bringing together people with different ideas and opinions under one roof, he said, 'Wherever the spirits of Gandhi and Ambedkar are, they must be celebrating today.' He added that such events, which bring together people with diverse ideas, are very crucial, especially in the current political scenario where people are being attacked and killed for differing views.

Samas, by having both Ambedkarite and Gandhian figures addressing the gathering from the same platform, succeeded in reminding us of India's rich history of respecting differences in opinions and ideas, the legacy of nurturing the diversity in our country.

Dakshinayan Abhiyan was founded by Ganesh Devy, a linguist scholar and an activist, in the wake of the killings of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar, activist Govind Pansare, and scholar M.M. Kalburgi. All three of them, through their scholarship and activism, opposed the communal and sectarian politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and its think tanks, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Sangh Parivar.

Dabholkar, Pansare and Kalburgi's murders have been strongly

condemned by writers, activists, scholars and artists from across the country. They have joined together to resist these attacks on the freedom of speech and expression. Even as these protests have been going on, Gauri Lankesh, an activist-journalist in Karnataka—she was actively involved in organising protests against these political murders, and the failure of the police in nabbing the perpetrators in all the three cases—was assassinated on 5 September 2017. Gauri's murder added to the sense of urgency among citizens, who saw these killings as a threat to democracy and the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights. Protesting the killings, a number of protest marches and events are being organised across the country.

These political murders are not merely the killings of people who dared to oppose and question the ideology of the ruling government. They are also an attack on the constitutional values, secular ideology and the democratic fabric of this country that Dabholkar, Pansare, Kalburgi and Gauri represented and strove to protect. They nurtured the democratic belief system which stood directly in opposition to that of the Sangh Parivar. They did not believe in uniformity but in diversity, they struggled to provoke and enable the oppressed to think and question. And it is this, the ability to think, to question and dissent, that is perceived as a threat by the fundamentalist right wing advocates.

Samas, in bringing the Ambedkarite and Gandhian politics in dialogue with each other, has given birth to a space for dialogue at a time when such spaces are becoming increasingly scarce, making it all the more significant. The question that we should be asking now is, how do we create more such spaces?

Onus is on CPI(M) to Put an End to Competitive Political Violence in Kerala

Apoorvanand

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) needs to answer the charge of its involvement in the murder of S.P. Shuaib, a 30-year-old man, also a youth leader of the Congress party in Kannur. Merely condemning it and claiming that it had nothing to do with the killing does not wash. It will have to face the question raised by Shuaib's father, Muhammad, 'Why did they kill my son over a destroyed flag in a school? What crime did my son do to die with 37 wounds on his legs?'

Who is this 'they' Muhammad is talking about? Is it true that a band of CPI(M) workers faced resistance from Shuaib and his party colleagues when the office of the Congress was raided by it? Is the media lying when it reports that following the scuffle, CPI(M) workers took out a violent procession predicting death for Shuaib? Is it only a coincidence that after this open threat, Shuaib was attacked and hacked to death?

The CPI(M) knows that what it is saying now is simply not true. Kannur has been a battlefield in Kerala with a unique history of inter-party rivalry, fought with all kinds of weapons. Crude bombs, swords, machetes and guns are freely used. The idea is not merely to kill, but to prolong the death of the enemy and make it painful.

In Kannur, political organisations have practised and mastered the art of murder. They make a spectacle of it. Each act of murder is carried out in a manner so as to ensure

that it remains etched in collective memory, and recalled by succeeding generations. The aim is to show how brutal the killing can be and why the killer needs to be feared. Probably, the idea is to unleash brutality to establish supremacy. But history shows that instead of acting as a deterrent, brutality has produced the same level of brutality from the other side. Killings have been responded to by killings and this has become an endless saga.

It is a fact that members of both the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as well as the CPI(M) have been murdered. Other parties are also involved in this game of death. The CPI(M) has demanded a ban on the Popular Front of India (PFI), blaming it for violence. But statistics show that it is mainly a battle of supremacy between the RSS and the CPI(M). Both are ruthlessly causing the death of their members to fulfil the ambitions of their party bosses.

All organisations—starting with the CPI(M) and the RSS—must first acknowledge that they have been involved in this competitive violence. This was recognised indirectly when a peace meeting was called by none other than Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The collector of Kannur also held a peace meeting where all parties promised to eschew violence. Where was the need to take such a pledge if the CPI(M) has never taken recourse to murderous violence?

A report by Firstpost says:

The CPM activists, who traditionally nurse hostility against workers of rival parties, have been trying to settle scores every time the party comes to power. Political analysts say this is because they are confident that the party-led governments will protect them. An analysis of the official statistics related to the incidents of political violence since 1991 obtained from the Kannur district police headquarters show an increase in the reported cases of political violence during every term of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by the CPM compared to that of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

For example, the number of political murders went up from a mere eight, during the 1991–96 term of the UDF government, to 28 during the 1996–2001 when LDF was in power. The number of murders came down to six during the subsequent term of the UDF government from 2001 to 2006. This shot up to 27 during the 2006–11 LDF term and came down to 11 during the last UDF government term.

Will the CPI(M) face these facts?

It has also been noted that political parties, CPI(M) included, hire professional criminals to settle scores with rivals. They can then claim that it was a criminal act and the party had no involvement in it. This is clever but cowardly. The RSS has also been found indulging in the same practice.

There was a time when the CPI(M) looked invincible in West Bengal. It practised and cultivated a political culture of violence, not only to intimidate its rivals like the Trinamool Congress but also its partners. I remember my conversation with the late A.B Bardhan, then the general secretary of the Communist Party of India, after the CPI(M) and state government sponsored violence in Singur and Nandigram. We were pleading with him to listen to his state unit and come out of the Left Front to oppose this violence. He agreed that the CPI(M) was behind it and added that his party workers had also braved violence from their 'big brother,' but he refused to talk about it publicly. The question of criticising it openly did not arise, he said.

We also remember the then

CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat's statement. Justifying the violence, he said that such had been the political culture of the state that he and his party were helpless and had no option but to use it to maintain their hold on the state. We also recall the infamous call of another CPI(M) leader, Brinda Karat, who said that the opponents have to be given *dam dam dawai*. This was an open call to beat up party rivals.

This arrogance could not save the CPI(M) in West Bengal, where power had become a second name for the party. The TMC and the Bharatiya Janata Party picked this up from CPI(M) very fast and both are now masters of the game. The CPI(M) seems to have fallen into an abyss and is finding it difficult to emerge from it.

Fortunately, Kerala has been

different, even for the CPI(M). By voting out parties from power at regular intervals, the people of the state have not allowed them to be arrogant. There is a lot that CPI(M) can be praised for in the state, but for its desire to dominate all aspects of life and taking recourse to violence.

The CPI(M) must understand—as should other organisations—that violence legitimises violence. You cannot criticise the violence of your rival if you yourself practise it. By eliminating its opponents in Kannur, by murdering them, the CPI(M) can no longer claim political superiority. It is not using party ideology but mastery of weapons to ensure the loyalty of the people. These are the same weapons that its rivals are using. So, where is its politics?

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Devastation Caused by Alcohol Should Receive Serious Attention

Bharat Dogra

The many-sided devastation of health and social relations as well as the huge number of injuries and violent episodes caused by alcohol consumption and addiction, as also the huge economic and ecological costs associated with this have been well documented at the world level. In developing countries like India there are three factors that accentuate this loss. Firstly, many of the families affected are already so poor or economically stressed that the recurring expenditure on liquor simply ruins them. Secondly, the poor availability of medical and de-addiction facilities means that the

way out of this morass is available to only a few who need this desperately. Thirdly, the gender equation is such that despite very low levels of liquor consumption by women, it is women and children who end up bearing the heaviest burden of increasing liquor consumption in terms of denial of basic needs and increasing domestic and sexual violence.

It is in this context that the demands for curbs on increasing liquor sale and consumption have been raised by several anti-liquor movements in various parts of India, particularly rural India. These

include social movements with a larger agenda which have also felt the need for fighting liquor related problems and also very specific anti-liquor movements focusing mainly or only on this issue. Women have played the most important role in most of these movements and have brought a strong sense of urgency and passion into these movements. One important specific demand of several of these movements has been to remove the liquor vend or shop from their village so that easy availability of liquor very near to the village can be checked.

While most governments have paid lip sympathy to anti-liquor sentiments, in reality most governments have been happy to collect their massive earnings from sale of liquor. In addition, several politicians have close links with liquor mafias and some of them have themselves entered liquor production and trade. Despite all this, several governments have been forced to respond to growing public sentiments against liquor, particularly in the context of women voters. They have responded to the anti-liquor sentiments of people, particularly women, in various ways. Prohibition has been in existence in Gujarat for a very long time and was more recently introduced in Bihar. Tamil Nadu and Kerala are likely to move towards phased prohibition. Other state governments have agreed at times to removing liquor vends in specific areas if certain conditions such as opposition by more than 50 percent local population are satisfied and proved. Others have withdrawn specific vends following opposition.

On the whole, however, these official responses have been inadequate and the massive, many-sided damage caused by alcohol has been increasing. The time has now come to give much more serious attention to this issue. On the one hand, well planned government policies keeping in view local conditions are needed, and on the other hand there is even greater need for sustained public campaigns against liquor on a continuing basis involving respected community leaders, with women playing a leading role.

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Press Release

It's Not the Question of EVMs Alone But Democracy Is at Stake : Unanimous Call for #Back2Ballot

New Delhi, February 19: 'Today it is no more the question of going back to ballot papers in elections, but it's a must that 2019 elections be conducted through the ballot papers. EVM machines are destroying the trust between the voter and the democratic system. Democracy is too precious to be left to machines. To ensure the democratic nature of the country, the 2019 election should be done through the ballot system', said Manish Tiwari, spokesperson, Indian National Congress. He was speaking at a meeting organised by Anhad, CPA, Delhi Solidarity Group, National Alliance of People's Movements, Peace and Sabka Bharat on the question of EVMs in elections, held at the Constitution Club of India. Other prominent political leaders and intellectuals who were present and who spoke at the meeting included Ali Anwar (MP, Rajya Sabha), Amarjeet Kaur (CPI), D.P. Tripathi (NCP), Dr. Sunilam (Ex-MLA, National Convener, NAPM), Gauhar Raza (scientist), Kavita Krishnan [CPI(ML)], Kunwar Danish Ali (JDS), Naval Kishore Yadav (RJD), Nikhil Dey (MKSS), Nilotpal Basu (CPM), Ravi Verma (SP), S. Srinath (expert), Saurabh Bhardwaj (AAP), Uvesh Mallik (Advocate) and Seema Mustafa (senior journalist).

'JD(S) will not contest the Karnataka Assembly elections later this year, if VVPAT are not counted 100% and that's a decision we have made', stated Danish Ali, the

spokesperson of JD(S). He further added that there is an atmosphere being created through television studios that one nation and one election should be brought in because multiple elections hamper development work. This completely unfounded view is being promoted by an organised lobby and its aim is to pave way for one party and one leader rule, a dangerous trend for the nation.

The process of elections should be something the citizens of a country have complete faith in. EVM machines have been found to be faulty innumerable times; the democratic nature of the country is challenged every time an EVM machine fails. Given the fact that powerful democracies across the country have chosen to stay with the ballot system, India should rid itself of the many complications of the EVM system and simplify its procedures. 'The electoral process should be so simple that anyone and everyone is able to vote and is also aware of the entire process of elections. The process of voting should be simplified to the bare minimum. In a democracy, every vote should be accounted for and there should be no talks of average numbers and/or rounding off of votes,' said Kavita Krishnan of CPI-ML. Mr Nilotpal Basu (CPM) reiterated the need to use the VVPAT system and make the entire process as transparent as possible, keeping in mind the satisfaction of the voter.

It is important to continue the debate in India because if EVMs are not tamper-proof, it makes the vote valueless, endangering Indian democracy. Furthermore, it is important to take this issue ahead from the stage of a debate; it is the responsibility of all political parties, civil bodies and the public to carry it forward and turn it into a movement to demand the return of the ballot system. Gauhar Raza, the well-known scientist and film maker, also made an impassioned plea for the ballot system: 'The constitution gave us the right to vote and it gave that right to every single citizen. That is commendable because other countries had to fight to achieve it, our country adopted universal suffrage right at the start. The tampering of EVM machines is an attack on our right to choose and our right to vote. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has stated 6 technical ways which prevent it from being tampered with, but there is no machine in this world that is impenetrable. That is the driving factor in the universal rejection of EVM machines.'

What is even more important is to demand that the ECI dive head first into electoral reforms. The Commission is losing its credibility as it continues to deny that EVM machines can be tampered with. In the wards where the EVM machines had been tampered with, the ECI made no outright moves to penalise those who manipulated the system. Ankit Lal of Aam Aadmi Party added that EVM machines are produced by companies like the ECIL and the BEL, and these companies are incapable of maintaining the machines on their own; therein lies the problem because they have to hire external technicians, train them and outsource the task of maintaining the

machines to them. In the countless number of technicians they hire locally, what is the guarantee that they are free from being politically manipulated?

The need for the ballot system stems from the fact that voters can physically witness their vote being submitted; the chance of the votes being tampered with are minimum as the entire process is very simple and there can be no glitches. The only concern here, as Mr Sunilam (Ex MLA and National Convener, NAPM) pointed out, will be that the election process will have to be extended by a few more days. For clean and transparent elections, surely this minor delay can be undertaken and managed.

S. Srinath from Karnataka and Yogesh Malik from Gujarat both presented detailed accounts of tampering and of voting fraud, and also of their efforts to complain to the Election Commission and judiciary and seek justice, but unfortunately in the name of the sanctity of the election process they couldn't make any headway. ECI is not sacrosanct and influence proof from those in power.

Amarjeet Kaur of CPI and Nikhil Dey of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan said that unless every single voter is confident about their vote and its destination in the counting process, democracy will have failed. To ensure the same, we have to go back to the ballot system. Political parties should have raised commotion about electoral reforms in 2014 itself, no one did so, and thereby they failed in their duty to change the system for the better. To make sure that the country doesn't veer towards fascism, people have to be convinced that the electoral

process is foolproof and that their voices matter. That faith has to be rebuilt and enabled, and for that the ballot system is the most appropriate.

In the light of the presentations made and similar opinions and concerns expressed by all the leaders of political parties and eminent members of civil society present at the meeting, all those unanimously agreed that it's high time the ECI took urgent action to restore faith in the election process. This can't be left to machines; the only way it can be done is by ensuring that the 2019 elections and for that matter every election in this country from the local self-government elections to the national election be held on ballots. For this, a citizens' movement is needed today, and this can only be achieved if everyone joins in.

Anhad, CPA, Delhi Solidarity Group, National Alliance of People's Movements, Peace, Sabka Bharat

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Both Nehru and Patel Were the Need of the Hour in 1947–48

Rajindar Sachar

Prime Minister Modi while speaking on the Budget expressed the grievance that Congress did not make Patel the Prime Minister. Unfortunately no one had advised Modi that Nehru was Gandhiji's choice. He had equal respect for both Nehru and Patel.

The fact actually is, there was no rivalry between Nehru and Patel as both realised that India can only prosper if there was good relation and mutual respect for each other. Patel even when he could muster majority in Parliament did not try to supplant Nehru. Let me give some instances of the respect which Nehru and Patel had for each other.

In 1952, the Congress returned to power with a clear majority in the Punjab Assembly elections. My father became the Chief Minister of Punjab, which then comprised of present-day Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

I had in 1946 become an active member of the Socialist Party founded by J.P. and Dr. Lohia and others. I

myself had this personal experience in 1955. I was the chairperson of the Socialist Party (Punjab) and the general secretary of the Punjab High Court Bar Association then. The Punjab High Court was shifting from Simla to Chandigarh. It was to be inaugurated by Nehru and he had come to Chandigarh the evening before. My father, who was then the Chief Minister of Punjab, invited Nehru for an informal breakfast at our residence. I was staying with my father, though my office was in another sector. I had admired Nehru a lot during the freedom struggle, but by 1955, my views on Nehru had considerably changed. Our party was convinced (rightly or wrongly, time alone will tell) that Nehru, who had shown the vision of socialism to us, had abandoned that vision and was following wrong policies. Our differences with his policies were deep. Though I was a nobody in those days, I told my father that I will not be at the breakfast table to receive Nehru. My father and I had a beautiful understanding and respected each other's view. He realised my reluctance, even though

he mentioned that I was being childish.

I went to my office before Nehru arrived because I could not think of being at home and being rude by not joining him for breakfast. Of course, we received Nehru with all the dignity and deference due to him when he came to the High Court for inauguration.

Today, I laugh at my presumptuousness – a chit of boy, whom Nehru probably did not even notice, beating his chest by not attending and denying himself a rare close breakfast meeting with one of the greatest leaders of India and who had been a hero of our time. Nevertheless, looking back, I still feel that my conduct was not demeaning, because at that time it represented a youthful, genuine and unshakeable faith in socialism—something which fortunately I still have not lost.

Whatever little was left of democracy vanished when Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency and stifled the press violating Nehru's warning. My father, an old Congressman, wrote a letter to Indira Gandhi during the Emergency reminding her of what Nehru had said:

To my mind, the freedom of the Press is not just a slogan from the larger point of view but it is an essential attribute of the democratic process. I have no doubt that even if the Government dislikes the liberties taken by the Press and considers them dangerous, it is wrong to interfere with the freedom of the Press. By imposing restrictions you do not change anything; you merely suppress the public manifestation of certain things, thereby causing the

idea and thought underlying them to spread further. Therefore, I would rather have a completely free Press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated Press.

Let me give a few instances where, even when they differed on State policy, Nehru and Patel accepted the other's point of view. In 1947, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir realised, after the tribal attack from Pakistan, that it was no longer possible to remain Independent. So he sent his Prime Minister Justice Mahajan with a letter to Pt. Nehru agreeing to accede J & K to India, so that India could send military assistance to J & K.

Mahajan was finding it difficult to convince Nehru about immediately accepting accession of Kashmir, even though Patel agreed with Mahajan. A heated debate ensued, but Nehru still showed reluctance. At this time Sheikh Abdullah, who in the adjacent room and was listening to this debate, came out to tell Nehru to accept the view of Patel and Mahajan. It was in these circumstances of mutual respect for each other that accession of J & K to India took place.

Another important event concerned the accession of Hyderabad. It is well known that while Patel was for taking strong action against the Nizam of Hyderabad who was wanting to remain independent and not accede to India (even when his boundaries had no direct linkage with Pakistan), Nehru was against military action. Finding that the conditions would become irredeemable, Patel decided on his own to send security forces.

While the security forces were

moving in, Nehru came to know about it and telephoned N.V. Gadgil, Minister of State for Home, and told him that he immediately wanted to talk to Patel about this action. Gadgil phoned Patel and told him about what Nehru had said. Patel naturally sensed that Nehru would want to stop action against Nizam. So he told Gadgil to tell Nehru that he had not been able to contact Patel. The result was that the security forces moved in, and the Nizam immediately signed the latter of accession to India.

Nizam realised and understood the working of Nehru and Patel. This is shown by the fact that soon after, when Nehru went to Hyderabad, Nizam did not show the courtesy of receiving him at the airport. But when Patel went to Hyderabad, he realised the consequence of repeating his foolishness, and quietly went to the airport to receive Patel, which was the correct protocol.

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BJP Ideology and Future of Scientific Enterprise in India

Ram Puniyani

With Indian independence and framing of the Indian Constitution, the foundations for progress in society were laid. This was to be multifaceted progress, and an important basis of this was the principle of scientific temper. This process was guided by the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru. There was a massive surge in the establishment of scientific institutions, accompanied by great contributions by Indian scientists, which contributed to the progress of the country. There were flaws and weaknesses of course, but the direction was clearly that of rational and scientific approach. This fulfilled clause Article 51a of the Indian Constitution that enjoins upon citizens the 'fundamental duty' to develop 'scientific temper'.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and its leaders, who are currently ruling the country and dictating the direction of scientific research and development, seem to have different ideas. During the last seventy odd years of the development of our scientific institutions, foundations have been laid for development in all areas of science and technology, including the areas of basic science and technology, health, atomic energy, space science and what have you; now, the ruling dispensation is putting things in reverse gear.

The inkling of this retrograde direction can be seen during the previous BJP-led NDA Government, when Murali Manohar Joshi, the then MHRD minister, introduced courses like astrology and Paurohitya (rituals) in universities.

In continuation with this, Dr. Satya Pal Singh, currently minister of state in the MHRD, recently stated that Darwin's theory is wrong as our ancestors did not mention that they saw ape turning into man in our scriptures. He was duly backed up by RSS ideologue turned BJP leader Ram Madhav.

The latter himself stated a while ago that Wright brothers were not the first to invent the aeroplane, it was an Indian, Shivkar Bapuji Talpade, who first invented it. He emphasised that school text books should highlight the likes of Talpade. The theory of evolution has been one of the turning point discoveries of science, based on painfully collected evidence by Darwin over several decades. As science is not based on faith, there is always scope to fill the gaps of knowledge of the original discoverer, and that's how science develops. In contrast to the methods of science, the fundamentalists harp that all knowledge is already there in the Holy Scriptures, the word of the almighty. The Joshis–Singhs–Ram Madhavs are not the only ones in such retrograde thinking; the Christian fundamentalists too counter the theory of Darwin by putting together what they call 'Creation science', and Islamic fundamentalists like Zakir Naik too dismiss this theory on frivolous grounds.

Singh's statement has been very disturbing for the scientific community in India. A large number of them expressed their anguish in a letter, which they sent to the minister. The letter says that the

minister's statement was simplistic and misleading: 'There is plentiful and undeniable scientific evidence to the fact that humans and the other great apes and monkeys had a common ancestor.' The letter further says that the minister's claim that the Vedas contain answers to all questions is exaggerated and 'is an insult to the genuine research work on history of Indian scientific traditions.'

'When a minister working for the human resource development in the country makes such claims, it harms the scientific community's efforts to propagate scientific thoughts and rationality through critical education and modern scientific research,' reads the letter. 'It also diminishes the image of the country at the global level and reduces faith of the international historical research community in the genuine research by the Indian researchers.'

At another level there are claims that Kauravas were born through the techniques mentioned in our holy scriptures, based on which Balkrishnan Ganpat Matapurkar has patented the technique for body part generation, inspired by Gandhari's giving birth to 100 sons and Karna taking birth from the ear of Kunti. At an equally bizarre level is the understanding of the Chief of the Indian Council of Historical Research, Y. Sudarshan. According to him, a reading of the Hindu epic Mahabharata leads to the inference that the weapons described in them were the result of atomic fission and/or fusion. He also claims that stem cell research was there in the Iron

Age in India.

It is not difficult to imagine that with such a pattern of thinking among policy makers, our science policy will get a strong jolt. The government is encouraging research and funding on topics which are based purely on figments of imagination. Huge top level funding has recently been announced for Panchgavya, a mixture of cow urine, dung, ghee, curd and milk. Efforts are being made to prove that Ram Setu (Adam's bridge), a mythical bridge between India and Srilanka, was for real and was built by Lord Ram with the help of his monkey army. In the field of history, efforts are on to prove the existence of River Saraswati and the historicity of epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, to name a few of the current research topics.

There are two unscientific processes involved here. One is the claim that all knowledge is already there in our scriptures and that research and development in science and technology should be along those lines. The second is claiming that all discoveries have their roots in India, more so the India before the coming of Christians and Muslims. This seems to be running in parallel with identifying India with Hindus and Hinduism alone. With the foundation for good development of scientific enterprise having been laid during the last many decades, the question is whether this community of scientists and Indian society at large will be able to resist these impositions on the direction in which our science has been advancing so far? Will our next generations be able to benefit from rational thinking and achievements of science, or will they be taken backward to medieval age thinking ?

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Sectarian Politics and the Partition of India : The Targeting of Nehru and the Congress

Anil Nauriya

Decades after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu Mahasabha workers have in recent years become emboldened enough to publicly glorify his assassins. On January 30, 2016, precisely 68 years after the assassination, some of them reportedly distributed sweets to mark the killing as they continue to hold Gandhi responsible for the Partition of India in 1947.

On the same day, an intellectual associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) sought, on the electronic media, to dissociate the RSS from the prime assassin. However, the RSS and its various offshoots, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have seldom dissociated themselves from holding the Indian National Congress (Congress) responsible for Partition. On the contrary, this has been a major plank in their propaganda offensive against the Congress. Many BJP leaders have resorted to such rhetoric, especially at election time.

These attacks became especially marked since 2013, in the run-up to the General Elections of 2014.1 Some of the Hindutva organizations have also become less covert than before in their glorification of the assassins of Mahatma Gandhi. Simultaneously, other sections of Hindutva forces have sought to disclaim responsibility for Gandhi's assassination and have attempted to shift the focus of their attack on Jawaharlal Nehru.2

There have also been some gradual changes in the rhetoric of the BJP as compared, on the one hand, with that of the Jan Sangh, its pre-1977 predecessor, and on the other hand, with that of its natural allies such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Shiv Sena and similar parties. The Hindu law reform conducted in the 1950s during Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure as Prime Minister had not gone down well with the sections of society prone to support the Jan Sangh, and the momentous churning of a near-stagnant social milieu provided a further point for conservative Hindu bitterness towards the country's first Premier. It was some two decades later, with the Jan Sangh's involvement in the political movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) in the mid-1970s, that the Sangh found itself having to engage with Gandhians, Sarvodaya workers, socialists and others.

The targeting of Nehru

Thus, when the Jan Sangh re-emerged in 1980 as the BJP, its traditional doctrinal positions gave way to some modified formulations. In the new conditions, it became necessary to reshuffle the punching bags that the new party would target in its political practice. It is in this phase that its fire came to focus more exclusively on Nehru and his family. This did not mean that the BJP quite discarded its previous antagonism toward Gandhi.

By the 1990s, the BJP under Lal

Krishna Advani had internalised Hindutva, the ideological position of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha leader. In 2003, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government even installed, in the Central Hall of Parliament, a portrait of Savarkar who had directly inspired Gandhi's assassin. JP was long dead, and in any case, for the BJP, he had served his purpose. The BJP (and the Shiv Sena) felt enabled to show closer affinities with the Hindu Mahasabha without directly attacking Gandhi himself.

The BJP strategy of not directly attacking Gandhi coupled with a selective utilisation of his name continues. Given the great respect in which Gandhi is widely held, it would have perhaps been inexpedient for the BJP, both domestically and internationally, to adopt a course that a party with no immediate prospect of wielding—or continuing to wield—power might have felt free to do. For that reason, despite the celebration and sweets distribution organised by Hindu Mahasabha workers on the anniversary of Gandhi's assassination in 2016, the main focus of the Hindutva–BJP attacks in the immediate future is likely to be not on Gandhi as such but on the Congress, in particular on Nehru and his family.

The functioning of the post-1969 Congress too facilitated this concentrated fire on Nehru's family by the BJP. As the Congress began increasingly to be identified personally with Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, power within the party came to be centralised in her and her younger son during the emergency (1975–77). After her return to power in 1980, and the death later in the year of the younger

son, power within the party came to be wielded also by her elder son who would, after her assassination in 1984, succeed her as Prime Minister and remain in office till 1989. Finally, after the death of all three, the Congress came gradually to be identified at its apex with Sonia Gandhi and also, in due course, her children. In this scenario, attacks on Nehru and his dynasty have received new traction. A very substantive part of the Hindutva attack involves popularising the thesis that the Congress in general, and Nehru in particular, were responsible for Partition.

There have been two tactical features of the Hindutva attack on the Congress in relation to Partition. First, Hindutva forces consciously eschewed any reflective analysis of the pre-independence politics of the Hindu Mahasabha and, second, with respect to British imperial objectives, they either passed them over sub silentio or treated them as not being of adequate importance in causing Partition.

The silence over Savarkar

For example, the consequences of V.D. Savarkar's adoption of the two-nation theory have not been reflected upon, let alone honestly analysed in Hindutva historiography and propaganda. In his presidential speech at the Calcutta session of the Hindu Mahasabha in December 1939, Savarkar declared that 'We Hindus are a nation by ourselves.'³ In this speech he pointedly excluded Muslims from this definition of nation. Significantly, this was a few months before Jinnah and the Muslim League formally adopted the two-nation theory.

On August 15, 1943, four years after the 'Hindus are a nation'

articulation, Savarkar said:

For the last 30 years we have been accustomed to the ideology of geographical unity of India and the Congress has been the strongest advocate of that unity but suddenly the Muslim minority, which has been asking one concession after another, has, after the Communal Award, come forward with the claim that it is a separate nation. I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two nation theory. We Hindus are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations.⁴

There are three noteworthy points about this statement. First, in spite of his earlier 1939 speech, Savarkar now affects surprise at the Muslim League demand. Second, even he concedes that the Congress has been the strongest advocate of the unity of India. Third, he endorses Jinnah's two-nation theory. It is quite amazing that even after Savarkar took the position that Hindus and Muslims were separate nations, Hindutva-oriented circles could claim to raise the banner of Akhand Bharat (and even murder Gandhi in its name). Indeed, the Akhand Bharat slogan was again raised by an RSS spokesman on August 15, 2016.⁵

A leading political figure like Savarkar would, it must be assumed, have been fully aware of the demographic composition of the various regions of undivided India. When he spoke of Hindus and Muslims being two separate nations, surely he must have known, or would have been expected to know, that this could serve to legitimise the demand for separation of the regions where there was a majority of the people who he argued constituted a separate nation.

Obviously, Savarkar was aware

of the implications of what he was saying. He knew, as even a person of the meanest intelligence would have been expected to know, that such a formulation could involve geographical Partition. Even though they may raise the slogan of Akhand Bharat, the Hindutva-oriented critics' real grievance against Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress therefore was not, and is not, that the country got divided. Their real grievance obviously is that Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress continued to believe in a composite culture and a concept of nation that did not accord with theirs. *That is why Gandhi lost his life and that is why Nehru is under attack today.* Such matters are not analysed or even mentioned in writings by persons belonging to organisations like the RSS, Jana Sangh or the Bharatiya Janata Party.⁶

As it happened, the vigorous renewal of the Hindutva propaganda holding the Congress responsible for Partition began even as a similar critique of the party, albeit from a diametrically opposite perspective, was being developed in some academic writings, especially at Cambridge University. From the early 1980s, this would gain appreciable circulation and also feed into the Hindutva attack. It is, therefore, necessary to deal with this particular academic critique, as it appears in spite of its many errors to be not infrequently repeated.⁷

As in the case of the Hindutva positions, discussion here too proceeds without recognition of the existence of any British colonial strategic objectives regarding Partition. This is strange considering the attention given by the British to retaining control in areas in undivided India's north-west and the north-east.⁸

The hypothesis has been put across from time to time that in the 1940s, Nehru stood in the way of a federal structure which Jinnah supposedly desired.⁹ The notion, which has in recent years received some traction, seems to be that Jinnah stood for a more inclusive, broader Union which was not acceptable to the Congress leaders. Generally, the 'loose federal Union' argument is made in the context of the British Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946. The Cabinet Mission Plan, in paragraphs 6 and 7, rejected the 'larger' and 'smaller' versions of Pakistan that had been placed for consideration, and overtly envisaged an undivided India. The Plan was to be subject to re-consideration at the instance of any Province after 10 years, and every 10 years thereafter. It envisaged three Groups A, B, and C; Group B would consist of the Muslim-majority Provinces in the north-west and Group C of the eastern Provinces of Bengal and Assam. The Groups would come together at the Centre in respect of specified subjects.

The fallacy of a federal Cabinet Mission Plan

The two underpinnings of the 'loose federal structure' argument are: first, that this is an adequate description of the character of the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 and, second, that Jinnah had 'accepted' this Plan. The view, first expressed by the then Viceroy Wavell, and later popularised by Cambridge scholars as well as some Bombay-based lawyers, was that the Cabinet Mission Plan was 'accepted' by Jinnah and the League and that this implied that the Pakistan demand had been given up. This view has been widely circulated, sometimes with the qualification that the demand for Pakistan was effectively given up.¹⁰

The opposite was in fact the case. The resolution passed on June 6, 1946 by the Council of the Muslim League, which is supposed to have 'accepted' the Plan, made it clear that Pakistan remained its 'unalterable objective'.¹¹ Curiously, this part of the resolution was not emphasised either by Ayesha Jalal in her work on Jinnah published by Cambridge University Press or by H.M. Seervai in his work on Partition.¹² Jalal and Seervai did not also deal with the League's Madras session (1941), where it had been made clear by an amendment to the League's Constitution that its Pakistan demand was not a 'bargaining counter'. Both these writers were the principal propagators, after Wavell, of the idea that the League had 'accepted' the Cabinet Mission Plan which had, prima facie, rejected the Pakistan idea.

The second and third paragraphs of the League's resolution of June 6, 1946, reiterated that Pakistan remained 'the unalterable objective' of the League and that the Cabinet Mission Plan was for it only a step towards Pakistan, which it saw as 'inherent in the Mission's Plan'.¹³ It is not as if the League had 'accepted' the Cabinet Mission Plan and the Congress and Nehru simply came and torpedoed it. The League's options with respect to the Cabinet Mission Plan were restricted as the Labour Government in Britain at this stage was not willing overtly to go further by way of a direct Pakistan commitment. The Mission's Plan ostensibly rejected the Pakistan concept; however, as the League noticed, an alternative route to Pakistan was implicit in the Plan. In the third paragraph of the League Council's resolution of June 6, 1946, it was observed that 'it will keep in view the opportunity and right of

secession of Provinces or Groups from the Union, which have been provided in the Mission's Plan by implication.¹⁴ There was on the League's part no intention to work the Plan except as a route to attain Pakistan.

Later, while withdrawing its 'acceptance' of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Muslim League had cited, *inter alia*, a statement by Nehru on July 10, 1946, at a press conference in which he had declared that the Constituent Assembly would be sovereign.¹⁵ Yet, given the fact that the League had just a month earlier, on June 6, 1946, reiterated the Pakistan objective, it is hardly fair to blame Nehru's statement for a withdrawal of a League 'acceptance' that did not really exist in the first place.

Besides, the Congress had already made it clear through Maulana Azad's letter of May 20, 1946 to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, who led the Cabinet Mission, that it would look upon the Constituent Assembly as a sovereign body for the purpose of drafting the Constitution 'unhindered by any external authority'. This letter was drafted by Nehru. What Nehru said on July 10, 1946 was therefore not entirely new.

A federal structure requires that the Provinces have some control over themselves and their fate. In their submission to the Cabinet Mission four days before the Plan was announced, the League had somewhat brazenly referred to Assam as a 'Muslim Province'.¹⁶ The Cabinet Mission obliged the League by placing Assam in Group C, along with Muslim-majority Bengal. There was hardly any upholding of the federal principle here. In placing Assam in Group C the British would

have known that they were including in the Plan a 'deal-breaker'. The statement issued by the Cabinet Mission on May 16, 1946 required under Paragraph 19 (iv) that the provincial representatives to the Constituent Assembly would divide up into three Sections (corresponding respectively to Groups A, B, and C). Paragraph 19 (v) of the Statement further required that these 'Sections shall proceed to settle Provincial Constitutions for the Provinces included in each Section and shall also decide whether any Group Constitution shall be set up for those Provinces'. Maulana Azad pointed out in the letter (drafted by Nehru) to the Cabinet Mission on May 20, 1946 that Bengal would thus play a dominating role over Assam as the Plan required the Provincial Constitution to be 'settled' not by the Province but by the Section, that is Constituent Assembly members belonging to Group C, comprising Bengal and Assam. Rules framed by Group C could thus nullify the theoretical option given to a Province to opt out of a Group at a later stage. Azad pointed out that similarly, in Group B, Punjab would dominate over Sind and the NWFP. Incidentally, those familiar with the workings of politics in Pakistan today would readily endorse the validity of this apprehension. In the form in which it was presented, the Cabinet Mission Plan could not be treated as coterminous with or equivalent to setting up a 'federal structure'. In actual fact, it had the effect of covertly throttling provincial federalism at the Group level.

There were other features militating against inclusiveness. Some of these were immediately obvious. Others unfolded in the course of the Cabinet Mission's

deliberations. Sikhs were left out on a limb in Group B. Jinnah also resisted a role for non-League Muslims in the Executive Council envisaged under the Cabinet Mission Plan. Thus he sought to determine not only the League's representation on the Council but also the composition of the Congress representation. In this context, Zakir Husain was to Jinnah a 'Quisling'.¹⁷ To describe such positions as federalist or inclusive in any way is hardly tenable.

Speech-making apart, Jinnah had difficulty not only with the federal principle but also with a pluralist approach on Pakistan. In the course of his talks with Jinnah in 1944, Gandhi had suggested a referendum in the Muslim-majority areas to ascertain by adult suffrage of 'all of the inhabitants of the Pakistan area' whether they wished to be part of a separate state. The offer is recorded in Gandhi's letter of September 22, 1944 to Jinnah. He also suggested in the letter that a 'third party or parties' be called in 'to guide or even arbitrate between us'. Jinnah responded on September 25, 1944 demanding that the voting in such a referendum be confined to the Muslims in the area.¹⁸ Thus he was not inclined to permit the Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and others in the so-called Pakistan area to have a say in the future of the area that was their home. Such positions sit ill with civil libertarian claims.

Throughout the relevant period, the British resisted suggestions for resolution of the inter-communal question which did not involve a key role for themselves. They saw themselves as arbiters in an inter-communal dispute. Gandhi and Maulana Azad had called this particular bluff more than once in statements usually neglected by historians.

On August 8, 1942, a few hours before his arrest on the next day, Gandhi dictated a letter to a citizen of Bombay, backing Azad's offer to the League that if it cooperated fully in the demand for Indian independence, the Congress would have no objection 'to the British Government transferring all the powers it today exercises to the Muslim League on behalf of the whole of India, including the so-called Indian India.'¹⁹ On May 8, 1946 also, Gandhi suggested that an 'impartial non-British tribunal' go into the points of dispute.²⁰ But it was difficult to get the British to agree. In fact, the provision in the Cabinet Mission Plan regarding review after every 10 years also contained within it the likelihood of continued British supervisory presence.

Parenthetically, we may note that within independent Pakistan too, Jinnah was not enamoured of federalism or its implications. Although Bengalis constituted a majority in Pakistan after its formation, Jinnah, in a speech at Dhaka on March 21, 1948, declared that Urdu and 'no other language' would be Pakistan's state language.²¹ It was this early disinclination to grant a due place to the Bengali language in Pakistan that contributed to the movement for secession of its eastern wing.

The oft-heard lament for the Cabinet Mission Plan and the attempt by diverse forces to pin its 'failure' upon the Congress and Nehru is especially surprising considering some other particularly obscure features of the Plan. These features associated with the Cabinet Mission Plan have historically not received adequate attention. These relate to the complicated tie-up

envisaged in the Plan between four future events and processes: (i) the lengthy Constitution-making process required under the Plan; (ii) the transfer of power and sovereignty in the form of independence to India; (iii) the condition relating to the formulation of a treaty between the United Kingdom and the Constituent Assembly; and (iv) the stationing of British troops in India and the terms on which these troops would be withdrawn.

An examination of these intricate inter-relationships indicates that the Cabinet Mission Plan was not a document simply offering a 'loose federal Union'. Let us consider these features seriatim.

First, on *the length of the Constitution-making process envisaged under the Plan*, for it was only after this process was complete that sovereignty was to be transferred under the Plan. In a statement issued on the same day as the Plan was announced, Stafford Cripps declared:

*So the three Sections will formulate the Provincial and Group Constitutions and when that is done they work together with the States representatives to make the Union Constitution. This is the final phase.*²²

Thus, as per the Cabinet Mission's Plan, work on the Union Constitution would start only after Provincial and Group Constitutions were ready. That meant that each Group could take its own time settling its own Constitution and the constitutions of the Provinces comprising the Group. Then work would start on the Union Constitution in association with the (princely) States. Paradoxically, the Cabinet Mission Plan simultaneously declared [in Paragraph 14] that British

paramountcy over the princely States would not be transferred to the new Indian government on attainment of Indian independence. Thus, even while expressing the hope that the princely States would co-operate, the Cabinet Mission Plan offered the States the enticing prospect of their own independence if they did not co-operate in the making of a Union Constitution.

Second, it is not generally known that the matter of transfer of sovereignty was deferred under the Cabinet Mission Plan. The Secretary of State for India, Pethick-Lawrence, as leader of the Cabinet Mission, wrote in his letter dated May 22, 1946 to Azad that '*independence cannot precede the bringing into operation of a new Constitution*'.²³ He added:

*When the Constituent Assembly has completed its labours, His Majesty's Government will recommend to Parliament such action as may be necessary for the cession of sovereignty to the Indian people . . .*²⁴ [emphasis added]

Even at that stage this transfer of sovereignty was to be subject to certain provisos. Oddly enough, these vital issues have often escaped attention.

A third aspect concerns *the Treaty envisaged under the Plan*. Paragraph 22 of the Cabinet Mission Plan made it necessary to negotiate a treaty between the Union Constituent Assembly and the UK, to provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power.²⁵

The Cabinet Mission did not envisage any transfer of sovereignty in the form of independence without the Union Constitution having been drafted and in the absence of such a

Treaty having been negotiated. The inevitably long-drawn Constitution-making process intrinsic to the Plan also implied the possibility of continued British supervisory presence. What shape would this take? Moreover, what was there to prevent this supervisory presence from telescoping into the review envisaged in the Plan after 10 years? [It may be noted parenthetically that it was only on February 20, 1947, by when it had become fairly clear that the Cabinet Mission Plan was not working, that the British Prime Minister announced a 'definite intention' to hand over power to Indian hands 'not later than June 1948'.]

There is finally *the inter-related matter of the stationing of British troops*. In the Nehru-drafted letter of May 20, 1946, Azad had pointed out to the Cabinet Mission that its notion of British troops remaining in India 'till after the establishment of the government in accordance with the instrument produced by the Constituent Assembly' would be 'a negation of India's independence'.²⁶ Nehru made this point several times. For example, on August 20, 1946, he observed:

*I am sure that when British armed might is removed from India, it will be easier for all of us to face the realities in India and arrive at mutually advantageous agreements.*²⁷

The Cabinet Mission, while confirming in its statement on May 25, 1946 that there was 'no intention of retaining British troops in India against the wish of an independent India under the new Constitution', maintained that 'during the interim period' it was 'necessary' that 'British troops should remain'.²⁸ By

'interim period' was meant the entire elongated period leading up to the framing of the Union Constitution under the Plan, which would be a sequel to the framing of the Provincial and Group Constitutions, and finally the formulation of a Treaty between the Constituent Assembly and the UK.

Not surprisingly, in his letter dated May 20, 1946 to Pethick-Lawrence, Gandhi had also observed that with British troops in India, 'independence would in fact be a farce' and that 'it can in no way be contended that in the face of the troops, there would be natural behaviour in the Constituent Assembly'.²⁹

Thus in the obviously long-drawn Constitution-making process envisaged under the Plan, with no transfer of power or sovereignty in the form of Indian independence, and with one political party still committed to its objective of Pakistan, the continued British presence, including the presence of British troops, had the distinct prospect of playing off Groups, Provinces and Princely States against one another.

The Cabinet Mission Plan was quite different from the current perception of it in sections of the academic community and among sections of the intelligentsia. That this perception has acquired an appreciable hold is, in part, to be accounted for by the resources still available to colonialist historiography. Far from being the blueprint of a loose federal Union, the Cabinet Mission Plan contained within it no early, clear and definite prospect of Indian independence as such; instead it set out a Constitutional route for dissolution, a possible prelude

to a larger Pakistan and even the prospect, under colonial auspices and under the watch of British troops, of the separate independence of various Princely states.

Looked at from any angle, therefore, it appears that attempts to shift the primary responsibility for failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan and consequently for Partition upon Nehru individually or upon the Congress collectively, whether these attempts be made on behalf of Hindutva or on behalf of the League or by colonialist historiography, are less than convincing and historically dubious. This is more so because each one of the forces involved in or associated with such targeting usually excludes its own role from the analysis. It is necessary that this record be set straight as the sectarian accounts tend to become elements in the contemporary political and electoral arena.

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1. See, for example: 'Modi Blames Congress for Partition and Changing India's Geography', November 10, 2013, <https://www.indiatoday.in>.
2. See, for example, the report about an article published on October 17, 2014 by the mouthpiece of the RSS in the southern state of Kerala: 'Nehru Solely Responsible for Partition; Godse Chose Wrong Target: RSS Mouthpiece in Kerala', October 25, 2014, <https://www.outlookindia.com>.
3. *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. 2, p. 317.
4. *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, Vol. 2, p. 10.

5. 'RSS Leader Asks Youths to Make "Akhand Bharat" a Reality', August 15, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com>.
 6. See, for example, Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India–Partition–Independence*, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2009. Incidentally, the silences on the Hindu Mahasabha and its post-Malaviya leadership in Jaswant Singh's book become more deafening as Partition approaches. The last mention in it of the Mahasabha is with reference to the Gandhi–Jinnah talks of 1944 about which it is observed on p. 312: 'The announcement of the impending meeting also angered the members of the Hindu Mahasabha.'
 7. For an earlier critique of such perspectives, see Anil Nauriya, 'Some Portrayals of Jinnah : A Critique', in D.L. Sheth and Gurpreet Mahajan (ed.), *Minority Identities and the Nation-State*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 73–112.
 8. We may cite one of the several indications of a British expectation of a foothold in the so-called 'Pakistan' areas. On April 25, 1946, a few days before the Cabinet Mission Plan was announced, one of the contingency arrangements put forward by Sir William Croft, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, India Office, was 'that we should withdraw from Hindustan and leave it to its own devices while staying in Pakistan by agreement which he estimated would be forthcoming . . .' (*The Transfer of Power, 1942–7*, HMSO, London, Vol. VII, Document 138). Upon this Viceroy Wavell said that he 'had considered this possibility in consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, and thought that we might have to contemplate something of the sort . . .' (*The Transfer of Power, ibid., Vol. VII*). At the meeting of the Cabinet Delegation with Wavell on May 31, 1946 the Viceroy said that 'he did not feel that there were final grounds for rejecting the possibility that we might remain in North-Eastern and North-Western India for an indefinite period' (*The Transfer of Power, ibid., Vol VII, Document 415*). This line of thinking was understandable also because, so far as British control of India was concerned, Wavell, his administration and provincial Governors were naturally more in sync with policies maintained by the previous British Government headed by Winston Churchill than with the post-war Labour Government. Earlier, when on a visit to England soon after the change in Government, Wavell had on August 31, 1945 called on Churchill, the former Prime Minister. The latter's parting advice had been to 'Keep a bit of India' (Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1973, p. 168).
 9. In an article published on August 18, 2009, Jaswant Singh says: He said Jinnah envisaged that some areas of the new country would have Muslim majority areas and some Hindu majority areas and believed a federal system that kept the country as one was desirable. Nehru, by contrast, demanded a system that was centralised. 'Nehru believed in a highly centralised policy. That's what he wanted India to be,' Mr Singh went on. 'Jinnah wanted a federal polity. That even Gandhi accepted. Nehru didn't. Consistently he stood in the way of a federal India until 1947 when it became a partitioned India.' ('Search for the Real Villain of Partition Divides India Again', August 17, 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk>.)
- See also: 'Nehru was as Much to Blame as Jinnah for Partition', Rediff interview with Nisid Hajari (author of *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*, Viking/Penguin, Gurgaon, 2015), January 28, 2016, <http://www.rediff.com>. In the interview, Hajari asserts: 'Up until the spring of 1946, a political compromise that would have preserved a united India was still possible. The Congress – Nehru in particular – would have had to grant the Muslim areas that (eventually) became Pakistan more autonomy than he was willing to grant, and have had to accept a weaker Central government than he wanted.'
10. See, for example, Aijaz Ahmad, "'Tryst with destiny" – free but divided', *The Hindu*, Independence Day Supplement, August 15, 1997, pp. 22–23.
 11. For text, see Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921–47*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1957, p. 601.
 12. Ayesha, Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985 and

- H.M. Seervai, *Constitutional Law of India*, Vol. 1, N.M. Tripathi Private Ltd., Bombay, 1991 (4th edition).
13. Gwyer and Appadorai, op. cit.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Ibid., p. 619.
 16. For Terms of Offer made by the Muslim League as a basis of agreement, May 12, 1946, see Gwyer and Appadorai, *ibid.*, p. 573. Earlier, on February 7, 1946, Viceroy Wavell, in a cable to Pethick-Lawrence had accepted that Assam (apart from Sylhet district) was not a Province to which there could be 'a reasonable claim' on behalf of the projected Pakistan. (*The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, HMSO, London, Vol. VI, Document 406). When the Cabinet Mission Plan was yet in the making, the Mission offered to Jinnah on April 16, 1946 the possibility of a Union Centre limited to essential subjects and envisaging also 'in one federation the whole of the Provinces of Sind, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab and Bengal plus perhaps the Sylhet district of Assam'. (*The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, *ibid.*, Vol VII, Document 116). By the time the Cabinet Mission Plan was announced in the following month, Assam as a whole was to be added to Group C. The Mission was fully aware of the unfairness of this, particularly when the Group was to frame the Provincial Constitution as well. A note by W. Croft and F.F. Turnbull, secretary to the Mission, circulated on April 25, 1946, and by these two men and G.E.B. Abell, the private secretary to the Viceroy, on May 2, 1946 presaged this change in the manner the Mission would treat Assam. [*The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, *ibid.*, Vol. VII, Documents 140 (enclosure) and 179]. While these documents were not as such 'accepted', they clearly affected the evolution of the Cabinet Mission proposals. Besides, a further rigidity was introduced in terms of restricting the possibility of any Province opting out of the particular Group in which it had been placed. After initially suggesting that 'Provinces should be free to form groups', a formulation that still remained in Paragraph 15 of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the same document went on to nullify this by specifying in Paragraph 19 (viii) that 'opting out' by a Province from the Group could only be after 'the new Constitutional arrangements come into operation' and 'after the first general election under the new Constitution'. The change in Paragraph 19 occurred primarily as a sequel to a cable on May 9, 1946 from F. Burrows, the Governor of Bengal whose views had also been sought by Wavell (*The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, *ibid.*, Vol VII, Document 231). Burrows wanted also to ensure that the voting system within the Group, for formulation of the Constitutional arrangements, be such that decisions would be by simple majority. The inherent unjustness of this was marked also in relation to the NWFP and similarly placed Provinces. In any explanation of partition and analysis of sectarian politics, the role of officials like Croft, Turnbull, Abell and Burrows who pointedly introduced and encouraged sectarian demands needs close evaluation. The arrangements devised by them appear to have been programmed to ensure the failure of the Cabinet Mission even before the publication of its Plan. How these arrangements could be projected in scholarship and in 'popular' writing as loose federal arrangements, and Nehru accused of opposing them without justification, remains quite inexplicable.
 17. Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 296.
 18. Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's Correspondence*, East and West Publishing Company, Karachi, 1977, p. 124.
 19. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 76, p. 382.
 20. *Ibid.*, Vol. 84, p. 123.
 21. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches & Statements as Governor General of Pakistan 1947-48*, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1989, p. 183.
 22. Gwyer and Appadorai, op. cit., p. 585; italics added.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 591.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. Gwyer and Appadorai, *ibid.*, p. 583.
 26. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 15, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1982, p. 177.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
 28. Gwyer and Appadorai, op. cit., p. 595.
 29. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 84, pp. 173-174.

Why Were Budgets of Critical Farming and Food Security Schemes Revised Downwards

Bharat Dogra

When the budget is announced the common and understandable tendency is to compare this year's budget with the previous year's revised estimate (RE) so that one can know the extent to which allocation has changed in the new financial year compared to the previous year. However it can be very useful also to compare the revised budget (RE) of the previous year with the original budget estimate (BE) of the previous year to gain a complete understanding of how any important scheme or program has been budgeted .

To give an example, in the budget speech and in other policy statements the government has highlighted its commitment to spread organic farming and eco-friendly farming. But in reality we see that the budget for a very important scheme meant for this and related works such as protecting traditional seeds and time-honored practices of tribal farmers has been repeatedly revised downwards. This scheme is called Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY). Originally an allocation of Rs 350 crore was made for this in the budget for 2017–18 BE, but this was later cut very drastically to Rs 250 crore in the RE for the year. Now in the new budget an allocation of Rs 360 crore has been provided for this scheme. If we compare with the RE of the previous year, the increase is significant, but if we compare with 2017–18 BE, then even the impact of inflation is not covered.

If we go back one more year to 2016–17, then we see that during this year also the budget for this scheme was cut. In fact, it was cut even more drastically from the BE of Rs 297

crore to an actual expenditure of Rs 153 crore, a cut of nearly 50 percent at a time when there is such an acute need to save traditional seeds and traditional wisdom in farming. So for both these years, the modest allocated funds for this scheme have faced heavy cuts.

Similar has been the experience of the budget allocation for National Food Security Mission (NFSM). The budget allocation in 2017–18 for this was Rs 1,720 crore, but this was later cut in the RE to Rs 1,400 crore. The estimate for this scheme for 2018–19 is Rs 1,691 crore. This appears to be higher than the previous year's RE, but is actually lower than the BE of the previous year. Here again, if we go back one year, then again we see that the allocation for this mission was cut from Rs 1,700 crore in the BE to Rs 1,280 crore in the RE.

In the case of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the original allocation of Rs 4,750 crore in 2017–18 was later cut drastically to RE of just Rs 3,050 crore. The allocation for 2018–19 is Rs 3,600 crore. This remains much below the BE for the previous year even though it is higher than the RE.

Such a downward reduction appears even more shocking when it takes place in the context of a scheme that has been proclaimed to be of very high priority for the government. This is the case with the flagship irrigation scheme called the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). In the case of its component under the Ministry of Agriculture, during 2017–18 the BE of Rs 3,400 was cut to RE of Rs 3,000 crore, while in the case of its component under the Department of

Land Resources, its BE of Rs 2,310 crore was cut even more heavily to RE of Rs 1,832 crore. The RE under other components of the scheme increased compared to the BE. However if all the components are taken together, there is still a marginal decline in RE compared to BE. Again, if we go back one year, we find that in the financial year 2016–17, the BE for all the various components of this scheme taken together was Rs 5,767 crore, and this was cut later to RE of Rs 5,182 crore.

Similar is the story of some other schemes like the National Mission on Oilseeds. In fact, during 2017–18 even the overall RE of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare is moderately less than the BE. Incidentally, in the case of another ministry which is important from the point of view of vulnerable people, namely the Ministry of Labour and Employment, for this too the original allocation in the BE of 2017–18 of Rs 7,188 crore was later reduced to Rs 6,581 crore in the RE.

Hence it is important to keep track of budget of schemes and sectors which are crucial for public welfare throughout the year to find out if any cuts are being planned or made so that such tendencies can be opposed on the basis of reliable information. We can ignore marginal changes, but if substantial cuts are made, particularly in the case of public welfare schemes and sectors, then these should be placed before the Parliament and people so that the reasons for such cuts can be debated, and if these are found to be unreasonable, then these should be opposed and withdrawn.

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Meaning of Education

Sandeep Pandey

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently gave tips to students on how to clear the Board examinations with flying colours. Students of Jawaharlal Nehru University are protesting against a newly introduced policy of making attendance in classes compulsory. Do these things have anything to do with education?

Educationists today globally agree that the system of conducting collective written examinations is not the best method to evaluate students' learning. In fact, learning a subject in the sense of becoming knowledgeable, and scoring good marks in written examination in that subject, are two totally different things. In a country where tuition and coaching classes are given more importance than school education by not only students and parents but teachers as well, we are only preparing students to score high marks in examinations. Narendra Modi is only strengthening this viewpoint. It is another matter that there are experts in this country than Narendra Modi to guide students in this.

Education means developing a comprehensive understanding of the subject being learned. Ideally the students should select the subjects according to their interest and then learn it at their pace and through a method which they are comfortable with. The role of a teacher should be only that of a facilitator. If we foist a subject upon a student against her/his wishes, s(he) may score good marks under some pressure, but will

never be able to develop a liking for the subject or make use of the knowledge in real life.

Education must be linked to social concerns. There should be all round development of students. The students should acquire knowledge, skills and experience which they think will be useful in their lives. If adults start defining the objectives for children and also tell them how to achieve those, then the formal process of education may be completed but it would have lost all its relevance.

If we make attendance in classrooms compulsory, education will seem like tedium. The quality of teaching should be so exemplary that students get drawn to the class. This demands competency from teachers. It is only when the teacher is not capable or the administrators have no confidence in themselves (and, as an extension, in the students) that they think of making attendance in class compulsory. If the student doesn't understand the subject in class, it is better that s(he) goes to the library or takes the help of some other teacher or students outside the class to learn.

The evaluation should be only of whether the student has learnt the subject. If the student has not understood the subject s(he) should get another chance. If s(he) doesn't learn even in the second chance then s(he) should get a third chance. This process should continue until the student learns. To close the process

of evaluation before that would be against the very idea of education. Somebody can understand a topic only in one reading whereas another person may require several readings. The important thing is understanding, not the time taken to learn. Hence the idea of conducting examinations at a particular location within a stipulated time and that too in a competitive setting is meaningless. It is inexplicable why the educated class likes to create an unnecessary artificial competitive atmosphere for evaluation of learning of their children which doesn't resemble any real life situation.

Ideally no student should fail. If a student fails, it should be considered the failure of the teacher and not that of the student. The student has come to the teacher as an ignorant individual. It is the teacher's responsibility to impart knowledge. If the teacher is unable to make the student learn, it means the teacher doesn't know how to impart knowledge to the student.

The big question is also to what use we're putting our education to. If we're using our education to serve our individual or at most familial interests, facilitate corruption, work against nature and other human beings or to cause disrespect to them, then our education has no purpose.

Recently, I got an opportunity to teach a short course on 'development studies' at the National Academy of Legal Studies And Research (NALSAR) University in Hyderabad.

In addition to classroom discussions, the students were expected to visit a local Anganwadi centre and measure the height and weight of one child each to determine whether the child was malnourished. To understand the background of the child, they were also expected to meet the family and study how it meets its various needs within a limited low income, given that only the children of this category would attend the Anganwadi. For any problem related to their situation like lack of sanitation facilities or drinking water, they were to file an application under the Right to Information Act before the appropriate authorities. During the eight-day period of the course, they were also expected to scan some newspapers to see how much coverage of the issues being

discussed in the class was done by them. All the work done by the students was to be presented in the last class before other students and then a report was to be submitted based on their presentation. Now, since every student was studying a different child and different family, the element of competition was eliminated from the evaluation process. Some students asked whether they could work collectively. They were given the freedom to work together, provided they did the same amount of work as they would have done individually. So if two students were working together, they would study two children and two families. Presentations were to be made separately by each of them. In the process of preparing their presentations, they did whatever

studies or research that were required on their own.

Which will be the process in which the learning for the students will be greater? One where they make their own choices of the subject of study and do it their own way, or the other where they study books and restrict themselves to classroom discussions, get their presence recorded in the class akin to incarcerated prisoners of a jail, have the feeling of being continuously monitored by their teachers and invigilators, and perform under pressure to score high marks in examinations? The answer is easy to guess.

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How Far Have We Deviated
From the Ideology of Our
Constitution?
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When Has The Bureaucracy Treated People With Respect ?

Sandeep Pandey

There is pressure from the government officials in Delhi that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should apologize for the alleged assault on Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash inside the CM's residence by Aam Admi Party Members of Legislative Assembly. Two MLAs Prakash Jarwal and Amanatullah Khan have been arrested whereas there has been no action against employees who beat up minister Imran Husain and Delhi Dialogue Commission chairperson Ashish Khetan inside Delhi Secretariat earlier. Quite clearly this is yet another attempt in a series embarked upon by the Central government to discredit the AAP government. It appears that the Bhartiya Janata Party is not able to swallow the comprehensive drubbing it received at the hands of AAP in Delhi elections till now.

It appears that such an unpleasant situation arose because the officials of the Delhi government were not paying heed to the ministers, skipping their meetings and sitting on their files. Lieutenant Governor was requested to intervene as services were a matter in his control

but nothing changed. The resulting frustration and a sense of having no control over the bureaucracy probably created an emergency where CS was called to a late night meeting at the CM's residence. Whatever happened with the CS was unfortunate and should not have happened but the bureaucracy has to introspect why such a situation was created in the first place? The origin of the problem is the supremacy given to the position of LG over the Delhi government which is incongruous in a democracy. Democracy is a rule of the people, by the people and for the people. Who is a more authentic representative of the people - the political executive or the bureaucrats? Unless this anomaly is not corrected the problem in Delhi will persist.

In the present tussle in Delhi the bureaucrats are being painted as victims and the politicians as villain. But let us examine the character of two classes. Politician is there in his/her position for five years and then has to seek reelection if s(he) wants to continue. Bureaucrat holds a permanent position with tremendous immunity. If the benefits enjoyed by

the bureaucrats are compared with those of elected representatives a clear imbalance will be seen in favour of bureaucrats. Just compare the housing and the attendant staff given to bureaucrats and elected representatives. While it is easier to meet politicians even at their homes, the bureaucrats normally don't meet people at home. They always maintain a distance from people. It is much difficult to hold a government official accountable than a politician towards people. Politician gets chance for corruption for limited period whereas government employees are ensconced comfortably benefitting from corruption for longer periods of time. In fact, it is the government officials who have institutionalised corruption. A very elaborate system of commissions in terms of percentages is in place to get work done in the government. It is the bureaucrats who educate the new politicians in positions of power about this. The bureaucrats teach the politicians about how to scuttle rules/laws to manipulate their way or to stall decision making. In fact most of the time bureaucrats are busy (ab)using the system for the powerful against the common people's interests.

A few examples are, in Uttar Pradesh the government has embarked on an anti-encroachment drive and is demolishing mostly settlements of underprivileged population but it is not touching powerful corporate schools like the City Montessori School which has illegally built a school building against which a demolition order is pending for the last 21 years. The UP government is on a spree having committed more than thousand encounters and killed over 30 alleged criminals since the Yogi government came to power but has not given permission for cases to be tried against Yogi on serious

charges of hate speech, attempt to murder and rioting. The then UP CS Alok Ranjan chose to ignore a High Court order in 2015 making it compulsory for officials, ministers and judges receiving salaries from the government to send their children to government schools. He was supposed to file a compliance report within 6 months. The IAS officers, against all democratic norms, want a separate school for their children.

LG Anil Baijal has advised CM to reach out directly to the officer who are protesting and seeking Arvind Kejriwal's apology in order to resolve the crisis. He has said that the unfortunate incident of alleged misbehaviour and physical assault on the CS' was 'unprecedented' and had had a 'demoralising effect' on the bureaucracy. How many times the bureaucrats or magistrates order lathi charge and firing on people where it could be avoided? Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was of the view that in a democracy a government cannot resort to such extreme measures. Thousands and lakhs of people are left demoralised because of (in)actions of bureaucracy every day in this country. People can be seen sitting on dharnas outside government offices, tehsils, district headquarters and in state and national capitals merely because bureaucrats are not listening to them. Sometimes they have to inflict torture on self by sitting on fast or self immolating themselves just so that they can be heard.

Baijal has also said that in the course of his long career in government he did not recall there being such a wide rift between the elected government and the bureaucracy. Can the LG tell which distance is greater - between a government and bureaucracy in strained times like at present in Delhi, between elected government

and people or between bureaucracy and people in normal times?

The CS before attending a meeting of the cabinet after the alleged assault incident, amid heavy police deployment, wrote to the CM that he would attend the meeting based on the assumption that the CM 'will ensure there there is no physical attack and verbal abuse on the officers.' Further he said 'It is hoped that proper decorum will be maintained and dignity of officers will be protected.' Common people are afraid of police because of the abuse they can be subjected to at their hands. The government officials who will not even offer an empty chair to common people in their offices and humiliate them in every possible way from making them run unnecessarily or seeking bribe to do their genuine work or file false cases to take revenge have a desire to be treated with respect.

As Arvind Kejriwal entered the Secretariat for the cabinet meeting several top officials stood in the lobby wearing black bands as a mark of solidarity with the CS. They have every right to do so in a democracy. But they should also realise that only a CM like Arvind Kejriwal or Mamta Banerjee may allow this. They wouldn't have dared to do this in front of Narendra Modi or Yogi Adityanath. In UP Bareilly District Magistrate Raghvendra Vikram Singh has been chagrined for merely raising a rational question - why Hindutva groups raise anti-Pakistan slogans in Muslim localities? More shockingly Ashok Kumar Shukla posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate in Amethi was reprimanded for simply questioning the marathon meetings at the state capital which seemed unnecessary to him.

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Where Did We Go Wrong ?

Kuldip Nayar

I HAVE always wondered where we went wrong. After adopting a constitution which was secular in letter and spirit, we have strayed into the territory where every pebble is an impediment to the journey towards pluralism. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, said on the night of 14-15 August, 1947, in parliament and what became popularly known as 'Tryst with Destiny' speech.

"The future beckons to us... We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action..."

The Muslim leaders who spoke after Nehru were so emotionally surcharged that they outrightly rejected the proposal of reservations in employment and educational institutions as were discussed in the Constitution Assembly which Sardar Patel, then Home Minister, was offering. The Muslim leaders said in both houses of parliament that they did not want anything separate or special. They regretted that they were misled and unwittingly sowed the seeds of partition.

Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah reportedly wanted more and more concessions for Muslims but not separation. But somewhere along, the demand for Pakistan came to be raised. It swept the Muslims off their feet.

Lord Mountbatten whom I have interviewed at length at Broadlands, near London, where he lived told me that Clement Atlee, the then Prime Minister, asked him to see if the two countries could have something in common. Jinnah categorically said no to the suggestion. He said he did not trust them now because after accepting the Cabinet Mission Plan, which provided a weak Centre, they had gone back on the arrangement of grouping where the Hindu-majority Assam was a part. Subsequently, they came to accept the Plan but Jinnah had lost confidence.

I was one of those fortunate people to be in parliament, sitting in the press gallery, and listening to Nehru making the 'Tryst with Destiny' speech. That was 70 years ago. Today, when the head of a fanatic organization, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is looking to 'consolidate' Hindu vote in state elections and in the coming general election in 2019, I ask myself: Where did we go wrong?

Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief, spent nearly a fortnight, travelling to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the two most populous states of the country, where caste fissures run deep and caste and religion arithmetic decides the fate of candidates. In other words, the political outcome at the

centre is depended on the monolithic Hindu voters of the two states.

The RSS chief has been unequivocal while addressing the large crowd recently as he exhorted the Hindus to overcome the differences of caste. His remark was sharp and pointed when he said: "Hindus should be united. Division in society over caste and violence over the issues are the biggest hurdles in achieving this unity and there are forces that take advantage of it."

Apparently, the RSS chief had the non-Hindu voters in mind. Probably, his renewed push for consolidation had also something to do with the emergence of political entities like Jignesh Mevani after the attack on a Dalit family in Una and the rise of the Bhim Army, following clashes between Dalits and Rajputs in UP's Saharanpur. The RSS is said to believe that these are the groups that are covertly supported by the 'ultra' Left.

Bhagwat during his speech also tried to stem the rot that has set in after the central government's recent economic policies, which affected the farmers, and small and medium enterprises which are against the BJP-led NDA. Though the RSS spokesman put up a brave front saying that the visit of the RSS chief was meant to meet the functionaries, it was reportedly to appease the voters as there is a sense of concern within the Sangh parivar over the possibility of caste groupings that could jeopardize the BJP chances at the Centre.

Its deep anxiety on the possibility of a Dalit-Muslim combine emerging in Bihar is understandable because it could cobble together a formidable opposition to upstage the BJP. Hence the RSS is seen building bridges and reaching out to the economically backward classes, particularly the Kurmi and Kori communities, from which it did not get support.

The visits of Bhagwat to Bihar and UP are meant to garner the support the BJP needs to renew their tenure at the Centre, apart from its plans to have the RSS presence in every village as the Sangh is planning to attract more people to its fold. The concerted efforts of RSS to woo the Hindus, with help coming from the Janata Dal (United) of Sharad Yadav, are very much a part of the push to sustain its hold.

The role of Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar is deplorable. For the sake of protecting his government, he has accepted the support of divisive elements which he has fought against all his life. He has tried to defend his move to have the BJP along but it looks like a tamasha. A person who has categorical secular credentials, which was lauded by even the extreme left, has compromised his stand to stay in power.

The fact is that the secular forces have not been able to stem the tide of Hindutva. The Congress is too weak to get people to rededicate themselves to the Idea of India: A democratic and secular country. The BJP with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister looks formidable because the magic of Modi has not waned yet. Probably, the next election in 2019 may go his way. I only hope and pray that the nation would get back to the secular track.

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Let us have Opposition Unity on the basis of Common Minimum Programme

Pannalal Surana

As Lok Sabha elections of 2019 are approaching, there is the talk of opposition unity in the air. Taking into consideration the experience of the days of Congress Hatao (1967) and SVD governments in a number of States and of Janata party government (1977), it is desirable to adopt a positive approach and not of this or that Hatao. No party may be treated as untouchable. Politics of the country needs to be moulded in the direction of elimination of social and economic inequality and communal hatred. All progressive and regional parties are urged to enter into a dialogue and try to forge a United Front based on Common Minimum Programme.

Discussion may be initiated on the basis of following points :-

1. Today's model of development which tries to emulate capitalistic structure of West European and American countries will have to be given up and an alternative model of the egalitarian and eco-friendly development with full employment as the main objectives be developed. Agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishery be accorded high priority. Production of consumer goods be organised in a decentralised manner so that all regions get adequate opportunity to develop in a balanced manner. Heavy industries to remain in public sector, as also banking, insurance, passenger transport, Cooperative institutions to be strengthened in as many sectors

and levels as possible. FDI not to be allowed in defence and retail trade.

2. Fifty per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas.
3. Speedy implementation of recommendations of Sachar Committee so as to enable minority communities to participate in mainstream economic, social and political activities of the nation.
4. Faithful implementation of tribal sub-plans and SC-sub plans. Regular payment of scholarship and stipend amounts to SC and ST students.
5. Common, free and quality education to all children be provided by the State. Privatisation of education be totally debarred.
6. Public health facilities to be buttressed more in rural and hilly areas.
7. Railway network be so expanded as to cover all district headquarters in the country. Priority be accorded to the State of Jammu-Kashmir and those of North-East.
8. AFSPA to be withdrawn from the Northeastern States and also from Jammu-Kashmir. Meaningful dialogue at official as well as popular level to be encouraged so as to promote

liberal political activity and amity.

9. Fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of religion, caste or gender, to be safeguarded scrupulously.
10. With a view to minimizing the influence of money power on elections and to enable poor citizens\ activists to participate effectively in elections, public opinion to be mobilized for suitable electoral reforms, including substitution of present first-past-the-post system by one of proportional representation to political parties.
11. All-out efforts to be made to expedite hearings and disposal of crores of cases pending in various law courts.

This proposition needs to be discussed in various groups and parties. Public campaigning on the basis of the above propositions to be run so that attention is focused on issues and policies instead of personalities.

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Why This Neglect of Indigenous Technology ?

Bharat Dogra

It is time and again stated by the government that it wants to encourage indigenous technology but is this rhetoric matched by reality? One way of examining this is to see how some of the funds available for this very specific purpose have been utilised.

About three decades back a decision was taken to raise a special fund for the promotion of indigenous technology. For this purpose a cess called Research and Development Cess (RDC) was imposed on all imports of technology. The amount collected from this was to be deposited with a board called the Technology Development Board (TDB). The TDB was given the responsibility to use this money for promoting indigenous technology in the best possible ways.

All this appears to be a very good idea but we need to ask how it has worked in actual practice. In a report placed before the Parliament in December 2017, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) pointed out that in the two decades from 1996–97 to 2016–17 only Rs.7,885 crore were collected from this cess. Keeping in view the massive import of technology by India, it appears that several possibilities of collection of this cess are being missed out and due to this reason adequate funds have not become available from this cess.

However what is even more shocking is the extent to which this cess has been underutilised or

unutilised. According to the CAG report, out of the Rs 7,885 crore collected in two decades, only Rs 609 crore were actually disbursed to the TDB. In other words less than 10 percent of the collected funds could be utilised while over 90 percent of the RDC funds remained unutilised as these were not even disbursed to the TDB.

Considering that the promotion of indigenous technology is such a high priority objective and funds are so badly needed for this purpose in several important areas and sectors, it is shocking to know that for two decades 90 percent of the TDC-related funds available specifically for this purpose were not utilised for the stated objective. This tells us something about the actual commitment to the promotion of indigenous technology. One can only hope that after being reminded by the CAG of this sorry state of affairs in a crucial area, the government will take some effective remedial action with a sense of urgency so that RDC funds are utilised effectively for their stated objective of promoting indigenous technology.

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Modi goes Wrong with Right

Mrinal Biswas

The recent far right political challenge to the Right-inclined Modi government is not yet off the political scene. Its trio architects - Subramaniam Swamy, Arun Shourie and Yashvant Sinha – belonging to the BJP fold itself are still continuing with their forays whenever it suits them. The parallel development of rising dissenting members around the government whose decrying of return of protectionism in Arun Jaitley's budget proposals has posed a different kind of a challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Only BJP's fraternal Swadeshi Jagran Manch, unlike in the past, came out strongly in support of Modi government's economic policy as reflected in the budget. "When the whole world is moving towards protectionism why India should be different," Manch convener Ashwani Mahajan asserted. Of different Right tendencies in the economic field protectionism is one which comes handy to Left politicians too.

Arvind Panagariya, the first Niti vice-chairman under Prime Minister Modi and now a US Professor, is known for his rightist credentials. Whether his lashing out of current Modi policy will block out that section of the people who are Right thinkers and are his natural resource base so far for economic policy formulations are concerned is to be seen.

Protectionism is a scar and that has returned through this budget, according to Panagariya, who

in a newspaper article harshly commented that its reemergence has "resurrected a policy that had been consigned to the dustbin of history and economics." Indeed, India refused to beat the beaten track when in a historical moment its economy was opened up shedding aside highly restrictive policies pursued through licenses, permits and the like. That was considered the best policy performance in 1991 initiated by the then finance minister Manmohan Singh under ex-Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Indian economy since then has been largely integrated with world economy.

The Left was not happy with downsizing of the public sector and strengthening of the private enterprises. But economic prosperity that followed put an end to protectionist policy for good, the economists like Panagaria felt. Their hope lifted further with Modi government's stress on growth economy, as propounded by Jagdish Bhagwati, keeping at bay Amartya Sen's prescription of redistribution which would have returned the government's commanding heights of the economy. Left-Right divide struck at the very time when a fundamental shift in the political firmament dawned on India.

When it became clear that there would be a thrust on growth with an open economy Jagdish Bhagwati's follower Panagariya joined the government. He left at the first sight of Modi government wavering on economic policy. He has come down heavily when Arun Jaitley's budget

imposed variable taxes to give government protection to indigenous enterprises. Criticizing not only the advent of closed economy once again Panagariya felt domestic consumers would be priced out on a wide scale of modern products from footwear to cellular phones.

Even RBI Governor Urjit Patel warned of some taxes on capital and said these would inhibit capital investment, Other government insiders like Dr Rathin Roy and Dr Surjit Bhalla, members of Prime Minister Economic Advisory Committee (PMEAC), demurred on long-term capital gains tax. It is a moot question whether they will enjoy their present positions if Modi decides to stave off this challenge from his own Right affiliation.

The Modi government's intense desire to project a pro-poor image with large allocation of funds for the rural sector and approaching a universal health insurance scheme giving a cover to 50 crore of disadvantaged people are seen to have hardly enthused the people. The disappointment of his retinue of economists has not augured well for the government.

The Modi government has decided to take field operations to gather support for the budget proposals as a new policy initiative on economics. Ministers and Party faithfuls apart, journalists and economists are being engaged on the budget economics.

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3 - 4 February 2018

Political Resolution

The Indian Constitution is passing through the crisis of a serious threat from the ruling establishment of the country. The present government is not only destroying the basic values of socialism, secularism and democracy embedded in the Constitution, but its leaders are also openly declaring that they have come to power to make changes in the Constitution. They are openly advocating for a pro-corporate, theocratic and dictatorial India which is against the very nature of the Constitution that calls for a socialist, secular and democratic India. The right to life and dignity of not just the Muslim minority, but other minorities and vulnerable sections of society such as Dalits, Adivasis and women too, is under threat. Those who oppose this anti-Constitutional design of the government are killed in broad daylight and no action is taken against the killers.

The Modi government is promoting the private sector at the cost of public sector and diluting the labour laws in favour of industrialists. The Government is determined to dismantle the public sector, the basic anchor for a socialist society. The centralisation of power in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is another example of ignoring the Constitutional spirit of democracy and decentralisation. This government has now launched a campaign to promote the concept of 'one country one election'. This idea is against the federal and democratic spirit of the Constitution.

In such a challenging situation every Indian citizen who believes in the Indian Constitution must give a serious thought to the dangerous developments taking place in the country.

The Socialist Party condemns this unconstitutional, inhuman and undemocratic attitude of the government in strongest terms. The Socialist Party demands that the government should make efforts:

- to withdraw the decisions of FDI in retail and in defense sectors immediately;
- to withdraw all decisions related to the handing over of the PSUs to the private sector;
- to withdraw all decisions pertaining to labour laws which dilute the rights of labour;
- to ensure that government jobs will not be reduced, scrapped or made contractual, and fill up all vacant government jobs/posts without delay;
- to stop privatisation/commercialisation of education;
- to introduce a common school system in the medium of mother tongues;
- to ensure a Minimum Support Price of at least one and half times the cost of production (including cost of inputs, cost of family labour and cost of working capital plus imputed cost of land, called C2 price) for all crops, and ensure that farmers get this cost for their produce;

- to waive all loans given to farmers/fishermen/artisans;
- to stop privatisation/commercialisation of health services;
- to stop election funding by the corporate sector, even in the guise of separate electoral trusts formed by corporate houses;
- to revive the Women Reservation Bill in the State Legislatures and the Parliament;
- to publicly disclose the names of the big defaulters of public sector banks, whose total bad loans have crossed more than Rs 8 lakh crore;
- to disclose the names of all Indians who have accounts in Swiss Banks and other tax havens without delay, and to bring back black money as promised by Narendra Modi in his election campaign;
- to introduce a minimum of 30% income tax on the higher income groups and the corporate sector;
- to introduce an inheritance tax and thus reduce gross inequality in society.

With these immediate demands, the Socialist Party appeals to the citizens of India, particularly to the youth, and to all the political parties to come together to protect the Constitution of India in order to build a self-reliant, prosperous and civilised nation.

**Thus Stands the Socialist Party
Upholding Brotherhood and
Equality**

Remembering Jawaharlal Today

C.N. Chitta Ranjan

The following article, by the first editor of Mainstream, appeared six years after Jawaharlal Nehru's death in Mainstream's May 23, 1970 issue. Although the situation in 1970 in the country was quite different from the one prevailing today, the similarity of the contents of this article with the present scenario in India is indeed striking.

When last week Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on behalf of the people of India squarely accepted the grim challenge posed by communal reaction and declared that these enemies of the nation would be relentlessly fought at every level, history was repeating itself; for, she was speaking the language of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru whose uncompromising commitment to secularism and democracy is her own heritage as much as the nation's.

When the Prime Minister referred to the "naked fascism" visible behind Jana Sangh President Atal Behari Vajpayee's provocative and mischievous speech which could only be interpreted as a green signal for communal gangs to continue and intensify their inhuman activities against the minority communities, chiefly the Muslims, she was unconsciously echoing words used by her great father over two decades ago.

Cherished Values

Not long after the murder of the Mahatma, Jawaharlal described the dark forces of communalism as "the Indian version of fascism", and expressed his determination to prevent them from attacking the secular base of Indian democracy. When Smt. Indira Gandhi compared Sri Vajpayee's gesticulations to those of Hitler, she obviously had much more in mind than the Jana Sangh leader's waving of arms. Like her father, she saw clearly the threat

to all cherished values of the country enshrined in the Constitution in these gestures and the diabolical words that accompanied them.

Jawaharlal Nehru was among the first of the national leaders during the years of the freedom struggle to understand the true character and aims of the parties of communal reaction among both Hindus and Muslims. He often underestimated their strength, no doubt, but he was never in doubt about what precisely they stood for, whose interests they were frantically trying to protect at the cost of national unity and cohesion.

Vested Interests

He saw clearly enough that both Hindu and Muslim communalists in those years were in fact henchmen of British imperialism whose game they were playing to further the petty interests of a handful of affluent persons in either community. Communalism to him was the most obnoxious expression of the struggle of vested interests in collusion with the alien power to prevent awakening among the masses of India to which the National Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji had directed all its energies.

In the early thirties, Hindu communalism was represented by the Hindu Mahasabha whose offspring is the present Jana Sangh. Of the Mahasabha, Nehru said that it "not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but

also desires to preserve the vested interests of a group of big Hindu landlords and the princes". He firmly held that the activities of the Hindu communal organisations "have been communal, anti-national and reactionary".

It is a fact of history that Nehru did not spare the Muslim communalists who supplemented the work of the Hindu communalists. "Most of them," he declared once, "are definitely anti-national and political reactionaries of the worst kind."

In the early thirties he noted that the Hindu reactionaries as well as the Muslim communalists represented no more than a handful of vested interests subservient to the colonial power, and that neither had much hold over the masses of the country despite their obvious capacity to foment trouble taking sinister advantage of religious differences. He was indeed categorical that "there is no essential difference" between the two types of communalism.

One important difference he did note, however. This was that "the communalism of a majority community must of necessity bear a close resemblance to nationalism than the communalism of a minority group". This was especially true of India, for the Hindus are largely confined to this country and in religious terms they have little affinity with the world outside—a proposition which is obviously not true of minorities like the Muslims, the Christians and others.

It is easy for the Hindu communalists to pretend that they are genuine nationalists taking advantage of the fact that the roots of other religions lie outside the country. This point is of importance in the present context, for today's Hindu communalists, led by the Jana Sangh and RSS, are precisely making this claim to nationalism for themselves and constantly casting doubts on the loyalty to the country of the minorities on the strength of the wider association of the religions of the latter.

The purpose of the Hindu communalists now, as it was before independence, is to prevent the socio-economic status quo from erosion by the modern ideas of equality and democracy. While this was equally true of the Muslim communalists, whose symbol paradoxically enough came to be the irreligious and ultra-modern Jinnah, Nehru and some other national leaders realised that the greater danger to national purpose was posed by the communalism of the majority community. They realised that minority communalism could be effectively curbed only if majority communalism was eliminated.

Hence the leadership Gandhiji and Jawaharlal gave in the struggle against the dark forces of communalism beginning with the ones entrenched in the upper classes of the majority community. There is no doubt that they did succeed to a great extent in reducing the strength of Hindu communalism despite the consistent efforts of the British administrators to encourage it.

Grim Consequences

In the case of Muslim communalism, however, the efforts of the national leaders were not so successful, the main reason being the backwardness and utter poverty of

the majority of Muslims which the Muslim League was able to exploit to the full and in the most cynical manner. It was only when partition actually took place accompanied by the most unprecedented bloodletting and misery for millions of families, both Hindu and Muslim, that the grim consequences of a communal attitude etched themselves on the minds of both Hindus and Muslims.

At the time of partition the leaders of India more than the leaders of Pakistan were on trial; Pakistan had been carved out on foundations of hatred, and religion was used as a cloak to build a state whose sole purpose then was to satisfy the enormous vanity of a handful of arrogant individuals led by Jinnah. India, however, had different traditions imbibed over a far longer period.

The national leadership and the people as a whole were firmly committed to establishing a secular democratic state in which all citizens would have equal rights and all religions would have their place without any one of them being permitted to influence the administration. To the rulers of Pakistan the killing of the Hindu minority was not something altogether abominable; at any rate the philosophy on which they had chosen to found their new state precluded violent reaction to communal orgies.

Not so India; to the leaders of this country, the message of hatred and murder that the vast numbers of Hindu refugees brought from across the border was something that had to be fought fiercely and subdued. It did not, rightly, occur to them that the Hindu refugees or their friends this side of the border were justified in wreaking vengeance on innocent Muslims, men, women and children, living their own lives here as citizens of free India.

It is no accident that there was no parallel in Pakistan to the healing missions undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi in areas where minorities were under attack by organised hooligans, or to the great personal risks that Jawaharlal took by rushing into the midst of frenzied, armed mobs to prevent the butchery of innocent members of the minority community. The difference in attitude stemmed from the difference in purpose in establishing a free state.

Secular Forces

In the years before freedom it was Mahatma Gandhi who led the secular forces in the country despite his preference for communicating with the Hindu masses in the language of the shastras and the epics which the ignorant and the illiterate could comprehend easily. His concern for the safety of all minorities and for all the oppressed sections even within Hindu society was manifest not merely in his words but in his actions.

But, after the attainment of independence, it was left to Jawaharlal Nehru to lead the secular democratic forces in the struggle against communal reaction. This he had to do in the face of sniping from his own ranks often: for example, it is no secret that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, whom the Hindu communalists of today appear to have adopted as one of their apostles, thought in terms of packing off Muslims from this country in retaliation for the misdeeds of the Muslim majority in Pakistan against the Hindu minority there.

Jawaharlal put his foot down against such tendencies and insisted that it was the sacred duty of the majority community to protect and look after the interests of the minorities who had become citizens

of this country, irrespective of the behaviour of the neighbouring country. The people were with Jawaharlal and he succeeded in isolating the communalists in his own camp and establishing understanding with secular forces outside his party.

A little after independence, Nehru said:

We in India have suffered from communalism. It began in a big way from the Muslim League. The result was the partition of India. The Muslim League type of communalism is now more or less outside India. Some odd, foolish individual may indulge in it here, but that does not count and nothing can happen in India today from that source. But that poison has, by some reverse process, entered other people's minds and we have Hindu and Sikh communal organisations as communal as the Muslim League ever was . . .

If you examine the gospel of communalism even under the cloak of nationalism you will find that it is the most dangerous thing and breaks up that essential and fundamental unity of India without which we cannot progress.

Non-Communal Approach

At that time he noted, too, that communal elements had infiltrated the Congress and pleaded that Congress candidates "must be chosen with particular care so that they might represent fully the non-communal character and approach of the Congress". As for the Jana Sangh and other communal organisations, they were trying "to frighten the Muslims and exploit the vast number of refugees who had suffered so much already".

He uttered a clear warning to

the communal organisations whose echo was heard in the Lok Sabha the other day from Srimati Indira Gandhi; Nehru said: "So far as I am concerned and the Government I lead is concerned, I want to make it perfectly clear that communal forces will not be given the slightest quarter to sow seeds of dissensions among the people."

It is no accident that during the fifties, although there were engineered communal incidents here and there, the communal organisations were more or less ineffective. It is no accident either that the minorities in the country came to look upon Nehru as their greatest protector.

It was only during the last years of his life, when his powers were waning and opportunists in power were able to strike deals behind his back, that the communal organisations, notably the Jana Sangh and RSS, began to gain strength once again. Since his death these forces have become increasingly arrogant and violent. And they have been joined by organisations like the Shiv Sena which owe their growth to tolerance and even encouragement from certain Congressmen in office and from vested interests which see in such groups effective instruments to mount an offensive against the progressive policies and attack parties and individuals wedded to socialist ideas.

It is not just by chance that in Bombay, Ranchi and elsewhere the communal organisations have been making open attempts to divide the working class on communal lines and destroy trade union solidarity.

Smt. Indira Gandhi's chin-up acceptance of the challenge of communalism is undoubtedly heartening, but it will amount to little

unless the administrative machinery is purged of the communal elements that have infiltrated over the years, firm action is taken to put down poisonous propaganda by the communal organisations and their publicity sheets, and all forward-looking parties and individuals are swiftly mobilised at all levels to give a determined fight to reaction in all its forms.

Let us remember Nehru's warning which is as relevant today as it was when it was uttered. "Communalism bears a striking resemblance to the various forms of fascism that we have seen in other countries. It is in fact the Indian version of fascism. We know the evils that have flown from fascism. In India we have known also the evils and disasters that have resulted from communal conflict. A combination of these two is thus something that can only bring grave perils and disasters in its train."

The warning is timely in the wake of Ahmedabad, Chaibasa and Bhiwandi. But the struggle against the fascist threat posed by the Jana Sangh, RSS, Shiv Sena and the rest has now to be much more broadbased than it ever was in Nehru's time; the roots of the poison tree have to be cut and destroyed, and this calls for a dedicated national effort.

In this task, the Prime Minister obviously has the capacity to provide the leadership, but what we need are leaders in every village and every mohalla who will make the elimination of the communalists their first task. Let this battle against communalism be turned into a massive national crusade as the nation pays its homage to the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru this week on the sixth anniversary of his passing away.

How Far Have We Deviated From the Ideology of Our Constitution?

S. V. Narayanan

Constitution day on November 26, similar to other days of national importance, has become another day of ritualistic celebration without much critical introspection. Even though the Indian Constitution was adopted in principle on November 26, 1949, the majority of its provisions were formally adopted on January 26, 1950, to commemorate the declaration of complete independence or purna swaraj by the Indian National Congress on January 26, 1930.

The significance of Constitution Day is not in the explicit ritualistic reverence to the supreme legal document, but in critical introspection of our progress in fulfilling the basic ideology of our Constitution. The constitution makers' clarity of thought in creating a just society is clearly reflected in the founding philosophy of our Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly debates show the commitment of its members in giving life to the idea of India in an inclusive manner based on the principles of social justice and democracy. The unique nature of Indian nationalism, as highlighted by historian Ramachandra Guha, is not based on any single religion or language, as in European counterparts. That shows the inclusive nature of Indian nationalism overcoming the conflicting social identities to create a political citizenship for the overall development of the nation. The Constitution and its ideology have laid a strong foundation for such an inclusive nation respecting the

differences and strengthening social justice in the newly independent nation.

Ideology of the Indian Constitution

Ideology could be defined as a set of ideals or beliefs, which forms the basis of the economic or political system. Ideological beliefs not only give hope for a better society, but also recognise / accept the existing inequalities in society for its people to introspect about their progress in the future.

Even though our Constitution is a lengthy document, its ideology is well entrenched in its preamble, revealing the nature of the newly independent nation. The ideology in the preamble not only declares our freedom, but lays a strong foundation for a society based on equality, justice and liberty. The Objectives Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1947, is almost reflected in the preamble of the Indian Constitution. It clearly lays down the path to be taken by the future Indian state to create a strong, united and inclusive country, eliminating all forms of discrimination.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

And to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this 26th day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION."

* words' Socialist and Secular were inserted by the 42nd amendment in 1976.

The Constitution adheres to principles of social justice with a strong moral foundation. These foundations lay down the contours for all objective legal codes to be enacted and followed by the independent state. The Constitution weaved a fine balance between social justice and liberalism by following the path of social liberalism as its ideology.

Social Liberalism

Classical liberalism, which insists on minimum interference by the government, considers protecting the freedom of the individual as a core political value. Limited government, following the laissez-faire economic policy which emerged after the industrial revolution, played a vital role in the development of capitalism in Western countries.

Based on the ideas of John Locke, Adam Smith, David Ricardo and others, classical liberalism was critical of the welfare state, as it interferes with the functioning of free market. The economic downturn in capitalism in the beginning of 20th century led many Western governments to move towards social liberalism, where the government plays an important role in addressing the economic and social evils of the society as a consequence of the development of capitalism in areas such as health, education and poverty alleviation.

Social liberalism as an ideology acknowledges the market economy, but at the same time expands the role of government in reducing social inequities based on principles of social justice, for the smooth functioning of capitalism.

Thus, the principles of justice, equality, and liberty, along with secularism, form the core components of the constitutional ideology of social liberalism in India. The founding fathers of our Constitution envisaged an egalitarian society based on such ideal principles, but does our contemporary reality really reflect these values?

Reality Check

The founding principles of our constitutional ideology are mutually interdependent, making them indivisible and inalienable rights of every citizen. Justice—social, economic and political—lay the foundation for other principles of equality and liberty to be realised in an effective manner. Justice not only gives equal opportunities but also means positively treating unequals in an unequal manner to create equality. This basic social liberal ideology laid a strong foundation

for all positive discrimination intervention by the government. The protection of individual rights along with social justice can be understood clearly from the preamble of the Constitution.

Inequality

Persistent and increasing inequality in a society shows that the principle of economic justice has failed to realise its objectives. Further, the denial of economic justice extends its influence in denying justice in the political and social domain as witnessed in contemporary India.

According to Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel in their research paper titled Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj, income inequality in India is at its highest in the last 100 years. The top 1% had around 21% of total income in the 1930s, which reduced to 6% in the 1980s and again reached 22% by 2014—the highest ever level. Since the 1980s, when we first began adopting a neoliberal political economy (officially in 1991), the income share of the bottom 50% has considerably reduced and the top 1% has increased.

Further, according to Anand and Thampi, in Recent trends in Wealth Inequality in India, the top 1% of India had 28% of the country's wealth by 2012, which was an increase of 11 percentage points since 1991. The same period saw the decline in the share of the bottom 40% from 5% to less than 4%.

The Report on Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (2015-16) by the Ministry of Labour and Employment showed that at the all-India level, around

77% of households did not have a single regular / salaried person. More than 67% of households had an average monthly earning that did not exceed Rs 10,000. Within the labour force, more than 71% were not eligible for any social security benefits. Only 1.8% of the labour force in India earned more than Rs 50,000 a month and 0.2% earned more than Rs 1,00,000 a month. This data shows the extent of vulnerability and inequality among the working population of India.

Global Hunger Index

India occupied the 100th position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017, out of 119 countries. In Asia, only Afghanistan and Pakistan are behind us. The report further stated:

At 31.4, India's 2017 GHI score is at the high end of the 'serious' category, and is one of the main factors pushing South Asia to the category of worst performing region on the GHI this year, followed closely by Africa south of the Sahara.

The shocking aspect of the hunger index is that we were at the 55th position in 2014 and now we are at the 100th position within three years. The worrying aspect is that the totalitarian regime of North Korea and war-ravaged Iraq are ahead of India in the index. The high malnutrition level among children, women and other vulnerable groups contribute towards our declining position in the GHI. This further shows how economic and social justice is being denied to a majority of the population, violating the basic ideology of our Constitution.

Discrimination against Minorities

The Sachar Committee report (2006) on the social, economic and

educational status of the Muslim community in India revealed the institutional discrimination Muslims face in India. The literacy rate of Muslims was far below the national average and only one out of 25 students in undergraduate courses and one out of 50 in postgraduate courses in ‘premier colleges’ were found to be Muslim. Muslim representation in Civil Services was only around 3%. Muslim children are at greater risk of being underweight or stunted compared to other communities.

Banks in Muslim areas are marked as ‘negative’ or ‘red’ zones indicating that giving loans is not advisable—limiting their institutional support. Poverty among Muslims is high and even basic facilities like post offices were not operational in Muslim areas. Such institutional discrimination has kept the Muslim community vulnerable, causing them to turn to religious support systems.

The professor Amitabh Kundu committee, formed in 2014 to review the implementation of Sachar Committee recommendations, did not find much improvement in the institutional support system for Muslims. This is against the foundational ideology of justice in the Indian Constitution.

Privatisation of Educational Institutions

The constitutional ideology mixing social justice with individual liberties came under threat after we formally adopted the neoliberal political economy in 1991. The state slowly started moving away from positive intervention through the creation of support systems for vulnerable groups. Privatisation of the public sector has excluded the

hitherto deprived communities from the benefits of social justice.

The table below shows the surge in private institutions of higher learning in India between 2011 and 2017. Since private educational institutions do not follow the system of reservations, a majority of minority, SC/ST and Muslim students are excluded from any meaningful participation.

Percentage of Private Institutions of Higher Education : All India

Year	University	Colleges/ Recognised Institute	Stand-alone Institutes	All Institutions
2011-12	29.25	72.58	78.73	60.19
2012-13	31.86	73.77	76.91	60.85
2013-14	33.19	74.59	75.66	61.15
2014-15	35.36	76.09	75.07	62.17
2015-16	36.47	76.69	75.18	62.78
2016-17	38.74	76.86	74.44	63.35

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) – 2011 to 2017

Percentage of Teachers in Higher Education Institutions : All India

Year	SC Teachers	ST Teachers	OBC Teachers	Muslim Teachers
2011-12	7.07	2.01	23.65	3.07
2012-13	6.71	1.92	23.28	2.95
2013-14	6.81	2.01	23.64	3.17
2014-15	7.12	2.1	24.16	3.3
2015-16	7.43	2.09	25.53	3.36
2016-17	8.35	2.2	32.16	5.09

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) – 2011 to 2017

Need for Course Correction

The founding ideology of the Constitution, combining liberalism and social justice in the form of social liberalism, is slowly being defeated as we have already deviated from it considerably. The ‘justice’, ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ in the preamble are slowly losing relevance and have become mere ritualistic words for the ruling class during times of celebrations like Constitution Day.

The whole ideology of social justice has been defeated by the privatisation of higher education institutions, as we see lower participation of vulnerable groups as teachers in these institutions. Instead of the welfare state envisaged and established by the constitution makers, the old society based on hierarchical division has become dominant.

Critical introspection clearly shows how we have failed miserably to live up to the expectations of our founding fathers. The further weakening of constitutional values is going to threaten the idea of India that evolved from a complex mix of cultures, religions, regions etc, with social justice, secularism, liberty and equality as its core principles.

Courtesy : The Wire

India-Pak Ties Can Get Worse

A. G. Noorani

The current stand-off between India and Pakistan is highly troublesome, and needs to be stopped — at once. For, it is accompanied by gruesome violations of the ceasefire on the Line of Control in Kashmir as well as the International Working Border. The language used in the verbal spat itself is menacing enough. Things can get out of hand.

On February 12, India's defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "I wouldn't certainly set a timeline (for action against Pakistan). But will say this; Pakistan will pay for this misadventure. I repeat; Pakistan will pay for it." She was referring to a militant attack two days prior at the Sunjuwan military station in Jammu, in which five soldiers and one civilian were killed, and 11 persons including an Army major were injured.

The very next day, Pakistan's defence minister Khurram Dastgir warned, "Any Indian aggression, strategic miscalculation or misadventure, regardless of its scale, mode or location, will not go unpunished and shall be met with an equal and proportionate response." The precision in the language reflects deliberation. Home minister Rajnath Singh and Indian Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat are as belligerent.

The home minister said on January 21, "India's image in the world has become that of a strong nation and we have given a strong message to the world that we can attack our enemies not only on our soil, but also in their territory." A few days earlier, Gen. Rawat said, "If we will have to really confront the Pakistanis, and a task is given to us, we are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their nuclear bluff."

This is a reckless charter. True, neither the United States nor the European Union is as involved in South Asia as it was 15 years ago, when they issued a joint statement in March 2003 laying down a programme for a ceasefire followed by a summit; hence the ceasefire understanding in November 2003.

It is easy to begin an armed conflict of whatever dimension. It is difficult to predict, however, how it will end. Gen. Rawat should read Barbara Tuchman's classic on the origins of the First World War, *The Guns of August*, published in the same year as the Cuban Missile Crisis. In July 1964, Henry Kissinger annoyed the strategist Herman Kahn as he unfolded to a seminar at Harvard his elaborate theory of escalation, which formed the subject of a huge and useless tome. "Herman, you know our leaders. Will they have the time or capacity to understand that steps of the (escalation) ladder you describe?" Kahn was speechless. Do our leaders understand better?

On January 21, a former Indian intelligence agency chief said, "There seems to be no strategy at all. The situation is getting out of hand. The ceasefire is as good as over."

Shelling across the LoC exacts a huge toll on lives; almost entirely of the poor. Since 2016, when the militant leader Burhanuddin Wani was killed, there has been a steep rise in the young joining the militancy. "The number of local terrorists in Kashmir is at an all-time high," one correspondent reported.

On January 14, Gen. Rawat made a pertinent point when he stated, "The political initiative and all other initiatives must go simultaneously hand-in-hand, and only if all (emphasis added) of us function in synergy can we bring lasting peace

in Kashmir". Successive Srinagar-based 15 corps commanders have said precisely that.

Recently, the national security advisers of India and Pakistan, Ajit Doval and retired Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua, met in Bangkok and Russia. But the directors-general of military operations of both countries last met in December 2013. The need of the hour is a formalisation, in writing, of the ceasefire understanding of November 2003.

Given the will, the problems are not insoluble — provided that the Doval doctrine is discarded. Pakistan's lapses should be discussed at the conference table. It cannot be "brought to heel" by mindless confrontation and attempts to isolate it internationally. None of the other states joins in this sport.

Meanwhile, an all-time low is reached in the refusal of visas to pilgrims who wish to go to the dargahs of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz in Ajmer and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in New Delhi. What about the Pakistan-India agreement on the maintenance of places of religious worship signed in Karachi on August 4, 1953? The demolition of Babri Masjid violated paragraph 1.i (protecting, maintaining and preserving the sanctity of places of worship), while the refusal to grant visas to pilgrims violates paragraph 1.ii (increased facilitation for pilgrims on auspicious days). This is apart from the 1974 Protocol on Visits to Holy Shrines. Last December, 192 pilgrims were refused a visa to attend the urs of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.

Can things get worse than this? Of course they can — which is why we must stop the drift now.

Courtesy : The Asian Age



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Ramchandra Guha**

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How Significant is Change in Tripura

Mrinal Biswas

The theme song for Bharatiya Janata Party in Tripura election campaign was “Let’s change” (Chalo paltai) and massive victory for the party prompted its leaders to attain “golden age” through poll victories in States where the people will go to the hustings this year itself.

When the political observers appear confused as to the factors contributing to the rout of the formidable ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the Tripura poll and the total collapse of the grand old party of Congress along with Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamul Congress it is a moot point whether there is a tectonic shift in the voters preferential treatment in this remote eastern part of the country.

Tripura has only Assam and Mizoram as State neighbours and is part of Seven Sisters of north-east India it is mostly surrounded by India’s neighbouring country of Bangladesh. Since independence Tripura’s mostly tribal population was overwhelmed by influx of Bengali Hindus post-partition from East Pakistan which trend continued even after the latter became Bangladesh. Princely State

of Tripura’s sons of the soil tribal population turned minority in the face of ever increasing Bengali Hindus.

But then this north-east State became another haven for Bengali linguals the tribals speaking the same language with a different accent, though. What is important is that Bengalis came to dominate the Tripura politics in course of time and more importantly politics of West Bengal became the standard bearer of Tripura’s political life. After parts of India became Pakistan and emergence of East Pakistan Tripura was inherited by Congress from the British Raj. Tripura Congress though dictated by Congress High Command was more inclined towards Congress leadership of West Bengal. As the Communist Left’s incessant challenge ultimately overturned West Bengal’s Congress rulers Tripura soon became another Left bastion which has now been, unexpectedly if not unimaginably, hit out by BJP whose negligible presence in the east was broken quite recently by its Assam poll victory.

It is a matter of conjecture whether the tide is turned enough to

have a reverse influence of Tripura politics that will take over West Bengal to such an extent as to upset prospects and calculations of grand old party, Left and regional forces. BJP's stunning Tripura victory will have encouraged its leadership to see a wave in favour in Bengal but it is not exactly the position that Bengal is up for grab by the saffronites. BJP successfully cultivated the idea of change in the Tripura election time. But people were not told whether change would bring the State forward or harp on old values and practices.

How far Tripura will come out of the shadow of West Bengal will depend on whether the Bengalis are becoming inclined towards BJP more than their long-developed secular and Left orientation. Recent byelection results in Bengal have

shown BJP is steadily occupying the opposition space to the discomfiture of opponents of Mamata Banerjee's ruling Trinamul Congress government. This and the Tripura results have encouraged BJP chief Amit Shah, with explicit support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to take a stake in the electoral battles ahead in West Bengal.

The Bengali mindset strongly embedded in Left politics has seen eclipse of proclaimed progressive political combination at the emergence the phenomenon one-person, one-party of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress. The Left had been dethroned in this decade and a right-wing tendency, however insipid, has set in. BJP will definitely try to capitalize the situation. BJP's golden period will come if Bengal falls in to the saffron

juggernaut however the stigma of it being a reactionary force stuck to BJP.

BJP by propagating programmes of good governance and development is careful to remove this stigma. But its tendency to look back for inspirations with Hinduvta, ancient Hindu science and the like will keep it in the reactionary bracket of political dispensation. As Asoka Mehta said in his Democratic Socialism "you can divide them (political forces) into reactionary and progressive movements from the fact the former have their golden age in the past, the latter place their golden age in the future." It rests with Modi-Shah duo to clarify what kind of golden age they want to bring in to West Bengal and India.

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An Avoidable Operation

Kuldip Nayar

THE British government has rejected a petition by the Sikh community in London to make public all papers concerning to Operation Bluestar. Mrs Margaret Thatcher, then British Prime Minister, was close to the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and reportedly helped her to plan the Indian military action at the Golden Temple in Amritsar between June 1 and 8, 1984, to oust militant religious leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his followers from the Harmandir Sahib Complex.

It has now come to be known that one British officer had visited Amritsar on a reconnaissance and collected all the data which came

in handy to the Indian army when it launched the attack on the militants holed up at the Golden Temple. It is now realized that the Operation was not necessary and that Bhindranwale could have been removed from the Akal Thakt through some other methods.

But even after 34 years, the public does not know why the Operation was undertaken. True, Bhindranwale had converted the entire Golden Temple complex, including the Akal Thakt, into a state within the state and fortified it. He became an authority and issued orders to the Sikh community. The Operation which followed led to the use of tanks. I recall the then Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi was woken up at midnight because the first batch of Indian forces had to retreat in the face of well-planned gunfire by Bhindranwale and his followers.

Even today, one can see the bullet marks on the walls of Harmandir Sahib. The military action by the Indian government annoyed the liberal Sikhs who consider the Golden Temple as their Vatican. In the absence of information which the British government has, it is difficult to know why the Indian forces had to enter the Harmandir Sahib at the first instance.

The military action led to an uproar amongst the Sikhs worldwide and the increased tension following

the action led to assaults on members of the Sikh community in India. Many Sikh soldiers in the Indian army mutinied while many Sikhs resigned from the armed and civil administrative office. In fact, some Sikhs even returned the awards and honours they had received from the government.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi was conscious that the Sikh community would retaliate. She said in a public meeting in Bhubaneswar that she had an intuition that she could be killed. But what she contemplated was necessary in the interests of government's authority. What happened to her four months later was tragic. She was assassinated by Sikh security guards in what was viewed as an act of vengeance. And it did not stop there. More than 3,000 Sikhs were killed in the ensuing anti-Sikh riots in Delhi alone according to an official statement.

I was a part of the team which comprised General Jagjit Singh Aurora, Air Marshal Arjun Singh and Inder Gujral, who subsequently became Prime Minister. Our finding was that the army operation was not necessary and that Bhindranwale could have been dealt with otherwise. We said so in our report to the Punjabi Group which had deputed us to probe into anti-Sikh riots.

P.V. Narasimha Rao was the then Home Minister and he was equivocal when our team met him to appraise of the government action. All other people including the witnesses whom we spoke to made a case where it was clear that the government had overreacted. The anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and neighbouring areas could have been suppressed immediately. But the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, did not deliberately ask either the

police or the army to intervene. He reportedly remarked that the riots were spontaneous. He even reacted by saying that when a big tree falls, the earth is bound to shake.

Now three decades after the army stormed the Golden Temple, the freshly declassified British documents show that the UK gave military advice to India on retaking the temporal seat of Sikhs, kicking off political storms in both London and New Delhi. The British government has ordered an inquiry into the revelations and the BJP has demanded an explanation.

However, intelligence officials involved in operations against Sikh extremists in Punjab during the period and military commanders who led Operation Blue Star have denied using any British plan. They said as far as they were concerned, the entire operation was planned and executed by the Indian Army.

The revelation is contained in a series of letters declassified recently by the National Archives of UK after the 30-year secrecy rule. In an official communication dated February 23, 1984 titled 'Sikh Community', an official with the foreign secretary told the private secretary to the home secretary that "the foreign secretary wishes him to be made aware of some background which could increase the possibility of repercussions among the Sikh communities in this country."

"The Indian authorities recently sought British advice over a plan to remove Sikh extremists from the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The foreign secretary decided to respond favourably to the Indian request and, with the prime minister's agreement, a SAS officer has visited India and drawn up a plan which has been approved by Mrs. Gandhi. The

foreign secretary believes that the Indian government may put the plan into operation shortly," the letter said.

The letter went on to say that if the British advice were to emerge in public, it could increase tension in the Indian community in Britain. However, there is no evidence in any of the communication if the British plan was finally used for the June 1984 operation.

In London, the UK government said it will investigate its involvement. "These events led to a tragic loss of life and we understand the very legitimate concerns that these papers will raise. The prime minister has asked the cabinet secretary to look into this case urgently and establish the facts," a UK government spokesperson said in a statement.

Operation Blue star papers have to be thrown open to the public because as the time passes, one feels that it was an operation which should not have taken place.

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Wild Advocates of Privatization of PSBs

Pannalal Surana

After the PNB scam of over Rs 11,000 crores perpetrated by Nirav Modi came to light, a high pitch chorus is being sung by a few industrialists and columnists like Tavleen Singh and Meghnad Desai. (vide Indian Express, 25-2-2018).

The former can be taken as representative of the protagonists of Free Trade. It is worthwhile to discuss her arguments in detail. In the first place, she says, when such exposures come to light, only concerned minister or the government as a whole is taken to task while the officers, who are real authors of the misdeed remain faceless. Why does she say so? Generally, in such matters, names of the officers also appear in the press.

It is true that frauds are committed because some officers collaborate. But the fact remains that the prime movers are the industrialists. Those who want to make quick money conceptualise an illegal deal and lure greedy officials in the establishment. Advocates of free trade should ponder over the problem of how to tame greedy and unscrupulous enterprisers and persuade them to follow rules of the game and abide by law.

Further she says that such misdeeds are committed because the banks happen to be public sector undertakings. This is wrong and a sweeping statement not borne by the facts. A few years back one private bank in the South had to be wound up. Examples from the U.S., the Mecca of Free Trade, abound in number. Just a decade back, in

2008 to be precise, five private financial institutions went down. A few days after, 158- years old bank called Lehman Brothers pulled down shutters. Next in line was the A.G. Insurance that declared bankruptcy. The whole world was thrown into a whirlwind. What those first five banks did? They had lent large sums for house building. Then, they traded the mortgage deeds in the money market. A huge balloon of credit made up of innumerable "bubbles" flooded the economy. When purchasers of the derivatives tried to get real money from the mortgagors, the latter expressed inability to pay. Consequently, all those mountains of derivatives became trash. Banks could not pay back money to the legitimate depositors. So many people lost their lifelong savings. The banks, in their turn, stopped cash credit advances to the industries which had to lower or altogether stop production. Workers lost jobs and income. So the demand for goods in the markets slumped. Imports were cut. Many European and Asian countries, including China and India, lost export market. So the workers there lost jobs. Does not the veteran journalist like Tavleen Singh know all this?

Any person can realize how important it is to regulate the financial system which is, by nature, frail. It is cashless. So it can be easily manipulated. That is why regulating authority has to remain vigilant all the time.

Tavleen's statement that some bank officers are corrupt is obviously

valid. But why did the pious private enterprisers join hands with those sinful officers to commit frauds and cheat the poor depositors of the banks? Admittedly the corrupt officers excrete dung, but why the highly educated and religious-minded enterprisers stoop so low to eat it?

Tavleen's inference that officers serving only in public sector are prone to become corrupt but not those in the private sector is ridiculous. Does she not know that a number of officers of Satyam, Sahara and Kingfisher had indulged in bad practices?

One may say that it is easier to fire a corrupt official in private sector, but very difficult in public sector. Difficult yes, but not impossible. Public sector undertakings are more exposed to public scrutiny. There is CAG. There are stake-holders like depositors and the workers. There is Parliament, And there is the Media. Any day PS are more accountable than the private ones.

Friends like Tavleen Singh and Meghnad Desai should take note of the fact that it was only after nationalization that a large number of bank branches were opened in rural areas and agriculture and small industries started getting credit from the banks. And that has helped the nation to accelerate economic development in a more balanced manner.

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Freedom of Expression and Values

Perumalmurugan

In recent times, I have been thinking and talking about the issue of freedom of expression in the context of our traditional society. Our society has been constructed within strict caste divisions and Varna seclusions. I would like to share some of my thoughts on the freedom expression in a society so rigidly and conservatively bound by traditional/conservative values.

To be frank, I am not fully aware of the philosophy, studies and explanations about social values. Are customs and kahawats different from social values? A bit tough to answer. But customs and proverbs are certainly influenced by social values. That much I am sure. If we are asked to follow the footsteps of our ancestors without criticism, there lies the centrality of social values.

It is difficult to define what is social value. Values are known to be transferred from parents and elders to the next generation. This only explains how values have been protected; it certainly does not define or codify what are values. Even though I am unable to define strictly the concept of value, I am able to grasp what is this value. On whichever matter you are forbidden to raise questions, they are values. Wherever there is a prohibition for questioning—there lies some part of the value.

I would like to divide values into two types, one based on nature, and the other based on unnatural or artificial concepts.

Nature-based values describe the relationship between human life

and the ways of nature. There is a widespread belief that you should not insult time. Time here means the sun. Sun is the basis of all life. So in all regions, worshipping sun as a god is a traditional value. Living beings function only when the sun rises and gives light. So from very ancient time, this value has remained.

The sparrow comes and builds its nest in the roofing at the front of our house. House owners happily welcome it. They don't chase it away. It brings in and throws sticks, leaves and garbage. They clean them happily. It lays eggs there. Young sparrows are born. Till the sparrow family leaves on its own, they are allowed to live there safely. Why? There is a belief that if the sparrow comes and makes its nest, the family also will get a child. It is also believed that if the sparrow's nest is disturbed, the family also will get disintegrated.

There is a belief if the crow makes noise near the house, guests may arrive. The wife separated from the husband requests the crow to come and make noise near her home. She hopes that the crow's cry may bring her husband back. Crow is the best companion for humankind as compared to any other bird. Not a day passes without one noticing a crow. We don't sleep without hearing a crow's noise. The food we offer to the crows is considered to be eaten by our ancestors.

Such values provide protection to the sparrow and establish relationship with the crow. In some places, trees are worshipped as god.

Not even a small branch of the tree will be cut. If a big tree falls, people congregate and cry as if someone from their family has died. Death of cattle is also mourned and relatives come to express condolence. The values around sparrow, crow, tree, cattle, etc. establish the bond between mankind and nature.

These values are based on the five elements, namely land, water, air, fire and sky. There are many changes, destructions, new creations, etc. in such values. But they don't create much disturbance in human relationships. These changes are by and large accepted by people. But the values around which human beings are supposed to live in society are entirely different. Even a small violation creates great tension / disturbance among the stake holders. Questions against these values are fiercely detested. Values are treated as more important than human beings. There is no question of questioning these values. When there is no space for questioning, there is little space for freedom of expression.

One such value is the value based on the mother. There are hundreds of films made centering around the mother. They all treat the mother as goddess. Mother's word is Almighty's word. Aathichoodi in Tamil is a collection of social values. The first value listed in that booklet is: "Mother and father are your first gods." Values like "Don't disobey mother's words and there is no better mantra than father's instructions" come from the concept

of divine status for parents.

We should never disobey parents. They are our creators. Therefore, they have every right to guide us or dictate us. Mother and father are our first gods. We cannot argue with them. Such are the values regarding parents. I have a very simple question over this. The world of my grandparents was around ten miles, and that of my parents was about 20 miles. But being the first generation to get education, I have to travel hundreds of miles.

My mother was ignorant and afraid of the outer world. If the son travels to far off places, some untoward thing may happen to him; he may not return; without taking my permission, he may love and marry an outsider; etc. Such were her fears. She expected the son to cultivate their small piece of land and live before their eyesight. Mother was afraid of anything new. That may destroy their life. So be content with walking down the path known to us.

In my time, plenty of schools were created to impart education for all the oppressed people. The new generation from the centuries-old uneducated communities got the opportunity to read and write. But the parents were least interested to educate their children. Their doubts: "What is the use of education for the toilers and tillers; are they going to work as Collectors after education." Above all, the lurking fear is that the educated ward may not obey their words.

If the social value demands of me to obey the words of such a mother, it is but natural for me to raise questions on the said value. I did raise questions; a bit tougher questions. This ended up in several disputes between me and my mother. She tried to keep me under her thumb

by persistent abuses and intermittent cries. The plight of my mother at that time was really pitiable. My plight to face my mother and win her over was equally pathetic.

I used to save my pocket money and purchased books via the postal services. My mother opposed it severely. Relatives and fellow villagers gave multiple warnings to my mother: "If he reads too much, the boy will be spoiled. And he may go mad also." Another complaint was: "He wants to avoid farm work. Hence he finds an escape route through books." I struggled a lot to purchase books clandestinely. To keep them away from my mother's watch was an equally big challenge. Under these circumstances, if someone advised me not to disobey the mother's dictates, what should I do? After several fights and cries, she gave in and very reluctantly, with a heavy heart, allowed me to pursue my way.

She knows nothing about my education, college or the town where I stayed to study. So she has to listen to what I am telling about them. Only a person who knows something can tell it to another person who does not know. This is applicable in all fields. But our value saviours insist that the mother and father are the primary gods and we have to obey whatever they say blindly. Is this right? Now-a-days, private schools in Tamil Nadu glorify parents as gods. In the name of honouring parents, children are encouraged to wash their feet. In which age are we living? Is washing the feet of parents the way to show our respect to our parents?

Similarly, there is a value: "Words of the elders are like amrut (nectar)." So the youngsters have to accept the words of the elders—whatever they may be. The elders

have earned enough experience in life; their advice will help the youth. But there are various types of people. Only a few observe the different experiences properly and learn from them. Many people learn very little even if they live for 100 years. By and large, the elderly people feel proud of their younger days. They have utter contempt for the youth. They don't recognise that times are changing. What can the youth learn from such people? But our society insists that we must listen to elderly advice and follow it.

The values give an authority to the elders. That authority is to impose their views on youngsters. The way this authority is imposed on the youngsters by the elders is regressive and contemptuous. Elders have the right to address the youth singularly. The elders think the youngsters know nothing. And hence they indulge in long lectures compulsorily. We routinely see the youth desperately trying to escape from such ordeals. How many elders have the patience to listen for a few minutes about what the youth think on an issue? Youngsters just bend themselves before the elders to receive their sermons. How many youngsters have the freedom to express their opinion without hesitation before the elders? Freedom of expression stands before the elders with bent knees, folded hands and closed mouth.

Apart from the parents and elders, we have constructed similar values with regards to the teacher, the guru. Most of the castes were illiterates; hence the teacher who imparted education was kept on par with god. Our educational system also tells us that whatever is told by the teacher is Veda. Even if the teacher tells false tales, we have

to accept them. You cannot point out mistakes. If you do so, you are branded as indisciplined and labelled an outcaste. Ours, perhaps, is the only educational system in the world which thrives without questioning.

I wrote a few articles highlighting the unprincipled conduct prevailing among teachers. But the reaction I got was not about the conduct of the teachers. Many asked, "How can you write such bad things about teachers?" When we can write on every other section of the society, why should teachers be exempted? A few others questioned, "You are a teacher. Yet how can you write such damaging things about teachers?" I could write about bad things prevailing among teachers because I am a teacher and observe them closely. But till today, I am neither appreciated by the teaching fraternity nor by the general public. Because the value has constructed a demigod status for the teacher.

We have been given no freedom of expression by the parents, elders and teachers. This extends to many other fields. A dominating caste person might be very idiotic. But you are bound to listen to his words. With the master-slave relationship prevailing in the caste system, where is the scope for freedom of expression? Similarly, if you are a wealthy person, your words carry weight. But the words of the poor don't carry any worth. This extends to the persons holding power in the government. So our value system is full of upper stages and lower stages right through.

Our values do not allow a person to communicate normally / naturally with another person. Expression is only one way traffic. You can't object to parental advice. You have to listen to the elders. What teacher

says is Veda. You have to be a 'Yes Man' before your boss. Only the officer's words will stand in a sabha. It is immaterial whether the opinion is right or wrong; who is telling it is very relevant. We have very little space for expressing contrarian views. Even if you differ with another's opinion, you can't express it. You have to keep it within you. If you dare to express a differing view, you are disrespecting the strong and mighty. In the guise of giving respect to a fellow being, the value system prevents even a normal exchange of views among people. Only the free exchange of views can bring out different opinions. Differing opinions are the mark of a healthy debate.

As far as our society is concerned, there is no equality in expressing one's views. Dialogue between fellow beings is not possible. There is no issue-based debate. Logical debates are existing only in books, and are absolutely lacking in everyday life. Whenever the question of freedom of expression is raised, the value system brings in words like prestige, honour and respect to choke the throat of freedom of expression. All men are equal—this is the basic philosophy of democracy. But this philosophy is new to us. For generations, we have treated people unequally. And the corresponding values manufactured by us have sanctioned this inequality. Our talk about democracy is only in books. We practice just the opposite of democracy.

When we discuss about freedom of expression, we must first deal with the existing inequalities in practical life and the social values which sanctify such grinding and glaring inequalities. We should re-examine and re-investigate them. We should

place our questions before them. Natural debate must take the front space. Time-barred and outmoded values must be challenged and disobeyed. We must be prepared to change those sick and moth-eaten values. Then only can we create a minimum acceptable platform for the freedom of expression, the very root of equality.

(English version of the speech delivered at Lohia Academy, Bhubaneswar on February 24, 2018)

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The Tiranga of the Hindutva Bikers in Kasganj is Not Mine

Apoorvanand

Their tiranga is not mine. The tiranga that the bikers in Kasganj carried in order to thrust it in the faces of the Muslims who had assembled at Shaheed Abdul Hamid Chowk to unfurl the national flag on Republic Day is alien to me. This is not the flag I have grown up with. I do not know it and it does not look friendly to me. It is being wielded as a threat, a weapon of goons, the flag of a gang out to annex my very being. India belongs to its people. It does not annex them and I refuse to be annexed by any party or ideology.

The tricolour is now being used to mark territory and annex people who are already a part of the country. Just see the faces of those who wield this flag. They look like marauders. Assault units out to capture new territories and vanquish people. To make them submit to the diktat of those who claim that this flag belongs naturally and only to them and that others will be made to bow before it.

This misuse of the national flag has been going on for at least the past 20 years, that too by those who once warned that the three colours of the tiranga were inauspicious for India.

But then they decided to hide behind its universality and attack their enemies using it as cover. Their enemies are known. They are mainly Muslims and Christians.

They think that once they hold this flag, they have a right to passage: they can ask you to make way for their gang, ask you to vacate your shared spaces by planting the flag over it. You are not allowed to

question their right, their move.

This is what the BJP did in Karnataka in 1994. Their attempt to hoist the tricolour at the Idgah Maidan in Hubli that year cost six people their lives. You have to read this report by Saritha Rai, published in *India Today* on September 15, 1994 to see how what is happening today in Kasganj is part of a pattern. It is not new. It is a tried and tested strategy of the BJP to provoke violence and polarise Hindus against Muslims.

For the BJP in Karnataka, starved of an election plank, the Hubli Idgah Maidan dispute couldn't have come at a more opportune time.

The controversy stems from a dispute over the ownership of the 1.5-acre plot, with the Anjuman-e-Islam laying claim to it and the BJP saying it is municipal property. Actually, its current status, determined after prolonged legal action, is that the land has been licensed to the Anjuman, and that it is permitted to hold only prayer meetings there, twice a year.

The right of anybody to use the maidan for public purposes is still under consideration by the Supreme Court. But the BJP planned to hoist the tri-colour there on Independence Day its sixth attempt to do so.

On August 14, Hubli was sealed, a curfew clamped and police and Rapid Action Force personnel deployed. Said Chief Minister Veerappa Moily: "I'm not Kalyan Singh to close my eyes and allow violence to carry on." But although BJP leader Sikander Bakht was

arrested in Bangalore, Uma Bharati, MP, managed to sneak into Hubli and declared that "the flag will be unfurled at any cost".

On August 15, violence erupted as BJP supporters tried to march to the Idgah Maidan, defying curfew orders, to hoist the flag. State BJP leader B.S. Yeddyurappa and Uma Bharati were arrested, and the mob ran amuck.

The police opened fire killing five people and injuring about a hundred. Four days later, the BJP organised 'Moily Hatao' meetings all over Hubli. Violence broke out again when the police over reacted and opened fire, killing a woman.

Moily, seeing that his administration's image was taking a beating, threatened to invoke the dreaded TADA if the violence was not curbed. Tension spread to the communally-sensitive town of Bhadravati nearby, which witnessed group clashes a week later.

Meanwhile, BJP leader L.K. Advani predicted: "Moily's fate was sealed when his administration ordered firing on innocent patriots in Hubli."

Although the Anjuman has refused to comment on the issue, the BJP is doing all it can to keep the Hubli issue alive. Says Girish Karnad, noted actor and a member of the Citizens For Democracy group, which has prepared a report on the situation: "The Sangh Parivar has failed to communalise the issue only because the Muslims have been restrained."

This is largely true. A.M.

Hindasgeri, the Muslim legislator from Hubli city and minister of small scale industries in the Moily Government, says Muslims in Hubli have refused to be provoked by the BJP. "They know what the BJP is all about, it lost in the north and is now trying its luck in the south. The Muslims have decided that the matter will be decided in the Supreme Court."

The BJP, however, is not content to leave it at that. It has announced programmes in various districts to attract membership to the party. The BJP's parliamentary committee is also planning to visit the affected areas. With assembly elections barely three months away, the impact of these efforts on the BJP's future in Karnataka will soon be known.

Why did BJP leaders like Uma Bharti come all the way from Madhya Pradesh to lead the march to hoist the tricolour at the Idgah Maidan? Why this insistence on having it at a place which was the subject of a property dispute involving a Muslim organisation? The matter was in the Supreme Court. Even then, they thought it fit to lead a 'tiranga' march to wrest the ownership of the land from the Anjuman.

People have forgotten another yatra by another BJP stalwart of those days, now himself a forgotten man. It was in 1991 that Murli Manohar Joshi led a yatra with the aim of hoisting the flag at Lal Chowk in Srinagar. Read these extracts of a report about that yatra—again from the archives, published by India Today—to understand what these new tiranga yatras signify:

When BJP president Murli Manohar Joshi rolls out from Kanyakumari in a DCM-Toyota van on December 11, he hopes the wheel will turn full circle on the Ayodhya issue.

Because with its second yatra—called ekta yatra this time round—in less than two years, the BJP aims to establish its credentials as a party concerned about the unity and integrity of the country.

At one stroke, the party aims not only to usurp the Congress(I)'s permanent tenancy on national integration, but also provide gainful employment to those in the RSS parivar who are concentrating their muscle and lung-power on the temple construction.

By travelling through 14 states and unfurling the tricolour at the yatra's last stop, Srinagar, on January 26, Joshi feels he will underline the "Centre's total inability to handle the problem of terrorism and secessionism".

About two lakh volunteers are supposed to join Joshi when he reaches Srinagar, and in Madhya Pradesh, the party is enrolling members for a 'saffron brigade' to storm Kashmir... Advani highlights the importance of the event, saying: "The issue at stake is national unity." And once the yatra is on course and the hysteria spreads, the BJP prays the temple will be a thing of the past."

Then, as now, the aim is to bolster the fortunes of the BJP by generating aggressive nationalism among Hindus by fanning anti-Muslim sentiments.

The most recent drive to use the tricolour for sectarian purposes was when the present prime minister planned tiranga yatras all over India. Ministers, MPs and MLAs were ordered to tie a huge flag over a pole which was to be at least eight feet high on motorcycles and other motor vehicles.

For the last two years, we have been reading about the chief of the RSS going to Kerala to unfurl the

tiranga in schools. It is again part of their campaign to expand and capture new political territory.

We have seen young men in our mohallas speeding on roads without helmets, two or three crammed on the pillion, holding giant-size tirangas on roaring motorcycles. This was a common sight during the 2012 anti-corruption movement. It was a heady mix of aggressive crowd instinct and nationalism. Nationalism, of course, was only an excuse.

I also remember the ugly, obscene tiranga rally that the student wing of the RSS took out in the University of Delhi after attacking students and teachers at Ramjas College in February 2017. They made a huge, unending tiranga canopy and marched under it, raising threatening slogans. The tricolour had never looked so uninviting to me before.

Now this tricolour nationalism has been decentralised. After the experiments of Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharati, the BJP and other affiliates of the RSS know how to use it.

Many of us feel that we also need to take the national flag in our hands, to not let the RSS usurp it. But we don't need to do this. We don't need to legitimise all our acts by giving them a nationalist colour. When students protest for their rights or farmers fight for their claims, they need not do it in the shadow of the tiranga.

Not that we have not loved it. I recall my childhood when we eagerly waited for January 26 or August 15. We used to make tirangas of our own or get one from the khadi shop. The khadi one was considered to be more authentic. It was of human dimensions. Now, when I see tricolours of giant proportions

dwarfing me, I cannot bring myself to like it. I look away.

Suppose a gang comes with the tiranga and demands it be planted on my roof, would I like it or allow it? Definitely not. The tiranga is only superficially our national flag when used to embarrass, frighten or subdue an individual or community. When used in this way, it loses its essence. This is what the tiranga yatra in Kasganj was doing.

We need to say emphatically that the tiranga the RSS and its affiliates are shoving down our throats is not the tiranga which was given to us by our leaders in the constituent assembly.

Let us recall the words of Nehru when he proposed the tricolour as our national flag:

This Flag that I have the honour to present to you is not, I hope and trust, a Flag of Empire, a Flag of Imperialism, a Flag of domination

over anybody, but a Flag of freedom not only for ourselves but a symbol of freedom to all people who may see it.

And wherever it may go—and I hope it will go far—not only where Indians dwell as our ambassadors and ministers but across the far seas where it may be carried by Indian ships, wherever it may go it will bring a message, I hope, of freedom to those people, a message of comradeship, a message that India wants to be friends with every country of the world and India wants to help any people who seek freedom.

That I hope will be the message of this Flag everywhere and I hope that in the freedom that is coming to us, we will not do what many other people or some other people have unfortunately done, that is, in a newfound strength suddenly to expand and become imperialistic in design. If that happened that would

be a terrible ending to our struggle for freedom.

But there is that danger and, therefore, I venture to remind this House of it—although this House needs no reminder—there is this danger in a country suddenly unshackled in stretching out its arms and legs and trying to hit out at other people. And if we do that we become just like other nations who seem to live in a kind of succession of conflicts and preparation for conflict. That is the world today unfortunately.

Those who are stretching out their arms and legs and trying to hit out at Muslims and Christians should hear this message clearly. The flag they carry in their hands with so much aggression is not the flag we Indians adopted. We will not submit to them.

Email: katyayani.apoorv@gmail.com

Sridevi's Tragic Death Draws Attention to Role of Alcohol in Millions of Accidents

Bharat Dogra

Sridevi's extremely untimely death has again drawn attention to the role of alcohol in causing millions of tragic accidents every year. In the USA one person dies on an average every day in a bathtub or spa accident, and many of these accidents are related to alcohol.

According to the Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol and Addictive Behavior, alcohol has been found to have a role in 44 per cent of fatal road accidents. The possibility of a road accident increases by 3 to 15 per cent if the driver is drunk. Up to 50 per cent of motorcyclists who crash to death are likely to have been under the influence of alcohol.

Regarding non-fatal accidents, this encyclopedia tells us that alcohol is involved in 23 to 30 per cent of these accidents. In the case of fatal fire and burn accidents, alcohol was found to have a role in 46 per cent of such accidents.

In India researcher Dinesh Mohan has presented evidence showing that the role of drunken driving in road accidents may be much higher than what is revealed by the routine statistics. He writes, "In the absence of more detailed epidemiological data we can only surmise that the high rates at night could be due to higher speeds of vehicles when traffic volumes are

lower and/or higher frequency of driving under the influence of alcohol. Evidence for increased use of alcohol comes from a hospital study in Delhi where 29 per cent of the riders of motorized two-wheelers admitted to alcohol consumption before the crash. In Bangalore, a hospital-based study showed that alcohol was involved in 22 per cent of night-time crashes, and that 35 per cent of randomly checked drivers on the road at night were under the influence of alcohol."

In addition alcohol related accidents are known to be high at several entertainment events and on several festive occasions.

Email: bharatdogra1956@gmail.com

Gandhiji and Socialist

Conversations between D. S. Nagabhushana and Ramchandra Guha

**From D.S. Nagabhushana,
Shivamogga (Karnataka)**

October 9, 2017

Dear Sri Ramachandra Guha,

I am D.S. Nagabhushana, the one who asked you a bunch of questions in Kannada in the beginning of the afternoon session of your *Neeenasam* (Heggodu) programme. You did not answer all of my questions, may be because they were not fully and properly translated to you. You did answer my question on Gandhi's conversations with Congress Socialists, but your answer I found was not based on facts. You said that Socialists were not even in the outside of the outside circle of Gandhi and hence Gandhi could not have had any conversation worth noting. To rebut your argument, I asked you if you know that Gandhi had proposed JP for Presidentship of the Congress party. But you asked for evidence! I could have also asked in turn for evidence for all the points you made in your talk delivered in the morning. But I did not do so, because you were our guest and I did not want to embarrass you. More over, I did not want to occupy a large chunk of the question-answer session with my animated argument with you. As we saw, others also had a lot of questions.

Let me start with my questions I asked you that afternoon. Questions were:

1. Are there any particular reasons for choosing the four conversations you chose to introduce Gandhi for that audience?
2. Do you consider these four conversations as the most important conversations in Gandhi's life? I thought that the

conversations Gandhi had with himself on so many subjects are more important than those he had with others. As such, I mentioned the following as my selection of four important conversations of Gandhi's life: (i) The conversation he had with the texts of Ruskin, Thoreau, Tolstoy, which moulded the basic foundations of Gandhi's mind in terms of his reinterpretation of equations between religion and politics. (ii) The life long conversation he had with the traditional edition of Hinduism, which I always thought will serve as a strong basis for any attempt of reconciliation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. (iii) The conversations he had with Congress Socialists, particularly with JP, Lohia and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya at different points of time, on subjects of varied interests. (iv) The conversation he had with Dr. Ambedkar.

3. My last question to you was as to on what (philosophical) basis you argue or plead (in the absence of enunciation of Gandhi's rediscovery of 'true Hinduism', which he called *Sanatana Dharma* and which has been utterly misinterpreted as to mean 'puritanical' Hinduism) for a reconciliation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. That too after a reading of latter's last argument against Gandhi entitled 'What Congress and Gandhi did to Untouchables?' in which he has made a vicious personal attack on Gandhi. My last objection to your talk was that your opposition to Modi was very simplistic and I thought

opposition to Modi cannot stand alone on the fatigued and rusted legs of Secularism. It needs a more robust political explanation.

But you choose to reply extensively only on my question on conversations with Congress Socialists. You started praising the contributions of Socialists to modern Indian literary and cultural tradition and you also regretted that this Socialist stream should not have disappeared, as that stream of no extremes would have served a useful role in the present political scenario of extremes. But this presentation by you of this stream/movement which started in Gandhi's time and was continued by his followers should have prompted you to re-explore the kind of relations it had with Gandhi. I should say that your assertion that Socialists were not in outside of the outside circles of Gandhi is only a reflection of your squint-eyed reading of history.

You said that you have gone through all the thousands of pages of Collected works of Gandhi and you did not find even a shred of evidence in it of Gandhi's conversations with Socialists. But I can give you at least some evidence of this, even if it is not much. Please see the entry of May 27th of 1947. There is a big conversation (of about 3-4 pages) between a team of Socialists headed by JP with Gandhi. This is only one example that I, a very casual reader of history, have come across. But you being a professional, I hope you will find more of it. At the same time, may I remind you that the Collected Works of Gandhi cannot be the sole basis for understanding Gandhi's history. In particular, if you want to reassess and re-explore his relations

with Socialists, you will have to go through other literature also, like biographies and complete works of Socialist leaders like JP, Lohia, Ashok Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan etc.

When the Congress Socialist party was established in 1934, Gandhi welcomed it as he wanted a new fermentation in Congress movement and he had developed a fascination for the word 'Socialism'. He called it a beautiful word and said that he was a Socialist well before the Socialist Party was born. Yes, he had many a differences with socialists as long as they were following Marxism, mainly because of its non-acceptance of non-violence as a principle. But no sooner than the Socialist Party abandoned Marxism as a party creed (after its heavy defeat in the first General elections) Gandhi gradually developed a personal and a philosophical affection for Socialists, especially for JP and Lohia. It was in this context and with increasing disillusionment with the senior leadership of the Congress that Gandhi in 1947 proposed to Nehru to appoint JP as the Congress President for 1948. But Nehru, it is said, did not like the proposal and instead proposed Acharya Narendra Deva and ultimately settled for Babu Rajendra Prasad. For all the evidence you want in this regard you may go through the relevant pages of JP's biographies like *Unfinished Revolution: A Political Biography of Jayaprakash Narayan* by Ajit Bhattacharjee, *Jayaprakash Narayan: Prophet of People's Power* by Sudhanshu Ranjan (an official biography, which I am sure you will take as a source of 'official / authenticated evidence' to tell your official history, published by NBT), *Is J.P. the Answer* by Mino Masani and *J.P.: His Biography* by Allan and Wendy Scarfe.

In fact most of the rigorous

conversations Gandhi had during the freedom struggle on a host of issues of national importance such as non-violence, truth and God, the role of the state, technology, modern war and armament, partition, constitution of Constituent Assembly etc., were with the Socialists, as they were the only people who were intellectually equipped for such dialogues. Otherwise, most of his Congress disciples including Nehru were yes-men most of the time. To understand what kind of relationship Lohia had with Gandhi you have to go through the old issues of Harijan in which Gandhi republished many of Lohia's articles in Congress Socialist magazine, of which the Lohia was the editor. He even published the texts of arguments of Lohia in court rooms whenever he was tried for sedition and or for other activities like the Goa liberation struggle. After all, Lohia was the son of Hiralal, one of his close followers. Likewise JP was the son-in-law of Brij Kishore Prasad, another close follower of him.

You should go through the letters Gandhi has written and also published in 'Harijan' whenever Socialists were arrested and tortured. Especially, the letters in which he has described Lohia and JP as assets of the Nation and men of great intellectual ability, character and courage. I suggest you should go through some chapters of *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* by Rammanohar Lohia, if not all the pages of the complete works of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia edited by Mastram Kapoor and selected works of Jayaprakash Narayan by Bimal Prasad (ed.). May I also add here that it was Lohia whom Gandhi asked to accompany him for his Noakhali Yatra and his visits to refugee camps in Delhi which were like a warfronts during those days. May I also inform you that it was Lohia with whom Gandhi had a long personal talk with

his arm on Lohia's shoulder on 28th January 1948 as to how the latter had to prepare for a new role in national politics and invited him for further talks in this regard on that fateful day of 30th January.

I decided to write all this in detail to you, because you are a leading public intellectual today and people trust what you write and say and I don't want you to spread half truths, said perhaps not deliberately, but as result of selective reading because of one's social background and political leanings. May I also inform you here that your definition of history, as it heavily, if not wholly, depends on 'official' documents, suffers from its Western preoccupations and Gandhi did not like this way of history writing. He called it a bane of modern civilisation as it always tended to keep the wounds of history open and unhealed, with its hunger for excavating and publishing 'official' or authenticated documents.

I also made a remark about your inability to speak in Kannada even after about three decades of your living in Bengaluru, the capital of Kannada speaking State of Karnataka. Your alibi that you came to Bengaluru after the age of 40 and the luxury you mentioned that a man can live in Bengaluru without knowing Kannada are unbecoming of a public intellectual. Please don't mistake this remark for language fanaticism, which I don't endorse. It is a question of social connectivity and cultural rooting. The lack of these in your case is well reflected in your limited knowledge of Kannada intellectual tradition, which you flout many a times with authority in the middle of your general discourses. That is why the only figures you can quote are U.R. Ananthamurthy, Girish Karnad and D.R. Nagaraj in this regard.

Please remember that there are a quite a few others, many of them

excelling the three you mention, in their contributions to Modern Kannada intellectual tradition. Let alone the doyens Kuvempu and Shivaram Karanth, the exclusion of P. Lankesh, K.P. Purnachandra Tejaswi, K.V. Subbanna, Chandrashekhara Kambara, Devnura Mahadeva and H.S. Shivaprakash in any reference to modern Kannada intellectual tradition is a cultural offence! People like you whom I tend to call as pampered frogs of English dare to commit this 'offence' again and again with all the English diction at your command as your tool of dazzling and authority. According to me, an Indian who is not well versed with any one of the Indian languages cannot be a credible or a genuine intellectual. No doubt, Goddess Saraswati, as you said, has delivered English child also. But that child was delivered in England. As such English is an inorganic language for us and it can only be used for public purposes with the live support of cultural sensibilities of an Indian language.

I don't know how far I have succeeded in communicating my views and thoughts to you on your talk on that day with my limited knowledge of English. I hope you read this long letter of mine with the empathy it deserves. If you feel like writing back, please do.

With regards,

*D.S. Nagabhushana,
Shivamogga*

Reply by Ramachandra Guha

October 9, 2017

Dear Professor Nagabhushana,

Thank you for your mail. I am, as I noted at some length in my response to your questions at Heggodu, a great admirer of the socialist tradition, and mourn everyday its disappearance from public life in contemporary India. The fact that I included three socialists in my anthology of modern

Indian political thought—JP/Lohia and Kamaladevi—while including no Marxist should I hope persuade you of the high regard I hold the socialists in.

I am sorry that in your letter you resort to hyperbole and exaggeration. You claim that I said 'that Socialists were not even in the outside of the outside circle of Gandhi and hence Gandhi could not have had any conversation worth noting with them.' I would never make such an absurd statement. What I did say was this: that as far as personal proximity to Gandhi per se is concerned, the socialists were not in his inner circle. These are the facts:

- Gandhi's inner-most circle consisted of the ashramites, such as Mahadev, Mira, Vinoba, Kumarappa, etc.
- Gandhi's second closest circle consisted of Nehru, Patel, and Rajaji, referred to as his heart, hand, and head respectively, and indisputably his closest political associates.
- Gandhi's third closest circle consisted of his personal friends who were not in politics or in ashram life, such as Tagore, CF Andrews, Pranjivan Mehta, Polak, Kallenbach, etc.
- Gandhi's fourth closest circle consisted of the other leading Congressmen and Congresswomen of the day, such as Azad, Rajen babu, Kripalani, Pant, CR Das, Sarojini Naidu aetc.

The socialists may be placed, with other such groups, in perhaps the fifth such circle. He had interactions with them, of course, as he did with so many others. I spoke in my talk of his closeness to Kamaladevi. In 1934 he debated with Masani on the Congress Socialist Party. In the 1940s he praises JP and Lohia, and has personal affection for them, as indeed he does for hundreds of others who went to jail in the

movements of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. However, when you look at Gandhi's life in the round, and the entirety of his contacts and conversations he had, the four sets or circles I have outlined above were far, far, closer to Gandhi while he lived than any or all of the socialists.

Incidentally, in your letter, you write: 'But no sooner than the Socialist party abandoned Marxism as a party creed, after its heavy defeat in the first General elections, Gandhi gradually developed a personal and a philosophical affection for Socialists, especially for JP and Lohia.' The first General Elections were in 1952; Gandhi died in 1948. What are we talking about here?

I think being petty or pedantic is not necessary in this context. The facts are that Gandhi had many people who were far, far closer to him personally as well as politically than JP or Lohia.

That said, the socialists have often interpreted Gandhi creatively and constructively, both when he was alive and long after he was dead. The contributions of socialism to India, past, present, or future, do not depend on rewriting history to make them Gandhi's most intimate associates, which they were not.

With best wishes,

R. Guha

PS: I have deliberately restricted myself here to historical facts. The question of what my personal commitment is to Karnataka and to India is between me and my conscience, just as it would be for you, too.

Reply by DSN

October 9, 2017

Dear Sri Guha,

Thanks for your reply. At the very outset let me tell you that I have no illusions about the grade of proximity that Socialists had with

Gandhi. Whether they were inside the innermost circle of proximity or on the periphery of outer most circle is of least interest to me. The point I was trying to make on that day was that Gandhi had conversations of substantial nature with Socialists, particularly with JP and Lohia. Imagining or creating circles of proximity around Gandhi, I think, is too amateurish for an historian like you and it does not help in understanding the importance of conversations Gandhi had with others in his life. Because, such graphics—real or imaginary—mislead us in understanding Gandhi personality in all its contours. I have heard and read many stories to the effect that every man or woman who went to Gandhi felt as if he or she was the most important person for Gandhi. And also Gandhi himself has not betrayed anywhere any sense gradation in the quality of his relationships with others.

But that day you insisted again and again that Gandhi had no conversations of any kind or substance with Socialists (except with Mrs. Chattopadhyaya on non-political issues). The two reasons you gave for that were that Socialists were not even in outside of the outside circle of Gandhi and there is no evidence of it in Collected Works of Gandhi. I have given you an evidence. But you now say that you did not say it. In fact you repeated the phrase, 'outside of the outside circle', second time with a vocal emphasis! If you want evidence, you may get a copy of the recording of your talk from Sri K.V. Akshara. I have got it confirmed from my side, from two of my friends who were there at Heggodu. Anyway it is not that phrase per se that disturbed me, it was the vehemence with which it was uttered. Through that you were saying, I thought, nobody can question my authority on Gandhi and his history.

It was only in this context that I asked you as to whether you know that Gandhi once proposed JP for the Presidentship of Congress party. But you asked for evidence for that and I was perplexed at your (lack of) knowledge of history of the Congress of which, I thought, you were a champion. It was for this purpose also—giving the evidence you demanded—that I wrote the letter. But you are silent on this. May be you are checking it up. I hope you will change at least your assessment of the quality of proximity of Socialists with Gandhi, if not your assessment of the quality of conversations they had with him.

No use in regretting now at the disappearance of Socialist stream in India. It was half suicide and half a killing from outside by the protagonists of double-faced Nehruvian politics. They are still there in our midst in new avatars! In fact, nobody wanted Socialists in post-Independence India, because nobody wanted the real Gandhi, as creatively interpreted by Socialists, particularly Lohia. Lohia was a lone fighter and he died a sad man. No gain in calling him names now. He was what he was and he has to be acknowledged as such. He is liked by many intellectuals now because he is no more, but he still is intellectually fascinating! That is an Indian intellectual for you now! JP, the hero till Independence, turned out to be too good a man for anti-Nehru Opposition politics and he went away after 1952 elections only to come back in 1975 as saviour of Indian democracy. But as a political philosopher he was neither here or there. The Janata Party he helped to form was a fine example of this. But everybody amongst our intellectuals adores JP and has something or the other against Lohia! It seems, Nehru, father of Indian intellectual 'class' as such, still rules the Indian political mind! That was very evident in your

talk and reply to me that day. So your praises and recognitions, that you list in your mail, of Socialists, particularly of Lohia and JP look just academic.

Yes, there is a technical mistake in my argument as pointed out by you. It was my absentmindedness in that sentence formation that has caused it. What I meant there was that Gandhi moved more towards Socialists as they started realising the inefficacy of Marxism and that realisation was more pronounced after their defeat in 1952 elections, which found expression in the form of Lohia's address (titled later as *Doctrinal Foundations of Socialism*) in Panchmadi meet. I think this mistake in no way affects the validity of my argument.

I would have loved to hear your responses to some other points I had raised in my letter. Sad that you have chosen to either neglect them or called them as petty and pedantic. I wonder if they really are! However I respect your assertion that your commitment to Karnataka and India is a matter between you and your conscience; but with a remark that Kannada and Karnataka are inherently inseparable.

I am not a professor as addressed by you. I am a (volunt.) retired Station Director of All India Radio. For your additional information: I was in New Delhi during the Emergency years and was working in the News section! I translated JP's prison dairy in to Kannada and got it published it by a publisher friend in Mysuru. Dr. Nagaraj was my close friend (so also is Devanuru Mahadeva) and he was junior to me in my college days. He was doing his BA (Hon.) in Kannada literature when I was doing my MSc in Mathematics in Central College, Bengaluru.

With regards,

D.S. Nagabhushana
(To be concluded)

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**Gandhiji and Socialist
Conversations between
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Rahul in New Avatar?

Kuldip Nayar

RAHUL Gandhi is the new star on the Congress firmament. His mother Sonia Gandhi has passed on the baton to him and he is the party president. Rahul is the great grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru. Thus the office of Prime Minister, if and when the party is voted to power, remains with the dynasty. It has, naturally, given a sense of unity, important for a country of division and diversity.

Rahul Gandhi is not that young. At 48, he is the youngest president of the Congress so far. Whether he has answers to problems plaguing the country is yet to be seen. But he is considered very blunt. He has rightly attacked the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party and its mentor RSS for dividing the people. A combative Rahul specifically targeted the Prime Minister, taking on the issue of corruption.

However, the parties joining hands to attack the government on the killing of 39 Indians in Iraq is misplaced. These people were kidnapped four years ago. One wishes that Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj had used pressure by the West to have the Indians

released. The attitude of the West is not understandable. None of these has bemoaned the massacre. This underlined the contempt the whites have for the third world where the black and the brown live.

Similarly, the Congress has singled out the BJP for the massacre. Congress leaders blamed the government for the delay in announcing the killing. Shashi Tharoor, a Congress leader, criticised the government for giving "false hope" to the families of the hostages. "This is saddening for every Indian, rest I would ask why this information was delayed by the government, they should tell how it happened and when did they die. Also, the way government gave high hopes to the families was not right," he said.

So far, parliament's stand too is prosaic. Its debate reflects the division between the Congress and the BJP. Granted that they are polls apart, they should have come together for the action on the massacre. Sushma Swaraj's explanation that they wanted to be sure does not condone the inordinate delay. To condone this, she should have announced the government's

action. At present it looks as if it has pocketed the normal anger over the killings.

She was, however, right when she said that without concrete evidence, the government could not have announced the killings. "It is the duty of any responsible government to not declare anyone dead without confirmation. I have said earlier that I won't declare them dead without evidence, and won't wait for even a day once it's confirmed" Sushma Swaraj said.

"Are we going to play politics over dead bodies? I want to ask the Congress, why did they disrupt the House today?" Swaraj said. "I went to Lok Sabha with a heavy heart today and came out even more disappointed," she said in a press conference after her speech was disrupted in parliament.

Rahul Gandhi, I think, should open a new chapter. Unity or even a semblance of it is necessary to blunt the criticism on late announcement over the killings. Still there is no action. The Muslim countries could have been marshalled to condemn the massacre. We should have been able to convince our neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to come out on the killings.

In the meanwhile, Sonia Gandhi's dinner meeting with the opposition leaders was a step in the right direction to bring all non-BJP parties together to see that the BJP does not return to power in 2019. Congress chief spokesperson Surjewala, however, said the dinner was not organised for politics but for amity and friendship among opposition parties. "The intention is not political, but to hold discussions in a family-like setting at a time when the nation is confronted with a number of issues, including the

farmers' unrest," he said after the dinner.

Surjewala said at a time when the Congress was not allowing Parliament to function, it was obvious that leaders of various parties would get together to discuss the current political situation. Sonia Gandhi has consistently been pushing for broader opposition unity, urging political parties to set aside their local differences and get together in the larger national interest to keep the BJP out of power in 2019. In fact, Sonia categorically said that Narendra Modi would not return to power.

Apparently, this is just the beginning of all parties coming together to oust the BJP. CPI(M)'s Mohammad Salim said more comprehensive meetings will soon follow. Pawar has called another meeting of opposition parties later this month. However, the BJP hit out at the Congress after Sonia's dinner. "It seems Sonia and Rahul Gandhi doesn't believe in democracy. They speak outside on democracy but don't practise it in Parliament. Congress doesn't have democracy in its genes," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar said.

At the plenary session, the Congress president did not leave a chance to attack the BJP claiming that the Modi government colluded with India's biggest crony capitalists. He also accused the BJP saying that party was the voice of an organisation, while the Congress was the voice of a country. Yet he admitted that the Manmohan Singh government didn't meet the expectations of the people in its last few years. He said, "We are humans, we make mistakes. (But) PM Modi thinks he is not human but an incarnation of God."

Rahul, in his concluding remarks, said that the Congress will take the country forward. "To every youngster in India, we are your instrument. The Congress party belongs to you. We want to open our doors to your talent, your bravery and your energy. This country is struggling and it needs you," he added.

How far Rahul can remove the ills within the Congress is yet to be seen. People in the country await his action or functioning. The foremost thing is employment. Can he create two lakh jobs a year and increase the GDP to 11 percent to stave off the economic backwardness ?

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Worrying Silence Over Threats and Post-Poll Violence in Tripura

Apoorvanand

In view of the ‘violent’ language used during the Tripura campaign by BJP, post-poll violence comes as no surprise. What is worrying is the deafening silence of political parties, media and civil society.

Should it have been left to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) alone to condemn the violence that the ‘conquering army’ of the BJP and its allies is unleashing on the defeated CPI(M) in Tripura? Should it have been only the CPI(M) communicate that should have informed us about the attacks, burning and destruction of its offices and brutalisation of its members by the victorious BJP?

Why did political parties, media and our liberal intellectuals maintain a stoic silence in the face of the mocking threat of the BJP leadership to the former Chief Minister of Tripura Manik Sarkar, asking him to look for shelter in West Bengal, Kerala or Bangladesh?

The media, however, have reported with barely concealed glee that a statue of Lenin was bulldozed by the rampaging hordes of the jubilant members of the BJP. The BJP, on its part, has issued a terse statement asking its members to maintain restraint, failing which they would risk expulsion from the party. Is this warning only for the sake of public consumption? If not, why is the party justifying the demolition of the statue of Lenin and the attacks on the offices of the CPI(M) as outpouring of popular anger against the CPI(M)?

The reluctance of the media to

even verify the claims of the CPI(M) regarding the violence against it, leave alone report the acts of arson, violence and vandalism on their own, shows the depth to which the media have fallen. Is the violence so insignificant as to be ignored? Or, does the media think that it is natural? Is it not its duty to see if the CPI(M) is exaggerating or do its allegations have some truth? Or, does it think that the violence of the winners is justified to a certain extent and should therefore be tolerated?

The CPI(M), which has ruled the state for 25 years, has become so helpless that it can only appeal to the BJP not to indulge in violence in the wake of its sweeping victory. Its inability to even resist the attacks effectively shows that the party had no strength of its own, all it had was the power of the state machinery. The way it has given way to the violence proves that the party was nothing but a pack of cards and its cadre lacked conviction in their much trumpeted people’s ideology. Its record in West Bengal also shows that all it could achieve in its days of power was to mobilise around it a mass of lumpens, who deserted the party once power went out of its hands and it no longer had the fruits of power to distribute among the loyal folks.

Secondly, the fact that the CPI(M) has also indulged in violence in the past cannot be a justification for violence against it now. Democracy cannot survive revengeful and competitive violence.

The violence taking place against the CPI(M) should be a concern of all political parties and not only the one which is being targeted. Ideally, the parties should raise this matter in Parliament and take it up with the President of India and make it an all party issue.

The way the police in Tripura is treating the attacks also shows that like their counterparts in the other states, they are only slaves of the masters of the day. Till yesterday, they were servants of the CPI(M); today they are on the side of its oppressors. It seems that the police lacks a sense of it being an instrument of the state, with the duty to uphold the law and maintain order and harmony.

The election campaign of the BJP was, right from the beginning, violent in its form. Its threat to throw the CPI(M) into the Bay of Bengal and its call to the people of Tripura to throw away Manik for Hira was symbolically violent.

We need to be concerned that elections are now being fought as wars and the BJP does not hesitate to employ violent imagery to energise its cadre. It is as if it is on a ‘capture India’ drive, determined to use all means, fair or foul, to achieve this end.

The silence of the civil society, media and political class against the symbolic and physical violence of the BJP would prove to be costly for everyone and not just the CPI(M).

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Two Year Battle Fought From Prison : How Handcuffed Prisoners Defeated Biggest Imperial Power

Bharat Dogra, Jagmohan Singh and Madhu Dogra

Despite many limitations and adversities, after their imprisonment in 1929, Bhagat Singh and his comrades were able to inspire and mobilise millions of people for a greater participation in freedom movement by their courage and noble conduct. This period of the imprisonment of Bhagat Singh and his close comrades thus became one of the most glorious chapters in the freedom movement of India and indeed in all liberation struggles. During these two years April 1929–March 1931, Bhagat Singh and his close comrades can justly be credited with not only defying but even defeating the world's biggest imperial power from behind the bars. The more the colonial government tried to repress and torture them, the more reverence and affection they received in the entire country because of the courage and determination with which they faced the onslaught. This is how the colonial power, despite its vast reach and strength, was defeated by its handcuffed prisoners.

Much more than their own defence, Bhagat Singh along with B.K. Dutt and other comrades concentrated on focusing attention on rights of all political prisoners and issues concerning this. In the course of the various struggles of the freedom movement, a large number of political prisoners (mostly freedom fighters) were all the time being imprisoned, and the terrible conditions in jails posed a serious threat to their life and health, much

beyond the punishment to which they were sentenced by the legal system. Bhagat Singh and his close comrades went on fasts ranging from 60 to 95 days to demand the essential rights of all political prisoners.

Secondly, despite the fact that the colonial government was violating all norms of justice to rush up the case against Bhagat Singh and his close comrades, denying various essential rights to the accused, Bhagat Singh and his colleagues worked very hard to present their views and ideology in careful, well-thought-out ways. As a result it became increasingly clear to people that these revolutionaries had actually taken all care to save human lives in the Assembly Bombing Case. A terrorist generally tries to take the maximum number of human lives, whereas these freedom fighters had taken the maximum precaution to ensure that there was no loss to human life. This was evident in the way the bombs were prepared, and the way in which these were used. They had also given away their revolvers on their own to security-men, although they could have used these weapons to make good their escape.

It was becoming increasingly clear to the people from the conduct and statements made by the revolutionary prisoners that far from indulging in any indiscriminate violence, they had planned their activities very carefully keeping in view only the interests of their country and the freedom movement

for which they were willing to make any sacrifice and bear any hardship.

This became apparent from the courage and nobility with which they faced torture and beatings. They endured fasting for very long periods. Even as they saw their own health and the health of their dearest friends collapsing before their eyes, they did not surrender. Paralysis gradually spread from one part of the body of fasting freedom fighter Yatindranath Das to another part, and yet he did not break his fast. Prison authorities used to mix milk in the water, so that when they drink water the fast of the revolutionaries would automatically break. Instead of drinking this milk-mixed water, the thirsty prisoners simply broke the pitchers containing this water. When the authorities tried to force feed them in a cruel way, the prisoners resisted so much that they were injured. Ultimately, fearing loss of life due to force feeding, the jail officials had to discontinue these efforts.

As news of such acts of courage and determination spread, the support for these revolutionaries grew rapidly in the country, just as these young freedom fighters had hoped.

In a paper 'Bhagat Singh as Satyagrahi', (Modern Asian Studies 43, 3-2009) Neeti Nair has summarised the impact on the nation:

“Soon after news of the hunger strike spread, 30 June (1929) was observed as Bhagat Singh-Dutt

Day in a majority of districts in the Punjab. In Lahore, 10,000 people attended a meeting organised by the City Congress Committee . . . The Tribune reported that thousands of Lahorians had expressed their solidarity with the hunger-striking prisoners by fasting that day. . . . Bhagat Singh and Dutt were hailed as the honour of Punjab and Bengal. . . . Volunteers from the Congress and the youth leagues marched in procession with red banners carrying photographs of the hunger-striking prisoners bearing the inscription 'Dutt is at the point of death, all for country's honour sixteen young men are starving to death in your Lahore'. When the success of these processions unnerved the administration and Section 144 was suddenly imposed, Congress, Ahrar and Akali leaders including Sardar Mangal Singh and Zafar Ali Khan courted arrest by shouting the newly banned slogan Inquilab Zindabad along with members of the newly banned Naujawan Bharat Sabha. . . . The Satyagraha Committee won its first victory when the District Magistrate was forced to modify his order and release the defiant demonstrators. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha celebrated its victory by announcing that 21 July 1 be celebrated as All India Bhagat Singh–Dutt Day. The proposed programme included fasting, processions, the collection of funds for the Conspiracy Case Defence Committee and meetings to explain the purpose of the hunger strike and protest the treatment of political prisoners."

When fasting freedom fighter Yatindra Nath Das died on September 13, 1929 after a continuous fast of 63 days, "50,000 funeral processionists marched through Lahore. The

Central Legislative Assembly passed a motion of adjournment to censure the government for their policy regarding the hunger striking prisoners in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. . . . In the Punjab, Drs Muhammad Alam and Gopi Chand Bhargava resigned from the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Subhas Bose led the miles-long funeral procession in Calcutta; . . . Rabindranath Tagore was inspired to compose a song."

Later, "when Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to death, Bhagat Singh Appeal Committees were established in every district of the Punjab. At a Bhagat Singh day on 17 February 1931, colleges emptied out into streets, 15,000 people met in Lahore. Over 138,000 signatures seeking the commutation of the death sentence were sent by the All Punjab Bhagat Singh Appeal Committee to the Viceroy. In Amritsar, a public meeting organised by the Workers and Peasants Party demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners. The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee insisted that commuting the death sentence was an essential condition for peace."

Indeed the protest against the glaring unjust trial and death sentence even reached Britain where an appeal titled Stop the Lahore Executions! was signed by thousands of people. This appeal stated,

"We, the undersigned electors in Great Britain, emphatically protest against your sanction being given to the sentences, including three death penalties, passed by the judge in the Conspiracy Case at Lahore, India, after a trial, the character of which arouses the gravest misgivings.

"We are aware that the twenty-seven Indian youths accused

in this case were not only tried without a jury but by the special personal instructions of the Viceroy. Extraordinary regulations were adopted to conclude the trial without regard to the usual procedure.

"We regard the sentences passed under these circumstances as a violation of justice and demand that they should be disallowed by you. If the three death sentences are put into operation, we shall hold you and your Government responsible for sanctioning what amounts to the murder of political opponents under the guise of official judicial sentences.

"Without entering into the question whether there was any justification at all for the trial of the accused men at Lahore, whose conviction could only be obtained by such extraordinary means, we desire as strongly as possible to press our views upon you that there should be in all cases, without exception, an open, normal trial by a jury of the countrymen of the accused persons."

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Hindutva's Desperate Attempt to Use Bhagat Singh Against Love

Saurav Kumar

Love always elevates the character of man. It never lowers him, wrote the young revolutionary in a letter to his comrade in 1929.

Come Valentine's Day, and the Hindutva brigade—comprising of organisations such as the Bajrang Dal, Hindu Vahini Sena, Shiv Sena, etc.—start gearing up to unleash violence on young couples. In the past few years, hooliganism has marked this day in every big city and town. The main reason for this is the Hindutva brigade's view that Valentine's Day is against 'our culture and tradition'. However, this vicious campaign is not limited to 'tradition'. Fresh efforts are being made by these organisations to stop Valentine's Day celebrations by conducting an orchestrated propaganda linking Valentine's Day with revolutionary freedom fighter Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day.

It is well known that when it comes to twisting facts, appropriating icons of India's freedom movement such as Bhagat Singh, and even circulating fake news on social media, none can beat the Hindutva groups. For, playing around with historical dates and their significance to whip up hatred mainly works to the advantage of the divisive Hindutva agenda.

Take the case of Valentine's Day, which falls on February 14. On the eve of Valentine's Day in 2011, some people spread a rumour that the revolutionary freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged by the British

government on February 14.

The zealots went on to spread this misinformation through Wikipedia. As *The Hindu* reported, "The Wikipedia page on Bhagat Singh underwent many editing changes on February 13 and 14, Valentine's Day." The date of his hanging had been changed from March 23, 1931, to February 14, 1931. On Twitter, this misinformation spread like fire.

The attempts to change history did not end there. The Shiv Sena (Punjab) demanded the day be marked as a 'Black Day' because freedom fighter Bhagat Singh was hanged on this day.

Last year, this propaganda reached a crescendo when an education officer in Pune passed an order in a school, asking it to observe February 14 as the martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. The Solapur zilla parishad education officer (primary) Tanaji Ghadge also issued a letter to all block education and administrative officers, asking them to organise a programme in all schools under their jurisdiction on February 14 paying tribute to the martyrs of the freedom struggle, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, stating that this was because they were hanged on this day.

The self-proclaimed nationalists of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal and other Hindutva groups (followers of Veer Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar), are in a state of pain as they don't have an icon of their own who gave up his or her life or made sacrifices

during the freedom movement. What lies behind their zeal to oppose 'westernised love' by distorting history is an attempt to plug their own ideological and political deficit. This is why they have devised a new game plan since the past decade—to misinform people and instigate in them hatred against open-minded youth. In this process, the Hindutva forces are distorting history to hijack the heroes of the freedom struggle, particularly, young revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, by portraying them as agents of Hindu Rashtra.

The whole world knows that the death warrant for Bhagat Singh was issued on October 7, 1930, and he was hanged on March 23, 1931.

There is, of course, a wider irony to the Hindutva groups' disinformation campaign. In a letter to Sukhdev dated April 5, 1929, Bhagat Singh wrote, "Love elevates the character of an individual".

You asked me one thing, whether love ever proved helpful to any man. Yes, I answer that question today. To Mazzini it was. You must have read that after the utter failure and crushing defeat of his first rising he could not bear the misery and haunting ideas of his dead comrades. He would have gone mad or committed suicide but for one letter of a girl he loved. He would become as strong as any one, nay stronger than all . . .

As regards the moral status of love I may say that it in itself is nothing but passion, not an animal passion, but a human one – and very

sweet too. Love in itself can never be an animal passion. Love always elevates the character of man. It never lowers him, provided love be love.

But the insane hatred against Valentine's Day being whipped up by Hindu fundamentalists is spreading misinformation among the people with regard to the country's proud legacy of sacrifice for love. Bhagat Singh and his comrades logically advocated the idea of an independent India which was to be inclusive in nature, with strong bonds of commonality and rejection of religion in matters related to the state. In simple terms, they were against the formation of any Hindu rashtra or an Islamic state.

The distortion of history and facts by religious zealots, therefore, reposes a greater responsibility on us to keep alive the ideals for which these revolutionaries lived and died.

Courtesy: The Wire

Bhagat Singh: Destroy My Statues

Now the Regime and its cohorts have started on the job of destroying statues of Lenin (these exemplars of Sangh Parivar culture at one place even kicked around the head of one such statue like a football).

Soon, on March 23, these very gentlemen will be observing the 87th anniversary of the hanging of Bhagat Singh—a profoundly committed supporter of the man whose statues they are destroying. For Bhagat Singh to be paid homage by the likes of them is indeed a second, and worse, hanging of him and of his comrades.

Indeed, he would certainly have been deeply insulted that he has been exempted by these hoodlums from the same treatment they have given to Lenin. Perhaps he would have demanded that, rather than being garlanded by them, they bring his portraits and statues too under the

axe—much like Bertolt Brecht, in the following lines, demanded of the book-burning Nazis:

The Burning of the Books

When the Regime commanded that the books with harmful knowledge Should be publicly burned and on all sides

Oxen were forced to drag cartloads of books

To the bonfires, a banished Writer, one of the best, was shocked to find that his

Books had been passed over. He rushed to his desk

On wings of wrath, and wrote a letter to those in power

Burn me! he wrote with flying pen, burn me! Haven't my books

Always reported the truth? And here you are

Treating me like a liar! I command you

Burn me!

Courtesy : RUPE, India

Gandhiji and Socialist

Conversations between D. S. Nagabhushana and Ramchandra Guha - II

Reply by Ramachandra Guha

October 9, 2017

Dear Shri Nagabhushana,

With due apologies, you have in your last mail misrepresented what I said about Gandhi and Kamaladevi. I said clearly and emphatically that (a) she compelled Gandhi to change his mind about women in the Salt March; (b) she took Gandhi's ideas of satyagraha to the racist American South. And now you say I claimed Gandhi and she interacted on 'non political issues'!

On the issue of JP as Congress President, at Heggodu you mentioned that this was proposed in the year 1940. Now you say it was 1948. Let's assume you erred the first time (we all do); in 1940-2, since it was vital that the Congress have a Muslim President in answer to Jinnah's challenge, it was inconceivable for JP to be President—only Azad could have been. By 1948 it may indeed have possible. By 1948 JP's heroism was well established; and he was very close to Nehru too. So what you say may indeed have

been the case—that Nehru wanted JP as Congress President. But this is not reflected in Gandhi's Collected Works. Besides, in the last months of his life, all Gandhi was concerned with was Hindu-Muslim harmony—the issue of who was to be Congress President would have been of far less significance to him.

You wonder why some people today might prefer Nehru and JP to Lohia. One reason may be that JP and Nehru both were usually courteous in their language, even with their political opponents, whereas Lohia

was often unnecessarily personal and abusive. In your first mail you referred to me as a "pampered frog of English"; I do not think Nehru or JP (or Gandhi or Kamaladevi) would have used such language in intellectual or political debate—though Lohia perhaps might have. This vicious streak in Lohia often obscured and did disservice to his brilliance and originality.

Your last paragraph, on the other hand, reinforced what I have missed by not knowing Kannada. I wish I would know more about Devanur Mahadeva and read people like him in their own language. But even on this matter, allow me to please correct one of your misperceptions. You claim that I fling the names of Nagaraj, Ananathamurthy and Karnad with arrogance and authority. To the contrary—I have merely said that I was fortunate to have known them as friends. I have stressed the personal debt and never anything more. I have never claimed any deep knowledge of Kannada scholarship or literature on the basis of a few friendships. I am not so foolish, or so arrogant. In the course of my life across India I have had the great good luck to have known, often quite closely, remarkable writers who write in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, and Oriya. These encounters have made me slightly less ignorant of those literary traditions. Likewise with my Kannada friends. I am sure I would be able to learn a great deal from you too.

*With best wishes,
R. Guha*

Reply by DSN

October 9, 2017

Dear Sri Guha,

Sorry, you have missed again the point I was trying to make that day and in my last two letters. That is, whether Gandhi had any conversations of any substance with Socialists or not. Your answer that day was an emphatic no. You defended your answer through construction of circles of proximity around Gandhi. Yes, you did say that Kamaladevi had some conversations with Gandhi about participation of women in Satyagraha and such other things; but at the same time you asserted that except for this, there is no trace of conversations of any substantial nature that Socialists had with Gandhi. And all this was said by you only as a response to my argument through my bunch of questions that implied that conversations of Gandhi with Socialists were as important, if not more, as the four conversations you spoke of that day. More importantly, I was trying to make a comment on our historians by questioning your selection of those four conversations as the most important ones of Gandhi's life. Whether Sri Guha or somebody considers the conversations of Gandhi with Socialists as important or not was not of much concern to me, then.

I did term the subjects of conversations that Kamaladevi had with Gandhi as non-political, in the strictest sense of the term political, as they were not directly concerned with the State and its policies. But I tend to concede, if you insist, that they were political. Believe me, there was no intention of misrepresenting you in this regard.

Regarding the language of Lohia, yes he was pungent in his remarks many a times. More pungent than necessary sometimes, I too think.

But he was a lovely man too I was told by some of his close associates like S/s Madhu limaye, Kishen Patnaik, Mrs. Roma Mitra and so many others whom I met in Delhi during late seventies and early eighties. According to them, it had become necessary on his part to be pungent selectively at least, in the face of all pervading 'middle class' pleasing Nehruism of those days. After all he was not a bad man and he was in fact a great soldier of freedom struggle. But you see how badly he was treated by Nehru's policemen during his protests.

You should go through the indecent letter correspondence between PM Nehru and HM Sardar Patel (See Collected Works of Lohia by Mastram Kapoor) which discusses the pros and cons of releasing Lohia from Prison to attend an International meet. Lohia deserved a better treatment and engagement by the English speaking class of his time, I always thought. Please remember that people like Nehru and JP will always be a part of history and people like Lohia will always live on and kicking inside us. It was in this context that I called people like you as 'pampered frogs of English well'. If it is offending, so was your assertion that you did not learn Kannada because you can afford to live without it in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

*With regards,
D.S. Nagabhushana*

PS : I forgot to write about what you have said regarding the proposal of Gandhi to make JP the Congress President. You say that it was Nehru's proposal, even though you are not even sure whether that kind of proposal was ever made,

which according to my reading was a proposal by Gandhi. I do not know what made you to turn that proposal of Gandhi into Nehru's! You say that by that time JP's heroism was well established and he had come closer to Nehru. It is this kind of interpretation of history on your part that I object to. JP was enough of a hero in the eyes of the Nation well before 1948 with many examples of gallantry, the last one connected with his escape from Hazaribag Prison in 1942 November. And JP was always favourably disposed towards Nehru. He never antagonised Nehru.

My reading of history of that time tells me that Gandhi was disillusioned with the working of most of the leadership of Congress and also wanted to push the Socialists, towards whom he had started moving then, to join the mainstream to take responsibility in Nation building process. And hence it was Gandhi's proposal which Nehru could not implement citing opposition to it from rightist elements in Congress. Thus the appointment of Babu Rajendra Prasad. I hope I need not tell you that there is enough history beyond the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

PS-2 : Regarding your assertions about my comments on your seemingly limited knowledge of Kannada literary tradition, I submit that they were based on some press reports about your address at Karnataka Sangha, Shivamogga. However I feel even now that you should resist from talking about Kannada literary tradition since your knowledge of it is patently very limited and whatever knowledge you has come to you only through a

your limited interaction with only a selected few, that through English. Even Mr. Sheldon Pollack does not flaunt his knowledge of Kannada literary tradition in public, like you.

DSN

REPLY FROM GUHA

October 10, 2017

Dear Shri Nagabhushana,

Our correspondence reminded me of some correspondence I had exchanged earlier this year with Uday Dandavate, son of Madhu and Pramilla. Do see below. You will see there my manifest admiration for the Socialists and my wish that proper justice be done to their contributions.

Please also see this piece I wrote on Madhu Dandavate in 2005:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mag/2005/11/20/stories/2005112000240300.htm>

Here I wrote: 'Dandavate was a remarkable product of a remarkable political tradition. This was the socialist movement, from whose ranks came some of the most talented, and certainly the most honest, politicians of modern India.'

Once more, let me emphasize that the importance of the socialists is independent of how close they were or were not to Gandhi while the Mahatma was alive. Incidentally, I checked with a colleague who knows far more than me about the subject, and he confirmed that he too had never found any evidence that Gandhi would have recommended JP for the Congress Presidency. He further pointed out that even if JP's name had been proposed, Sardar Patel (not Nehru) would have vetoed it at once! I should further note that Rajen babu was President of the Constituent Assembly, not of the

Congress, in 1948; the Congress President in fact being that right-wing Patel favourite Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

In my correspondence with Uday Dandavate, back in April, I said:

'One of the more significant of the multiple tragedies of contemporary India is the death/degradation of the Socialist movement. Unlike the Communists, the Socialists were patriots; unlike the Congress, the Socialists genuinely believed in and fought for social and economic (including gender) equality. There is a major book waiting to be researched and written on their contributions both to the freedom struggle and to political life after Independence.'

I do not know whether you are inclined to write such a book yourself. It would certainly be a worthwhile task. If not, perhaps you know someone who might.

With best wishes

R. Guha

REPLY FROM DSN

October 10, 2017

Dear Sri Guha,

Thanks for your response. Once again, I would like to inform you that my objection to your talk on that day was as to why you did not include conversations with Socialists in your selection of four important conversations of Gandhi. My objection becomes more relevant now after you have given such a big account of your admiration for Socialists. If you can include Bhagat Singh, who had no personal rapport with Gandhi, in your selection of conversations, why not Socialists, with whom Gandhi had so much

of personal rapport and love and admiration? Again I should say that it is not of much concern to me whether according to Ram Guha Socialists were very proximate to Gandhi or not.

Yes the Nation has forgotten Socialists. But why are historians also forgetting Socialists? They—that too only honest among them—seem to remember them only when they are questioned on that count? It is like our U.R. Ananthamurthy praising some of us (who admired most of his writings but questioned his personal integrity regarding some of his social enterprises) in private but never in public or in his writings! I may also record here my dismay at your appreciation (praising it to the hilt) of URA's last book on Swaraj, a poor attempt of URA to use Gandhi for his dishonest tirade against Modi. I am calling it dishonest because he did not utter a word against the Gujarat genocide of 2002 when it happened or soon after, may be because he was occupying a cozy seat of some power offered by the then NDA govt. I have personally questioned URA about this in an interview, perhaps the last one of his life. This very long interview, which stretches from his early writings to his last public dialogue on Modi's candidature for Pmship, was done for the Socialist monthly 'Hosa Manushya' (meaning 'The New Man') which I edited for six long years till 2016 (stopped because of my failing health, and to be restarted in next November).

Again, regarding your doubt about Gandhi's proposal to make JP the President of Congress party, I should say that you have failed to find any evidence for it because of your problem with the definition of

evidence. It seems you recognise only that document which is sanctified by one authority or the other. That way your history can only be categorized as 'sanctified' history. I hope you don't suspect the integrity of late Minoo Masani, who—I think you concede—was nearer (in fact, a witness) than you and me to the theatre of events of the last forties. He in his book *Is JP the Answer?* (Macmillan, year of publication not mentioned!) writes :

A little later on the eve of the transfer of power, Gandhi—who as is well known was not happy about the line taken by Nehru and Patel—sought to create a new balance in the Congress by thinking of JP as the new President of Congress so that he might be a countervailing force and a check on Nehru and Patel who were to head the new Government. Nehru did not repond when Gandhi put the idea to him. He in turn suggested Acharya Narendra Deva who was close to him. Narendra Deva was in turn vetoed by Sardar Patel. Finally Dr. Rajendra Prasad was nominated President.

It is not only Minoo Masani who has recorded this proposal of Gandhi, but also all the biographers of JP that I mentioned in my first letter. It is for you to believe them or not. For your additional information, even Google provides this information! Further you say that Pattabhi Seetharamaiah was the President of Congress Party in 1948 and not Rajendra Prasad. Yes indeed, Pattabhi was the President in 1948, but he occupied that seat only after Rajendra Prasad, who was made President of Congress party in November 1947 after the resignation of J.B. Kripalani, relinquished it to become the President of the Constituent Assembly.

The problem with historians and political commentators like you seems to be that you don't want to believe or recognise anything that goes even slightly against Nehru. It has been the bane of post-Independence history writing and Socialist history has been one of its victims. It is for the same reason, though for a more dangerous political purpose, that Sangh Parivar has been doing a propaganda campaign against this kind of tilted history writing. This way, I should say, historians of this ilk are also responsible for the rise of Hindutva forces in recent history.

You have suggested that I may think of writing Socialist history. In fact I have written extensively about it in Kannada; it may not exactly be history as such. For your information, I have written brief biographies of JP and Lohia and subtitled all my (volumes of) social—including some of my literary criticisms, with which I started my writing career—and political writings as socialist discourses. I am not inclined to write in English as I am not good in it. You can find a lot of evidence of it in my correspondence with you. I am so tired of writing to you in English. In fact that is why I expect people like you to learn at least to speak a local language so that we can converse with you freely and clearly and mutually learn.

I think I should close my arguments with you now, at least for the time being. I should say that I learnt and also unlearnt quite a bit through this correspondence. You may please excuse me if my faulty English has troubled you.

With regards,
D.S. Nagabhushana

REPLY FROM GUHA*October 10, 2017**Dear Sri Nagabhushana,*

From being merely a pampered frog I notice that I have now become a historian who helped the rise of Hindutva. Your penchant for personalised polemic does not become a scholar of your passion, courage and great intelligence.

Your English is admirably fluent and evocative. Like Lohia, JP, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Tagore, you have the capacity to express yourself extremely lucidly in your mother tongue as well as in the language of our erstwhile conquerors. Lohia, JP, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Tagore, all chose to write in English when they wanted to reach out beyond their cultural universe. If you were to distill your knowledge and learning into a book on India's socialist traditions in English you would do a service to your fellow Indians. Please don't let your pride get in the way.

*With regards**R. Guha***REPLY BY DSN**

Sorry Sir, my English is so poor that I am unable to make out what you are saying in the second sentence of your above mail. If you are saying that I cannot make a scholar of myself by any means, you are right!

Yes I have said what I have said about historians of your type who have helped the raise of Hindutva forces in this country. It is for you to dismiss it outright or mull over it for its worth.

I have never said that writing in English is bad or unacceptable. What I have said is that writing

in English because you have been incapacitated to write in an Indian language is pathetic. Please see the conversation Gandhi had with his friend Mr. Polak in the former's autobiography on learning English vis a vis the mother tongue.

*With regards,
DSN***REPLY BY GUHA***Dear Sri Nagabhushana,*

1. Thanks-- yes, I know the Gandhi/Polak debate, and wrote about it here, in 2011:

<http://ramachandraguha.in/archives/a-question-of-english-the-telegraph.html>

Those Indians who are genuinely bilingual (such as yourself) can surely (like Gandhi and Lohia) communicate in both their languages! So please do not disregard my plea...

On the rise of Hindutva and who may have contributed to it, how would you react to my saying:

i) That Lohia's obsessive anti-Congressism and the coalitions he forged between Socialists and Jana Sangh in 1967 helped the rise of Hindutva;

ii) That JP's inclusion of the RSS in his anti-Indira movement and the certificate of patriotism he gave them helped the rise of Hindutva.

Surely these two acts by massively influential politicians you admire are far more worthy of critical scrutiny than the mere writings of a mere scholar, and that too in an elite language, English.

But since you press the point, do read the papers of today-- the Hindutvawadis have issued

fresh threats against me in Malleshwaram police station. The BJP and the RSS certainly do not consider me an ally or friend of Hindutva-- to the contrary, they threaten and intimidate me regularly!

But again, I urge you, let's get beyond these polemics and think of aiding something both of us want. Both you and I would like our younger compatriots to know of the history, heritage, and possible contemporary relevance of the Indian socialist traditions. So please do sympathetically consider the two proposals I made in my last mail.

2. Do see this mail below. Can I put this young scholar in touch with you please? I am sure your advice and encouragement will go a long way in motivating him to take up this vital and important project.

3. Prompted by your correspondence, I went back to Gandhi's Collected Works. It turns out that you were right, and that JP's name was indeed discussed for the Congress Presidency in January 1948. But it also turns out that my hunch was correct, namely that if this had indeed happened Nehru would have encouraged it. It seems that when Nehru resigned from the Presidency, he wanted a socialist to succeed him, and proposed Narendra Deva. To which Gandhi responded that if he wished he could even have JP to succeed him (JP of course being even closer to Nehru than ND was). This proposal of Nehru's, as amended by Gandhi, was then taken forward, and, as anticipated by both you and me,

the Congress Old Guard (led by Patel) nixed the proposal to have any socialist, whether ND or JP. From the sources, it appears that Gandhi himself, being busy with Hindu-Muslim unity, was not attending the crucial CWC meetings which decided this. But their proceedings were reported back to him. In a letter to Premaben Kantak, Gandhi says of the matter: 'As far as I know, Jayaprakash's views and policies are not harmful to the country's interests, but his method is. If, however, he becomes President, he must follow the Congress policy. Anyway, he was wise enough to decline to be President in the prevailing atmosphere of opposition to him. When a person who has opposed the official policies from outside becomes the leader of the whole country, he would if he has any touch of patriotism in him give up this opposition'. In other words, JP would have had to abandon or modify his radical Socialism if he wanted to become President of the Congress.

In this letter to Prema Kantak, Gandhi also says: 'About the Socialists, I believe that they are self-sacrificing, studious and courageous men'. But then he adds: 'I do not know what they have been doing. If it is enough to know what appears in the newspapers about them, then that much I know, though not in great detail.' This rather seems to prove my point which so upset you, namely, that while Gandhi admired and had affection for the socialists, he was not really in

close or continuous contact with them. On the other hand, you were right in calling attention to the fact (which had escaped me) that JP was, in the last month of MKG's life, indeed a candidate for the Congress Presidency.

Thanks for giving me a chance to explore this fascinating issue, and with best wishes,

R. Guha

REPLY BY DSN

Congratulations Guhaji! At last you have found a shred of evidence at least regarding Gandhi's proposal to make JP the president of Congress party. Congratulations also for ultimately proving to yourself through that shred of evidence that Socialists were not very proximate to Gandhi to have conversations with him!

So, now it is for you to fix the proximity gradings of S/s Bhagat Singh/Savarkar, Jinnah and Ambedkar with respect to Gandhi who according to you on that day had some important conversations with him.

*Regards,
DSN*

REPLY BY GUHA

October 11, 2017

Dear Sri Nagabhushana ji,

I don't believe that you can or will dispute that Gandhi's conversations with Jinnah and Ambedkar were definitive for India and for him. I think the real cause of your upset is that I spoke that day of Gandhi's arguments with the armed revolutionaries and not with the socialists. The reasons for this were simply that, in the India

of 2017, there is a real romance among the youth about Bhagat Singh and the Maoists and their methods, and it is vitally important to defend nonviolence against this misguided and dangerous faith in violent politics.

I still wish you would get over your hurt and injured pride. I am as keen as you are to have the (non and often anti-Marxist) socialists treated fairly and fully in our current and future political discourse. And I seek your help in this regard. Will you please think of consolidating your extensive writings in Kannada in the form of a short book on Indian socialism in English for a wider audience? And will you also talk to the young scholar who is keen to pursue a history of Indian socialism? If not the first, at least the second, I hope, though of course ideally both....

*With regards
R. Guha*

REPLY BY DSN

October 11, 2017

Dear Sri Guha,

Please don't imagine all kinds of reasons for my elaborate (ably assisted by you) correspondence with you. As my primary questions to you on that day indicated, I was only curious to know if there were any particular reasons for you to chose only those four conversations and if you consider those four only as the most important conversations of Gandhi's life. As a sympathiser of the Socialist movement, I also wanted to know as to why you don't consider conversations of Gandhi with Socialists as important. But instead of replying objectively to me, it appeared to me and some

friends there that you took my questions as a challenge to your authority on modern Indian history. And you started bulldozing me with all kinds of explanations as to why you don't consider Socialists were anywhere near Gandhi to have conversations with him, which I don't accept even now. Because, my reading of history of Indian Independence tells a different story. So where is the question of getting hurt or injured here?

I also read authors who write in English only, like H. Rajarao, R.K. Narayan, Mulraj Anand, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy etc., and you too, but I don't look at them in high esteem only because they write in English and pity them when get arrogant with the power of their English language. You may note that I did not choose to continue my arguments with you there after you asked for evidence for Gandhi's proposal with regard to JP. After all you were the honored guest for us on that day and I was only a layman in the audience. (It is also a fact that you did not allow me to continue my arguments, with waterfalls of your English diction!)

I wrote to you only to fulfill my obligation to you to provide some evidence of Gandhi's conversations with Socialists from your Bible called 'Collected Works of Gandhi' and of Gandhi's proposal regarding JP. But this correspondence got elaborated for so many allied reasons!

As you rightly judged, I am not a scholar and also cannot become one to associate myself with any academic or University projects. In fact I am damn afraid of them! Regarding your suggestion to bring out the English version of my writings on Socialist history, it is

for the English knowing Kannadigas interested in the subject to take the initiative if they feel it is worth taking. I am just not interested. I am a Swarajist in that way. My 'neighbourhood' is enough for me!

It seems, as a last resort of confrontation with me, you have chosen to repeat the rusted arguments of our tired secularists and Marxists to defame Lohia and JP. Lohia's anti-Congressism or JP's inclusion of Jansangh and RSS in his total revolution movement are to be understood in the political context and political compulsions of their time, when Jansangh and RSS were no forces at all. You should also note that neither Lohia nor JP compromised in any way with their political values. It may be of some interest to you to go through the last interview of Lohia's life with Prof. Bross, a foreign journalist (August 1967), in which Lohia has spoken about his relations with different political streams (published in Lohia Special issue of Janata, 2010). Have you forgotten the fact that post-JP Jansangh, soon after its reincarnation as BJP, was reduced to 2 seats in the 1980 elections? It was from there that they built the party and Sangh parivar to reach where they are today! On the other hand these so called secularists only tried to grow on anti-Hindu communalism (and social justice) sloganeering without doing any hard work at the ground level to build their parties. Now to save their faces in the face of drubbing they have got in people's court, they have resorted to Lohia and JP bashing! Good luck to them and you too.

Regards,
D.S. Nagabhushana

REPLY BY Guha

October 12, 2017

Dear Sri Nagabhushana,

I want to thank you for our exchange, which has educated me a great deal, not just about the JP Presidency idea which I was ignorant about, but about much else. In the days of Twitter and Facebook such exchanges are rare, if not impossible.

I also wanted to apologize for any arrogance or insolence I may have displayed that day in Heggodu while replying to your interventions.

With regards
R. Guha

PS: I hope you don't mind if I fill in a little detail about my personal background. My parents spoke English at home, but since I grew up in Dehradun I learned Hindi as a second language. I used a great deal of Hindi sources in my early research, and have also done some small translations from Hindi, including one of JP's remarkable essays Nagaland mein shanti ka prayas. Inspired and encouraged by our correspondence, I shall now actively pursue a project I have long wanted to do—this is to help edit and refine the translation into English of a major social history of modern Uttarakhand by a remarkable Kumauni scholar named Shekhar Pathak.

RREPLY BY DSN

October 12, 2017

Dear Sri Guha,

Thanks for your mail and I should say that I am really touched and humbled by its contents.

With regards,
D.S. Nagabhushana
(Concluded)



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