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**BJP's Forays in
North Eastern States and
Anti Minority Agenda**
Ram Puniyani

**India Needs Draupadi And
Not Savitri**
Rajindar Sachar

**Anti-Muslim Riots
in Sri Lanka**
Irfan Engineer

**Arvind Kejriwal's Apology
Letter and Middle Class
Standard of Ethics**
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Is a Federal Party Possible?

Kuldip Nayar

When former Congress President Sonia Gandhi said that they would not allow the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) to return to power, she hinted at a joint action on the part of the Opposition. It also means that she does not want Prime Minister Narendra Modi to for the second term. On its own, the Congress does not have the numbers to pose any threat to the BJP-run government or Modi.

In all probability, as things stand today, Modi looks good enough to returning to power. The three reverses in recent by-elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies notwithstanding, the BJP is capturing power in state after state and spreading its tentacles slowly but surely. Yet, 2019 general elections are some way to go and the impending state election in Karnataka and the subsequent ones in other states later this year would be the real test to assess Modi's strengths and weaknesses.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has taken the initiative to get the non-BJP parties together for a federal structure to contest against the BJP in 2019. To

underline the Congress cooperation, Mamata has said that she is daily in touch with Sonia Gandhi. In fact, the leaders from other non-BJP ruled states are constantly in touch with each other to see the possibility of a federal structure.

If you recall, the Janata Party was a federal structure. It did not last its course and fell because the then leaders, particularly the top ones like Morarji Desai and Chanran Singh, quarrelling in public all the time, much to the exasperation of the people. Then the Jana Sangh wielded power because the opponents were a divided lot. Once the non-Jana Sangh parties came together, the Jana Sangh government was reduced to a minority.

The federal structure that would come up, courtesy the top leaders like Sonia Gandhi or, for that matter, Mamata Banerjee, has to take a leaf out of the book of the Janata Party and learn to work together. The moot question would be who among the leaders has enough support to be the Prime Minister. Once this question is settled, things will fall into place and the federal structure could survive.

The question the country faces

today is that if pluralism, the nation's ethos, is defeated which forces would come to power. The BJP is determined to divide the people. They have been trying for a pro-Hindu government in some shape or the other. The RSS, which is the mentor of the BJP, is playing its role to perfection to help realize the dreams of Modi.

This is where the new federal combination has to be careful about. It is better they come up with a Minimum Common Programme with all parties endorsing the views and aspirations of all leaders. This is just one important issue which the top leaders of non-BJP have to address as the people's interests should be above everything else.

For the idea of India, which is founded on secularism and democracy, the parties based on religion or castes should have no place in the federal structure. The danger is that the various elements would try to pull in different directions to corner power. Even individual leaders should keep the country's unity ahead of personal or their party interests.

If they learn to live together, the warning about their disarray would be repulsed. Secularism would have gone through the fire to prove its intrinsic strength. With coalition politics inevitable in India, the best possible way to defeat the idea of BJP or, for that matter, Modi and his cohorts is stay together and learn in the process to rule together.

The BJP cannot defeat the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, unity in diversity. In fact, what it has done is to prove Gandhi right. Unity of India could face the danger of separatism. Pakistan whom I wish well is the fallout of the mistrust in the Hindu majority. Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad

Ali Jinnah, who was an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, said that he could not trust the majority, the Hindus. This mistrust is the reason why people left their homes after partition. One million were killed on both sides and Hindus and Muslims went apart further.

The RSS looks like copying the idea of division. Its philosophy is nothing but making a mockery of Gandhi's preaching. The RSS elements did not succeed as the communal forces could not silence Gandhi. They had to ultimately kill him so that the same voice which the people heard and respected. I had seen the letter which Nathuram Godse wrote in defence of what he did. He avowed respect to Gandhiji but argued that the country would suffer if the Mahatma had lived longer.

I recall one incident from his prayer meetings. I was present when, before the Mahatma started his meeting, one person from Punjab got up and said that he would not listen to the Quran. At the meeting all the three scriptures—the Gita, Quran and the Bible—were read. Gandhi said that there would be no meeting until the objector withdrew his dissent. For days, there was no prayer congregation. It was resumed only after the person finally withdrew his objection.

Today, when the fanatic RSS guides the government in appointment of teachers, librarians and heads of academic institutions, there is little hope for merit to take over. Under the circumstances, how can a federal party fight against such elements? The danger to the nation is from those who think that since the country has 80 percent of Hindu population, they have the right to rule.

Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel saw to it that there would be no Hindutva. They converted the then assembly into a constituent assembly to have a constitution. India is ruled today not by the 80 percent but by the constitution which assures one vote to one individual. Even when the Hindus are in a majority, they cannot subvert the idea of India because the constitution is supreme.

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BJP's Forays in North Eastern States and Anti Minority Agenda

Ram Puniyani

Over the last couple of decades, one is coming across pamphlets, leaflets and other material containing the propaganda that Christian missionaries are converting people at a rapid pace. The examples mostly given have been those of the North Eastern states. This propaganda has been extensively used at pan-India level, particularly before elections in most of the States. It is this propaganda which formed the base of hate against Christians and we witnessed the ghastly murder of Pastor Graham Stewart Stains, the horrific Kandhmal violence, and low intensity anti-Christian violence and attacks on Churches in different parts of the country. So how come BJP, the party flaunting Ram Temple, Mother cow and Hindu nationalism, could make inroads into an area where in many States Christianity has a good presence, where beef eating is part of the people's dietary habits and where different tribes with diverse and clashing political interests articulate their aspirations by forming various groups which have been asking for a separate State for their tribes.

While the situation in each State is different, there is a pattern in the BJP strategy, which in a flexible manner, supplemented by massive resources, near perfect electoral machinery and the backing of its parent organisation's swayamsevaks, is winning the majority in State after State. In Assam it focused mainly on Bangladeshi immigrants, alleging that Muslims are swamping the state and threatening that Hindus

will be reduced to a minority. It was clever enough to strike alliances even with separatist organisations. Most of the regional organisations in the area look at Congress as the party which has not focused on development work. The BJP, while it abuses those differing with its ideology as 'anti-nationals', has no compunctions at all in allying with those who have been talking of a separate State or even secession. In Tripura, the left government, despite its clean record, failed to fulfill the aspirations of tribal and OBCs in matters of reservation. It also failed miserably in creating employment opportunities for the youth which gave the ground to BJP to promise and create the illusion of development.

The BJP here mainly harped on two major factors. One is the promise of development. While in the rest of the country its slogan of development stands exposed as a mere vote catching slogan, in the North East it could still sell Modi as a development man. Manik Sarkar's failure to implement the new Pay Commission pay scales must have hurt large numbers as they are still stuck at Fourth Pay Commission scales, while talk of Seventh Pay Commission is in the air. In Tripura, they could also harp on 'Hindus are Refugees: Muslims are infiltrators' to influence the Bengali Hindu votes. In the tribal areas, RSS swayamsevaks have worked consistently since long in organising religious functions,

opening schools, etc. and thus succeeded in turning the tables, taking advantage of the fact that the Manik Sarkar Government failed to address the needs of tribals in matters of opportunities. In matters of beef, BJP openly took a hypocritical line that their ban on cow slaughter and eating beef, which is being imposed in different parts of country, will not be enforced in North East. It is by now well established that like most other issues raised by the RSS-BJP combine, holy cow is a political tool for dividing society, and when the crunch comes they manipulate the issue as they have done in Kerala and Goa.

In a very loud manner, towering over Christian voters, Mr. Modi talked of rescuing 46 nurses in ISIS captivity in Iraq and Father Alex Prem Kumar from Taliban captivity. What can one say on these issues? Were they rescued as they were Indians or were they rescued because they belonged to a particular religion? As is the wont with Modi type politics, they take advantage of these incidents in a crass political manner. Despite the fact that their ideology regards Christians and Muslims as foreigners, they do at the same time manipulate these identities for electoral gains. In Tripura, the majority of Congress and TMC MLAS migrated to BJP as well as the electoral support shifted to BJP. What worked for BJP here was the anti-Bangladeshi sentiment along with the illusory promise of development.

In Meghalaya, the situation is different. Though Congress did emerge as the single largest party and logically it should have been given the chance to form the government, the Hindu nationalist Governor thought otherwise and the second largest party, in alliance with practically everybody including the BJP, is going to form the government. Here the failure of BJP to win over the electorate is writ large on the results. But what is putting it in the camp of power is the alliance with a regional party, which does not have amicable relations with the Congress. The role of BJP's all-round clout, including money and

muscle power, is the undercurrent of the story.

There are a lot of lessons the Left can learn from Tripura. The issue of addressing problems of youth, tribals and OBC is paramount. In addition, the issue of BJP manipulating in all possible ways to come to power is something which can only be ignored at the risk of a severe decline in the electoral power of the Left and other parties. What is being labeled as the Karat line, not allying with Congress, will surely decimate the Left in times to come, probably sooner than later, as this line underestimates the potential and the deeper agenda of BJP–

RSS. It ignores the threat of the powerful electoral machine built by the BJP over a period of time, and its capability to manipulate issues like beef and conversion by Christian missionaries, even to the extent of taking opposite positions in different parts of the country and getting away with it!

The emotive politics unleashed by BJP–RSS is visible again in the form of attacking Lenin's statue and attacks on CPM workers. What is in store for future of the region if democratic forces don't rise to the occasion is anybody's guess!

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India Needs Draupadi And Not Savitri

Rajindar Sachar

Everyone knows that Indians are sensitive about their religion. Before the elections they are very particular about doing such actions which they think will result in a favorable verdict. And so, Rahul Gandhi is openly saying that he respects old traditions; not only that, he is going further and publicly showing his respect for these traditions while making his programmes.

As reported by the press, he showed this during the Gujarat elections by visiting many temples; even the press had no choice but to highlight this fact. Some of Nehru's admirers have expressed regret that Nehru's views on keeping religion outside politics are being abandoned by his own family.

In support of his actions, Rahul Gandhi is openly saying he would go by the conduct of the Pandavas, and has labelled the opposition as

Kauravas. However, he has not stated what will be his policies or programme of action as a Pandava, as against his opponents whom he has accused of being Kauravas.

Tradition says that the Kauravas were 'neech' because they did not show respect for women and had no respect for womanhood. The most important incident which is the basis for labelling the Kauravas as being disrespectful towards women is the disrobing of Draupadi by the Kauravas. But the question that needs to be asked is, what led to this incident taking place. Both Pandavas and Kauravas agreed to gamble, so to that extent, both are equally to be blamed.

Furthermore, it is the Pandavas who while gambling with the Kauravas put Draupadi at stake. Not only that, they did not even lift a finger when Draupadi was

being disrobed and crying out to be saved from this insult. Not only they, but the elders like Bhishma Pitamaha and Dronacharya too kept a cowardly silence when she was being disrobed and asking for help.

Now let us examine what Rahul means by calling himself as a Pandava. I would have been happy if he was promising that in present India bullets will never be used for maintaining law. Death by police firing raises a very important question as regards the responsibility of the State or the Central Government. I may in this connection point out that the Socialist Party of JP and Dr. Lohia had proposed a policy regarding police firing in independent India. It was a simple one, namely that in a free and democratic country like India, any police firing leading to the killing of citizens must automatically lead

to the resignation of the concerned State government. The leaders should promise that in independent India, no State government or the Central Government should have legal sanction to open fire on the crowds. And if a situation reaches that stage, it only shows the complete incompetency of the State government, and therefore should result in immediate resignation of the government.

In fact, the Socialist Party had to face this situation early in free India. The party was expected to do well in elections, considering the sacrifices and contribution to freedom struggle made by the socialists, especially their heroic role in the 1942 Quit India movement which was undoubtedly the most important phase of the freedom struggle.

However, the Socialist Party was able to form a government in only the State of Travancore-Cochin (which was renamed as Kerala State in 1956), with the socialist leader Thanu Pillai as the Chief Minister. Some time later, there was an agitation in Travancore and police firing took place, leading to the death of some demonstrators. Immediately Dr. Lohia and many others like us demanded the resignation of our government of Thanu Pillai. I am still of the view that in free India, killing of the demonstrators by police must automatically lead to the resignation of the government if human right violations are to be avoided. This has been proven by subsequent events in India; official figures released by Government of India show that over 50,000 people have been killed in police firings—this has happened because correct human right standards have not been accepted and followed, namely the

automatic resignation of the State government in such an eventuality.

I do not know why Rahul thinks that Pandavas should be supported against the Kauravas, whom he calls 'neech'. In the matter of gambling, both of them were in agreement, so both share the blame equally. During the play, the Pandavas lost their balance and chose to put Draupadi on stake, and for this they are primarily to be blamed. Even when Draupadi was crying for help, the Pandavas shamefully kept silent. The only explanation for this is that both Pandavas and Kauravas did not consider Draupadi as their equal, but a mere chattel of man.

Draupadi of course never forgot the incident, and took the stand that she will not keep contact with Pandavas till Duryodhana was killed. But even today, most people consider that keeping silent was the only correct answer. These people do not treat women as equal to men; that is why the cry of Draupadi when she suffers discrimination and is treated as personal chattel remains unanswered till today.

The only way this attitude towards women can be changed is by accepting women's demand that they should initially be given one-third representation both in the State legislatures and the Parliament, that is, one-third of all MLAs and MPs should be women (to start with). Women should press ahead with this demand and make it an election issue both in the State and Lok Sabha elections; in this fight for justice, it should be hoped that quite a large number of Indian men will vote with women.

Women must strongly put forth the demand that that they will no longer suffer any insult to their womanhood. Women must boldly

declare their resolve that they are determined to have an independent identity. This will be a befitting reply to all those who still consider women to be chattel today. This alone will give respect to womanhood. India does not need Savitri, India needs Draupadi.

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Anti-Muslim Riots in Sri Lanka

Irfan Engineer

The recent anti-Muslim riots in Kandy, Sri Lanka, once again demonstrate that religion is becoming more salient in public domain, including politics, in South Asia. Anti-Muslim riots were witnessed in Ampara town in Eastern Province on February 26 and in Teddeniya and Udispattuwa in Kandy district from March 2. Riots in Ampara were triggered when Sinhalese customers in a restaurant found lumps of wheat flour in the meals served to them by a Muslim chef which they suspected to be contraceptive pills. A video of the Muslim chef nodding (whether out of fear or misunderstanding) on being asked whether it was contraceptive was uploaded. Instead of conducting proper inquiries or reporting the matter to the authorities, mobs mobilised by extremist Sinhalese organisations attacked mosques and properties belonging to Muslims. Investigations later established that it was a false suspicion, and indeed there aren't any tablets that can cause permanent sterilisation.

Riots in Kandy were sparked when a Sinhalese truck driver was assaulted on February 22 by four reportedly drunk Muslim youth after a traffic accident. The truck driver died on March 2 due to injuries inflicted on him. The accused youth were arrested on the day of the incident itself and remanded till March 7. Sinhalese mobs began attacking Muslim properties in the region, resulting in widespread damage to property. According to the government, 465 houses, businesses and vehicles were damaged. The Sri

Lankan Government declared an emergency (which some felt was an over reaction by the government), clamped down on social media and imposed curfew. Emergency was last declared in 2011 during the civil war.

Both the incidents show the widespread fear, suspicion and prejudices prevalent against the Muslim community. Muslim community is diverse including the Moors, Malays, Bohras, Khojas and Memons, and constitutes 9.66% of the population of Sri Lanka according to the 2012 census. Moors speak Tamil language and are the largest ethnic group within the Muslim community, constituting 9.30% of the population of Sri Lanka. Islam arrived on the shores of Sri Lanka in the 7th century C.E. along with Arab traders, who married and settled on the island. They adopted the local Tamil language and culture. Sri Lankan Moors are descendants of Marakkar, Mappilas, Memons and Pathans of South India.

The LTTE targeted Moors when they resisted the claim that Moors were Tamils converted to Islam. Moors claimed their separate identity as progeny of Arabs. Few hundred Moors were killed while hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes and their properties destroyed by the LTTE as they claimed the northern and eastern territories for Tamil Eelam. Sri Lankan Moors and Sinhalese then joined hands during the 26 year civil war. Under attack from LTTE on one hand, and rise of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism on the other

hand, the Muslim community turned to Islam for stronger bonds among themselves. Prior to May 2009, the principal adversary of extremist Sinhalese Buddhist movements was the Tamil ethnic community. The Moors were not on their radar. However, after the threat from Tamil Eelam became subdued, extremist Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism turned its attention to new adversaries. New adversaries are necessary to project themselves as saviours, nay, custodians of Sinhalese Buddhist community, and achieving hegemonic power over not only the 'others' but also within the Sinhala Buddhist community itself. They now turned against the already besieged Muslim community, and with Islamophobia on rise globally, it was easy to target them. During my recent visit to Sri Lanka, a Buddhist monk asked me as to why the Muslims who had assimilated into the Sinhala culture were asserting their Islamic identity since the 1980s?

Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) or the Buddhist Force Army was founded by monks Kirama Wimalajothi and Galagoda Aththe Gnanasaara after they parted ways with the Jathika Hela Urumaya. In their first national convention held in 2012, they launched a virulent attack on Muslims and Islamic identity. They demanded a single legal system, opposed halal food and Muslim women wearing abaya or burqa, use of Buddhist monks to teach history and other subjects in schools and preferential treatment

in university admissions for students who attended Buddhism classes. They demanded ban on birth control measures for the Buddhist community. They thus demanded privileges for Buddhists on one hand, and cultural assimilation of Muslims or rather de-Islamisation on the other hand. The BBS stands for strong centralised authoritarian state which would ensure protection of Sinhala Buddhist cultural and religious traditions and is against multi-racial, multi-religious and multicultural nature of Sri Lanka.

The extremist Buddhist Sinhalese nationalism seeks to mobilise the majority Buddhist Sinhala community by instilling fear of the minority Muslim community which is less than 10% of the population. They problematise 'mosques springing up everywhere', 'faster growth of Muslim population' and 'conversions by Christians'. They argue that Sinhala Buddhists have only one country, unlike Muslims, Hindus and Christians who have other countries. The fact is, the Moors too have only one homeland, and so do Sinhala Christians!

The BBS General Secretary Gnanasara welcomed the victory of Narendra Modi Government in India. He claimed they were having discussions with the Hindu supremacist organisation RSS in India to form what he called 'Hindu-Buddhist peace zone' in South Asia, together with Myanmar's extremist Buddhist nationalist organisation, the Wirathu Group 969. Though Ram Madhav, General Secretary of the BJP, denied that they were in talks with BBS, he posted comments appreciating BBS. He wrote, "The Bodu Bala Sena essentially talks about protecting the Buddhist culture of the country

from foreign religions". RSS too claims to do the same – protecting Hindu culture of India from foreign religions. Wirathu Group 969, BBS and RSS have common imagined enemies in followers of Islam and Christianity, and profess a duty to save their respective 'sole homelands' from the threat from these 'foreign religions'. All three Buddhist and Hindu supremacist organisations posit imagined threat from imagined enemies and hype up fear within the majority community in order to project themselves as protectors of their respective cultural heritage. They have little respect for truth, established procedures and democratic institutions. In the case of recent anti-Muslim riots in Kandy, the Muslim youth had been arrested by the police on the charge of beating up the truck driver on the very day of the incident itself; and in Ampara, prejudices against Muslims led the Sinhala customers of hotel owned by Muslims to imagine contraceptive pills in meals served to them, notwithstanding the fact that there are no contraceptive pills that cause permanent and irreversible sterilisation. They did not wait for an investigation of their suspicion. Even if their suspicion was true, who should inflict punishment upon whom and in what measure?

The right wing extremists use insignificant everyday incidents as an excuse to inflict collective punishment on all members of the 'other' community, even those and those who have no role or control over the incident. In order to purge the 'other' from their midst, they hype up the conflict to the level of continuous and ongoing war with the 'other'. In this war, the weak, insufficient and often reluctant protection afforded to the 'other'

by law is immediately stigmatised as appeasement of the 'other'. The extremist supremacists are actually at war with democracy, and rule of law and war with the 'other' is only an excuse. At a rally in 2013 attended by 16,000 people, including 1,300 Buddhist monks, the BBS general secretary Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara unveiled the 'Maharagama Declaration'. He stated, "This is a government created by Sinhala Buddhists and it must remain Sinhala Buddhist. This is a Sinhala country, Sinhala government. Democratic and pluralistic values are killing the Sinhala race." He called upon the Sinhalese Buddhists attending the rally to "become an unofficial civilian police force against Muslim extremism. These so-called democrats are destroying the Sinhala race." The Wirathu Group 969 has always supported the Military Junta in Myanmar and the RSS has always been unhappy with the Indian Constitution which they say is based on western traditions, in a veiled attack on equal citizenship rights.

The BBS has also learnt a tactic or two from the RSS. In a rally held in Kandy on March 17, 2013, BBS announced that the 10th-century mosque at the Kuragala Buddhist monastery complex in Ratnapura District had been constructed on a Buddhist heritage site by Muslim fundamentalists. Medieval India was ruled by Muslim Emperors and this provides the basis for the Sangh Parivar to claim that Babri Masjid was built after destroying Ramjanmabhoomi Temple; but Sri Lanka was never ruled by Muslim kings. It was a first a Portuguese colony and later a British colony. BBS general secretary Gnanasara also accused the Muslim owned

Fashion Bug and No Limit retail chains of converting its Buddhist Sinhalese employees to Islam. The Muslim owned Fashion Bug clothes shop in Pepiliyana, Colombo District was attacked on March 28, 2013 by a mob led by Buddhist monks. While these right wing supremacists vilify Muslim cultural influences as foreign, they themselves freely borrow from other foreign political ideologies, including more than a leaf from the Nazis and fascists.

However there are inherent contradictions and inconsistencies in their ideologies. While they complement each other's electoral victories as good for the stability of the region, share common 'enemies' in Islam and Christianity and have 'held high level talks', their political goals are actually going to pit them against each other in the long run. While the BBS talks of protecting Sinhalese Buddhist homeland, RSS's goal is Akhand Bharat whose boundaries not only include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, but also Myanmar and parts of China! Sri Lanka is the land where Lord Ram waged war and rescued his wife Sita from Ravana's custody, so therefore it forms an important part of Akhand Bharat.

Through their hypes, the right wing supremacists create massive insecurity among the marginalised minorities who are also practically abandoned by the state, which in turn pushes them to seek refuge in stronger unity around their exclusive symbols. The halal food being problematised after 2012 is not a new cultural practice and it should not concern non-Muslims as to how Muslims choose to consume their food. Halal meat only means that blood of the slaughtered animal is

allowed to flow out fully before it is consumed. The extremists push the 'other' towards more exclusivism, instead of creating an environment of cultural exchanges and dialogue.

Musthafa Nihmath, member of Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) told this writer that there were about 3,000 mosques in Sri Lanka and all services were being conducted in Tamil. However, in the recent past, 5 mosques have begun their Friday sermons in Sinhala language in Colombo in rotation. The Moors are hard working and a large proportion of them are business entrepreneurs. The cab driver told this writer that every other shop or business belongs either to Moors or Tamils. It is possible that it is because of the prosperity of the Moors that their business and mosques are being made targets.

The extreme right wing nationalists in all the countries are able to exploit the feelings of relative deprivation that the poor among the 'majority' community feel, and convert it into hatred against others belonging to more or less the same class but following different cultural traditions, and then channelise this hatred into violence. These feelings could be checked by appropriate education and dialogue between and within communities. The Constitution of Sri Lanka, as indeed of India too, mandates the state to treat all citizens, regardless of their religions, equally, and guarantee all citizens adequate environment and space to freely practice their religion. However, the executive of these countries has failed to administer the law impartially, both in letter and spirit. As a Sri Lankan minister told a group among whom this writer was present, few people involved in violence are put to

trial and even fewer are convicted. The impending violence can be prevented if hate crimes are checked in time, intelligence strengthened and acted upon and bureaucrats are made accountable. Though the Sri Lankan Government took stern steps by declaring emergency to control the riots and also clamped down upon social media, the executive misused emergency provisions against the minorities. As the levels of inequalities in Sri Lanka are increasing, the economic elite finance right wing nationalism to problematise perceived or factual growth of the rich from the 'other' marginalised communities, so as to divert attention from their own wealth and from the structures that allow their enrichment.

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Fiery Death of Workers in Real Paint Factory in Sonapat: A Fact Finding Report

Five workers in Sonapat, Haryana, burnt to death due to a fire which broke out in Real Paint Factory in the Rai industrial estate in Sonapat, Haryana. The dead include a woman worker with her child on her chest. Sixteen jumped from the third floor to various serious injuries. But nothing appears in the news. This is not some random incident either. Workers work almost as bonded labourers for a pittance. In the entire area, there is no ESI, no Provident Fund, no labour laws, no pretence of safety measures, no union, only 'acche din'.

A fact finding team constituting of representatives of Inqilaabi Mazdoor Kendra, Nagrik Akhbaar, Jan Sangharsh Manch Haryana, Mazdoor Patrika and Grameen Mazdoor Union, Bihar went to the site of the accident on March 20, 2018. The team prepared the following report based on their physical inspection of the site and conversations with workers working in nearby units.

The Rai industrial estate is situated in Sonapat district of Haryana. It is on the GT road, between Delhi and Sonapat, around 47 kms from ISBT, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi. The factory which caught fire was situated on plot number 291, 292, 293 in the Rai industrial estate. The factory used to manufacture industrial paint for automobiles. On March 20, when the investigating team reached the site, smoke was still emanating from the factory.

There were some workers standing in front of the factory who

worked in factories nearby. Three policemen were seated on chairs along with a journalist from Punjab Kesari and some persons from the Intelligence Bureau. The workers informed us that the fire broke out in the night of March 17-18 at around 2.30 am. The factory used to produce paint thinner which is extremely inflammable and that there was a huge stock of paint thinner and solvent inside the factory. Thirty four workers worked in the factory but there is no conclusive information as to how many were working when the fire broke out. According to people nearby, five persons have already died due to the accident while police and intelligence report claim four deaths. The workers told us that sixteen workers saved themselves by jumping from the third floor of the factory. Many of them got charred, one of the female workers broke her spine, and the rest too are in very critical condition. They have been sent to PGI Rohtak and Khanpur Kalan for treatment.

When we reached the site we found that the main door of the factory was unlocked and open—in fact the metal door had melted and was completely deshaped, indicating the intensity of heat caused by the fire. We could see a pile of paint cans inside. The workers informed us that one of the worker's dead body was found stuck to a can of paint and another's charred skeleton was found near the stairs. Like the factory in Bawana, Delhi, there was a metal grill in front of the gate and the factory premises

had only one exit which used to be kept locked. In spite of producing highly inflammable substances, the factory had only one gate. The factory seemed like a prison where the workers were made to work like indentured labour, and that too at a grave risk to their lives. There were no safety norms followed. The basement had an enormous tank to store chemicals—the storage capacity was 15000 litres.

The factory was a three-storey building and the workers and their families lived in the same building. Production facilities were in the first two floors (ground floor and the first floor)—5 workers used to reside on the first floor and 16 people lived on the third floor. A woman and her child got burnt to death in one of the rooms on the third floor—she was clutching her child to her breast when they died. One of the workers is still feared to be trapped under the debris. It was

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evident from the remains that none of the mandatory safety norms were followed in the factory. According to the norms, at least 40 percent of the space of the plot in which a factory is constructed (around the building) has to be kept free. In this case there were thick sheets of iron covering the space, the same as in every other factory building in the vicinity. All the factories had generators and compressors on their roofs, which could lead to a serious mishap at any time. The real cost of human lives in a profit driven economy was evident from the accident we had gone to investigate and those waiting to happen.

Rai industrial estate was established in 1995-1996. At that time, the going wages was Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,500 a month. The employers on principle did not employ local workers; most of them were migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Rai industrial estate mostly constitutes of tiny units and the workers are given the lowest wages in the entire Delhi NCR region. On an average, a male worker earns Rs 8,000 per month for an eight hour shift while female workers earn Rs 4,500, way below the legal minimum wages declared by the Haryana government, which is Rs 9,600 for unskilled workers, Rs 10,826 for semi-skilled workers, Rs 11,429 for skilled workers and Rs 12,900 for highly skilled workers.

Workers informed us that helpers could manage monthly wages of Rs 9,000–10,000 by working 12- hour shifts. Further, only 20 percent of the factories in the area had registered their workers for ESI facilities. In any case the so-called 'reforms' by which the Central Government is conspiring to dismantle labour laws in the interests of the capitalist class

have already been implemented in the BJP-ruled states, including Haryana. Thus in Haryana, the capitalists have been offered complete freedom to exploit their workers, unhindered by legal constraints or any sanctions by the government. The situation is not likely to improve unless there is a collective resistance by the workers.

The police officials present (including a sub-inspector) refused to answer our queries on the case. The only information we could gather was that the owner Gulshan Mata was on the run. The owner Gulshan Mata, his son Abhishek Mata, the manager Meenu and three supervisors have been booked under section 304 A of the IPC—causing death due to negligence. It is telling that while the police routinely slap workers with much more serious charges including murder, treason, sedition, Gangster Act, etc., they seem to get all soft and generous when it comes to the crimes of the capitalists and their henchmen.

The state government has

announced compensation of Rs 5 lakhs for the dead and Rs 1 lakh for the injured. One wonders what difference would a lakh rupees make to a worker (or his family) who has been rendered permanently invalid.

On March 22, we came to know through an associate that the government and the administration have not been following up with the 8 severely burned workers admitted in PGI Rohtak. The announcement made by the government of ensuring proper medical attention to the injured workers is all a lot of hot air. One of the workers in a very critical condition has been referred to Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi for treatment.

The state of the factories in Rai industrial estate and the work conditions would lead anyone to conclude that the painful deaths of these workers were not due to an accident but were wilful murders in the ruthless pursuit of profits.

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15 Years After the Iraq Invasion, What Are the Costs?

Stephanie Savell

March 2018 marked the 15th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq.

In 2003, President George W. Bush and his advisers based their case for war on the idea that Saddam Hussein, then dictator of Iraq, possessed weapons of mass destruction—weapons that have never been found. Nevertheless, all these years later, Bush’s “Global War on Terror” continues—in Iraq and in many other countries.

It’s a good time to reflect on what this war—the longest in US history—has cost Americans and others around the world.

First, the economic costs. According to estimates by the Costs of War project at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the war on terror has cost Americans a staggering \$5.6 trillion since 2001, when the US invaded Afghanistan.

\$5.6 trillion. This figure includes not just the Pentagon’s war fund, but also future obligations such as social services for an ever-growing number of post-9/11 veterans.

It’s hard for most of us to even begin to grasp such an enormous number.

It means Americans spend \$32 million per hour, according to a counter by the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies.

Put another way: since 2001, every American taxpayer has spent almost \$24,000 on the wars—equal to the average down payment on a house, a new Honda Accord, or a

year at a public university.

As stupefying as those numbers are, the budgetary costs pale in comparison with the human toll.

As of 2015, when the Costs of War project made its latest tallies, up to 165,000 Iraqi civilians had died as a direct consequence of US war, plus around 8,000 US soldiers and military contractors in Iraq.

Those numbers have only continued to rise. Up to 6,000 civilians were killed by U.S.-led strikes in Iraq and Syria in 2017—more civilians than in any previous year, according to the watchdog group AirWars.

In addition to those direct deaths, at least four times as many people in Iraq have died from the side effects of war, such as malnutrition, environmental degradation and deteriorated infrastructure. Since the 2003 invasion, for instance, Iraqi health care has plummeted—with hospitals and clinics bombed, supplies of medicine and electricity jeopardised, and thousands of physicians and healthcare workers fleeing the country.

Meanwhile, the war continues to spread, no longer limited to Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria, as many Americans think. Indeed, the US military is escalating a shadowy network of anti-terror operations all across the world—in at least 76 nations, or 40 percent of countries on the planet. Last October, news about four Green Berets killed by an Islamic State affiliate in the West African nation of Niger gave Americans a glimpse of just how

broad this network is. And along with it comes all the devastating consequences of militarism for the people of these countries.

We must ask: Are these astounding costs worth it? Is the US accomplishing anything close to its goal of diminishing the global terrorist threat?

The answer is, resoundingly, no.

US activity in Iraq and the Middle East has only spurred greater political upheaval and unrest. The US-led coalition is seen not as a liberating force, but as an aggressor. This has fomented insurgent recruitment, and there are now more terrorist groups in the Middle East than ever before.

Until a broad swath of the American public gets engaged to call for an end to the war on terror, these mushrooming costs—economic, human, social, and political—will just continue to grow.

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Arvind Kejriwal's Apology Letter and Middle Class Standard of Ethics

Nishikant Mohapatra

I have been keenly observing the multitude of reactions to Arvind Kejriwal's unconditional apology letter in the various defamation suits filed by the political opponents across the country. Some of our own friends are deeply hurt as their perceptions of Kejriwal as an uncompromising, stubborn leader has given way to an image of a meek surrender. Of course the media and the Opposition chorus have tried to give strength to this perception but in vain.

But for people who are pursuing a passion for a change of system in a hostile atmosphere, this is not a surprise at all. It is only a tactical retreat. It is not a clean chit to the corrupt. His apology letter only says that "I apologise as I found that there is no evidence with me to substantiate my allegations." But the allegations as such stand as Arvind Kejriwal was not making them alone. He was only amplifying them with audacity and clarity. Any agency and government willing to book these criminals will in no way find Kejriwal's apology letter a hindrance to their purpose. On the other hand, defending false defamation cases throughout the country with money, time and energy forgetting the original objective is not desirable at all. In the Indian judicial system, everybody and anybody can file a defamation suit and can compel a person to

toil hard to save himself from penal provisions. In a defamation case, if you win then it does not automatically establish that what you have said about a person is true. It only establishes the fact that what you have said is without malice and intent to harm the other's reputation. It saves you from penalty and is a win of ego only. On the other hand, if you lose you are penalised.

Kejriwal as a visionary and true leader of the masses can distinguish between the fallacy of fighting defamation cases at the cost of concentrating on the fight for systematic changes. From the beginning, in his fight for change he has assiduously kept himself away from all the distractions that don't contribute to his effort for fundamental changes. He knows his accusations are based upon material available in the public forum and require proper investigations to nail the culprits in the court of law. This requires investigation by independent agencies and through proper judicial monitoring. Right now all investigative agencies like the CBI and CVC have become a part of the corrupt system. It is only wishful thinking to expect that the agencies will investigate and apprehend the accused persons. We have seen how the 2G case and coal corruption cases were thrown into the dustbin. Even the recent bank fraud cases revealed how the

administration and politicians are in connivance and let free the culprits. Furthermore, the objective is not to punish the alleged persons only as they are mere soldiers in the edifice of the corrupt governance system operating in India and the kingpins are well protected without any trail of evidence.

Therefore the middle class standard of ethics should not be applied to Kejriwal's tactical and pragmatic retreat through his apology letter. The people pursuing this ethics are silent when confronted with BJP's blatant disregard for democratic norms, the Lieutenant Governor's hegemonic rule in Delhi, data manipulation, u-turns by major parties, denial to come under RTI Act, retrospective provision to cover foreign funding to BJP and Congress, and the attack on the autonomy of the CBI, the judiciary, the banking system and educational institutions. The same middle class ethics is a party to social media manipulations, communalism and contempt for constitutional bedrocks. I call it middle class ethics as both the poor and the rich have ditched it for good. For example, on issues such as the opportunistic alliances of BJP-PDP and SP-BSP or cross voting by MPs, the rich, the politicians and the opinion makers are silent on it. They conveniently bury their ideological differences in the name of larger good. Navjot Singh Sidhu

can sing both that Manmohan Singh is “sardar beasardar” and “sardar asardar”. Similarly the poor and unemployed who accuse the government for their plight can stand for the governing party in the name of caste, religion, region, bribe and other non-governance elements and inducements. But there will be hardly any heart burning.

In this context Kejriwal’s decision is very pragmatic, logical and in the interest of the common man. He has done no harm to our purpose. Rather he should be strengthened to make his fight more vigorous to change the system. Despite heavy obstacles by the

Lieutenant Governor and the BJP, we are witnessing a sea change in Delhi’s governance system. His work against corruption and in the field of education, health, public distribution and services are watched world over and greatly appreciated. He has successfully exposed the fallacy of governance by the BJP, Congress and other political parties. He is solidly on his path for a corruption free, transparent, participatory, accountable, outcome oriented governance model. Pygmies and self centered politicians can him names such as bhagoda, but only time will tell how successful he is and what will be his contribution to modern governance in India.

I appeal to all change agents to concentrate on the task at hand, i.e. to expose the communal and corrupt elements and contribute towards strengthening Aam Aadmi’s alternative model of politics towards a political revolution. It will need sustained treading in the muddy path where issues will blur your vision and hurdles will be there in your path to derail your mission. A fight against the crony capitalist model hiding behind multiple layers of protective identities is not going to be easy. You need to accept and collaborate with AAP’s determination and single mindedness to fight it.

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Every Year Hundreds of Lives Can be Saved Just in Marriage-Related Accidents

Bharat Dogra

On March 6, 31 persons belonging to a marriage party were killed in a road accident in Gujarat on Bhavnagar-Rajkot highway. This is just one among several serious accidents involving marriage related travel and celebrations which have been reported during the last one year.

Several such accidents were reported were reported one after another during the marriage season in May . An analysis of reported marriage related accidents in India during just about one week of May revealed that in about seven separate accidents over 50 people were killed and around 200 were injured.

The reported accidents in media are just a small part of the total number of smaller accidents which go unreported or else are reported at

a very local level.

On May 10 a long but hurriedly and precariously constructed wall of a marriage hall in Bharatpur (Rajasthan) collapsed, leading to the death of 26 persons and injuries to a higher number of people. The baraat (marriage group from the groom’s side) had not yet arrived, or else the mortality in this accident would have been much higher.

Subsequent inquiries revealed that most of the marriage celebration halls in the state suffer from poor safety conditions but are owned or controlled by influential people.

On May 9 a vehicle carrying a baraat group met with an accident in Khargone district (Madhya Pradesh) leading to the death of 9 persons including the groom while several others were injured.

This turned to be a killer day for baraatias as in another accident near Sheopur in the same state a tractor trolley carrying a marriage party had an accident, killing six persons . 20 other persons of the marriage party including 9 children were seriously injured.

Another bus returning from Satna in this state was taking baratis back to their home when it got out of control . Three persons died immediately while six were reported to be struggling for survival . About 33 others were injured in the same accident.

Earlier on May 5 near Ambikapur (Chhattisgarh) two vehicles, both carrying baratis collided, leading to two immediate deaths and serious injuries to 22 others.

In another accident in Patraatu

valley in Jharkhand an overcrowded bus carrying baratis was involved in an accident in which 9 persons were killed and 'several dozen' were injured. A subsequent meeting in the village imposed a fine of Rs. 3 lakh plus on the groom's family. Villagers who spoke at the meeting said that the driver and khalasi (assistant) of the bus were both drunk.

These reports of accidents involving marriage parties within the time span of just one week or so indicate the very high toll of such accidents. The marriage season in India is often concentrated within a few weeks. Hence there is a big demand for marriage halls and vehicles to transport baratis and others during these days. In this situation compromises are often made regarding safety precautions. Even otherwise safety aspects generally get less attention.

As regulation on the part of authorities is also low, this increases chances of accidents.

Marriages in India are elaborate and expensive affairs involving a lot of completely avoidable tensions. So people tend to become very tired either from dancing too much or worrying too much. Hence safety can be compromised particularly at the time of return journeys.

Add to this the increasing flow of alcohol in many marriage celebrations. This greatly increases the chances of accidents (as well as ugly scenes) at the time of return journeys in particular.

There is a very absurd but not so uncommon practice of firing guns at the time of marriage celebrations. This sometimes leads to accidental injury or even

death.

Some marriage parties carry firecrackers with them as these are used in marriage processions including on busy roads. The transport of a significant stock of firecrackers with marriage parties increases the chance of fire and explosions accidents in vehicles and trains. The use of firecrackers in marriage processions passing on busy roads also increases the risk of accidents.

Any marriage time accident brings great grief very suddenly at a time of celebration and happiness and so can be additionally disruptive and traumatic for all those affected by such an accident. Hence counseling is badly needed for those affected by such accidents but this is seldom available in India.

On a longer term basis such accidents, even smaller ones, can be particularly difficult and traumatic for the young brides who are typically accused of bringing bad luck with them. Hence help for them is needed from within the community first but later also

from authorities if her harassment is prolonged.

Clearly much can be done to reduce the risk of accidents associated with marriages and other such celebratory occasions. On the one hand better regulation of marriage halls, banquet halls etc. is needed. Safe community buildings with modest facilities should be provided by public authorities and community organizations at a low cost. Serving of liquor at marriages should be prohibited. Essentials of safety in this context should be well established, well publicised and implemented strictly.

In addition public campaigns are needed to improve the safety while reducing the expenses and tensions of marriage ceremonies in India. All newly married couples and their families should be encouraged to save unnecessary expenses and donate them instead for some worthy cause which would be the best way of blessing and solemnizing the marriage.

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Press Release

Killing of Indian Workers in Iraq : Workers should Protest Against Government Apathy

Harjit Masih, the lone survivor among the 40 abducted Indian workers, in his interview published in *The Hindu* (24 March 2018) has given detailed description about the tragic incident. He stated in a clear cut manner that the Indian government officials took him into their custody on his return and told him not to reveal the truth about the killing of his 39 fellow workers. The officials made him believe that the truth revealed by him could put him and his family at risk as relatives of the 'dead' could get enraged. He told the government officials that the workers were kidnapped by Islamic State fighters from the factory at Mosul in Iraq in June 2014 and killed in a lonely place after two days of the kidnapping. The detailed revelation of the incident by Harjit Masih proves that the government had misled not only the Parliament but the families of the deceased for four years.

The Socialist Party condemns this untruthful and inhuman act by the government. In fact, the External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, who kept misleading the relatives about the safety of the abducted workers, made the announcement in Parliament only under pressure and compulsion. She was forced to make this admission because Iraqi officials had planned a press conference on this matter on the same day, that is, 20 March 2018. This episode has also exposed the hollowness of government's claims

about strong foreign relations under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Socialist Party believes that the government could dare to exhibit such insensitive behaviour because the victims were ordinary labourers from poor families. The ruling establishment, guided by the market values, has lost its human ground. The government might have assumed that it can barter the shock, anger, sense of betrayal and tears of the poor by offering them some money which it has looted from these very hard working masses.

The relatives of the workers killed in Iraq got the news from TV channels, and not directly from the government. This means that the government does not even consider the poor to deserve that they should be informed of the death of their loved ones. Sardara Singh, father of 36-year-old Gurcharan Singh, expressed his anguish that every time they met Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, she used to swear by 'kali maa' and assured them that 'children are safe'. He questioned the External Affairs Minister, 'Where is that promise now?' The government assumes that it is not necessary to speak the truth to the poor. Therefore, it is not surprising that the government does not feel the need to apologise to the families of the dead.

The Socialist Party demands that the government should immediately tender an apology to the relatives of the victims, if it has any regard for

humanity and civility. At the same time, the Socialist Party invites the Indian workers in the country and abroad to strongly oppose the corporate-friendly government in order to protect their interests. The fact should be kept in mind that the Indian workers who work in the Middle East bring huge amounts of foreign exchange to India. Their contribution is no less than the non-resident Indians in any sense.

Dr. Prem Singh, President,
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Books by Surendra Mohan

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Kashmiri Pandits' Dilemma
Kuldip Nayar

**Rewriting of History and
Sectarian Nationalism**
Ram Puniyani

**Inequality Neither Inevitable
Nor Irreversible in 2018**

**Bhai, We Pledge To Continue
the Fight to
Fulfil Your Dreams . . .**

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Veteran Socialist Leader Bhai Vaidya (22 June 1928–2 April 2018) Passes Away

Qurban Ali



Bhalchandra Vaidya, popularly known as Bhai Vaidya, passed away on April 2, 2018 at Poona

Hospital in Pune, at about 8 in the evening. 89-year-old Bhai Vaidya was admitted to Poona Hospital on March 26, 2018, after he became seriously ill. He had been diagnosed with cancer in the pancreas only 18 days ago. He was cremated at Vaikuntha crematorium in Navi Peth, Pune on 3rd April, 2018. He is survived by his son Abhijit, daughter Prachi Rawal, a grandson and a grand-daughter.

According to his son Abhijit who is a cardiologist, “on March 9, Bhai Vaidya complained of heaviness in the abdomen following which he was advised a sonography test. It was indicative of cancer. The next day he underwent magnetic resonance imaging and other tests which diagnosed him with pancreatic cancer.” On March 26, he complained of breathlessness

following which he was admitted to Poona Hospital and Research Centre. “His condition slowly deteriorated,” said Abhijit. “He was conscious and had a 10-minute talk with NCP leader Sharad Pawar when he visited him in the hospital on March 28.” He led a very active and energetic life till the very end, said Abhijit.

Born on June 22, 1928, at Dapode village of Pune’s Velhe Tehsil, Bhai Vaidya did MA in Sociology and Political Science. Swept in the flush and enthusiasm of the 1942 Quit India movement, Vaidya had his first brush with political activism before he turned 15 as an Indian freedom fighter.

He joined the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1946. Then played a major role in socialist movement while working in the Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Samyukt Socialist Party and Janata Party. He actively participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942, the Goa Liberation Movement of 1955, the Kachch Satyagraha of 1956 and the JP movement of 1974.

Bhai Vaidya was a vocal opponent of Emergency even during his Mayor-ship, when he organised a rally of 20,000 people at Shaniwar Wada in Pune and got arrested. He was jailed during the Emergency from 1975 to 1977. As a freedom fighter and a lifelong activist who fought for the rights of Dalits, farmers and backward classes, Bhai was in jail 28 times. Bhai Vaidya was at the forefront of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti movement with his mentor Shreedhar Mahadev Joshi and other influential leaders of the time.

In his political career which spanned over 60 years, he was elected several times to the Municipal Corporation and later he became the Mayor of Pune city during 1974–75. He was the first president of the All India Mayor Association. He was elected as a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in 1978 and was Minister of State for Home in Sharad Pawar's cabinet

between 1978–80, in Maharashtra State.

He is well known for many reformative decisions during his short stint in the Home Ministry, especially changing the police uniforms from half pants to full pants and refusing huge bribes from smugglers with his honest and uncompromising attitude.

He participated in the Bharat Yatra in 1983 with former Prime Minister and then Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar. He was also the National General Secretary of Janata Party from 1986 to 1988. He took over as National General Secretary in the Samajwadi Jan Parishad (SJP) formed in 1995 and held the post till 1999. In 2011, after the re-establishment of the Socialist Party in Hyderabad, he became its first National President and guided the party till 2016.

Bhai Vaidya was an uncompromising opponent of neo-liberalism/neo-imperialism

that came with the new economic policies introduced in 1991, and led several movements against its impact on Indian society.

In an age of corruption and compromised political ideals, he stood above the squalor of petty realpolitik, maintaining his dignity through his rectitude and near-legendary honesty.

For last 10 years of his life he fought for free health and education. He is known as an honest politician and a fierce socialist leader/activist who never compromised on his morals and values during his career. He was one of the few prominent survivors of socialist movement in India.

Vaidya was among the last in a fading constellation of socialist leaders. Renowned for probity in public life, he was a staunch adherent of socialist values and ideals. RIP Bhai Vaidya.

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Kashmiri Pandits' Dilemma

Kuldip Nayar

Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has said that the Kashmiri pandits should visit their place of origin, meaning thereby the valley. Her remark is like splashing salt on the wind. The pandits were forcibly ousted from Kashmir in 1993. Their fault was that they were Hindus in the 90-percent Muslim Valley.

Former state chief minister Farooq Abdullah has admitted in a public statement that no Muslim from the valley objected to their ouster. It is, indeed, true. He resigned from the position of chief minister

which led to presidential rule in J&K. It is alleged that then governor Jagmohan was primarily responsible for facilitating the exodus of Kashmiri pandits. The day he was appointed as governor, a large number of Kashmiri pandits were forced to leave the valley because of his pro-Hindu stance.

It was being alleged that security forces searched each and every house in Srinagar when hundreds of militants were found to be in possession of weapons. Most of them were arrested but during the

operation, which led to Gawkadal massacre, questions came to be raised on the role of the governor. Jagmohan, who was very close to Sanjay Gandhi, was also instrumental in forcefully destroying many slums in Delhi in the name of beautification.

The Kashmiri pandits began to leave the Valley in greater numbers in the 1990s during the eruption of militancy, following persecution and threats by radical Islamists and militants. In 2010, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir noted that

808 pandit families were still living in the Valley, and that the financial and other incentives put in place to encourage others to return there had been unsuccessful.

According to a Jammu and Kashmir Government report, 219 members of the community had been killed in the region between 1989 and 2004 but none thereafter. However, in July 2017, the Supreme Court refused to reopen 215 cases in which over 700 members of the Kashmiri pandit community were killed in Jammu and Kashmir in 1989, citing the passage of time.

The appeal now by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is a step in the right direction. During her appeal, following an interaction with Kashmiri pandits in Delhi, she said that “Kashmiri Pandits should visit Kashmir (and) their younger generations should see where their roots really lie. We will make all arrangements. Whatever has happened in the past is unfortunate but now we will have to move forward,” she said.

In fact, she also urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take a leaf out of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's book and initiate a dialogue with Pakistan. “I urge Prime Minister Modi to talk to Pakistan just like Vajpayee ji did. Neither are we nor is Pakistan in a condition to fight a war, both countries know now that if there will be a war, nothing will be spared. Both the nations will just lose everything,” she added.

I do agree with her because this is not a Hindu-Muslim question and should not be made into one. All political parties need to initiate steps which will enable the pandits to return to the Valley. Most of their

property is intact. The rest must be taken back from the people who have occupied it forcibly or otherwise.

I recall the Hurriyat leader, Syed Shah Gillani, vehemently denying that it was Hindu-Muslim question. At that time, the bug of fundamentalism had not bitten Gillani. He may not have changed his views. But he is conspicuous by his silence. He should have renounced his earlier stance: the Kashmiri pandits are part of our culture and should not be mixed with the general Hindu-Muslims question. Gillani, in fact, told me that he had wrongly stated earlier that the Kashmiri pandits' question would be settled with the overall Kashmir dispute.

But Home Minister Rajnath Singh has unnecessarily given an opening to those who argue that Kashmir is an unfinished task of partition. They want the state to be divided on religious grounds. Someday they will also try in Pakistan to re-emphasise their contention that the criterion of religion—on the basis of which India was divided—should be extended to Jammu and Kashmir.

Then chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayyed had mooted an idea of having a separate area where the Kashmiri pandits can safely reside. At present, 30,000 of them are reportedly in Kashmir while their total number is around four lakh. As long as Sheikh Abdullah was dominant in the affairs of Kashmir, he did not allow religion to play any role in politics. He would say that he was opposed to the state's integration with Pakistan because Jammu and Kashmir was a secular state. He did not want to join an Islamic country because he preferred

pluralism to communalism.

Even during the independence struggle, the Sheikh sided with the Congress instead of the Muslim League which demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims. He paid the price for being critical of New Delhi's policy of wanting a strong Centre. After being detained for 12 years at Kodaikanal in the South, he stayed with the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to register that Nehru had realised his mistake of misjudging the Sheikh when he demanded that the Centre should only administer three subjects—Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications—as was offered at the time of partition.

The Sheikh's famous statement was that Kashmiris would not eat Indian wheat if it meant compromising their autonomous status. The Sheikh's faith in secularism was deep although he wondered whether India would stay pluralist in the long run.

Whether the Kashmiris realise it or not, in the expulsion of Kashmiri pandits, they have lost the services of highly trained people. The pandits have gone to other parts of India and have found jobs because of their high qualifications. They are not likely to go back even if the state offers them equivalent jobs. In fact, Kashmir has lost the cream of youth which is technically well equipped to help the state develop economically.

Yet Srinagar should make efforts to get the pandits back because that will give them the secular image which they had enjoyed for decades. Lack of efforts on this front would only alienate them from the rest of the country where the Kashmiris are gainfully employed.

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Rewriting of History and Sectarian Nationalism

Ram Puniyani

With the Hindu nationalist BJP in the seat of power, an exercise in history writing is being undertaken on lines parallel to what was done in Pakistan. So far we did keep hearing loudly about the communal version of medieval history, where villainous foreigners, the Muslim kings, attacked India, spread Islam and destroyed Hindu temples. The latest sample of this version is seen in the glorification of Rana Pratap as a great Hindu nationalist, freedom fighter, etc. Lately it is being said that he had defeated Akbar's army in Haldighati! Another theory being propounded is that Aryans, from whom Hindus are supposed to have derived their lineage, were the ancient natives of this land and that Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were part of Aryan culture!

Now to put an official seal on "Hindu first" version of history, the Modi Government has appointed a committee, the aim of which is to work on these lines so as to prepare a report which will form the basis for making the syllabus of school books. The panel is referred to in government documents as the committee for "holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture since 12,000 years before present and its interface with other cultures of the world". Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma, while announcing the panel said that the long-taught version that people from central Asia arrived in India only some 3,000 to 4,000 years ago and transformed the population needs questioning.

In this panel, one aspect which is the major focus of study is ancient Indian history, especially the origin of Aryans. There are various versions of this. Jyoti Rao Phule attributed the coming of Aryans to be the invasion which led to the oppression of low castes here. Lokmanya Tilak went by the theory that Aryans, the people of a superior race, had come from Arctic zone. While the RSS's second Sarsanghchalak did not want to contradict Tilak, he was also aware that if Hindu superiority and exclusive ownership of this land is to be asserted, Aryans have to be presented as the 'original natives'. And so he claimed that while Tilak was right in saying that Aryans came from Arctic zone, the Arctic zone was earlier located in our Bihar and Orissa areas and later shifted to north through the movement of the land mass!

The primary source for theories about the origins of Aryans in the Indian subcontinent has been the study of Indo-Aryan languages. The major current theory is that there might have been several waves of migration, through which the Aryans came here. The remains of the Indus valley civilisation, as well as Harappan and Mohenjo-daro culture show that this was an urban culture. On the other hand, the Vedas, the major source for understanding Aryans, show that they were a village-based pastoral society. Thus, the two cultures are very different from each other, proving that there is no continuity between the people of the Indus valley culture and

the later Vedic people. However, RSS historiography has nothing to do with historical evidence; they believe in concocting evidence to prove their theories. To prove that the Indus valley civilisation was Vedic, RSS historians have tried to manipulate evidence on a computer to show that a unicorn depicted on a broken Harappan seal is actually a horse and is therefore an Aryan seal—the Indus valley people did not have horses, whereas the Vedic people had horses.

Today, there are various genetic studies too which prove the migration of Aryans into India from Central and Western Asia. Now, a committee with a prime mandate of 'Hindu First' has been asked to prepare a report. Why this wasteful exercise in the face of so many other pressing problems? Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, 'History is to Nationalism, what poppy is to an opium addict!' Sectarian nationalism always wants to take its history as back as possible to strengthen its claim of exclusive control over the land. In Pakistan the marginalisation of Hindu minority has run parallel with the theory that Pakistan was formed with Mohammad bin Kasim winning over Sind. In their syllabi, all Hindu kings are missing, the role of Indian National Congress, Gandhi and Nehru in the freedom struggle is not mentioned. Here in India, Hindu nationalists begin with the political assertion first formulated by Savarkar that all those regarding this land as 'holy land and father land' are Hindus. So logically, the ancient

lineage has to begin with Hindus, irrespective of the fact that the word Hindu itself came into vogue in the 8th century.

It is remarkable that leaders of Indian nationalism, Gandhi (in his book *Hind Swaraj*) and Nehru (in his classic *Discovery of India*), saw the country as belonging to people of all religions, with the interaction between religions giving rise to a syncretic plural culture, giving rise to aspects of unity in diversity. The cultures interact, influence each other and change over a period of time, all the time. This is what came out in the very significant UN document 'Alliance of Civilisations'. For academic interest, genetic studies have already shown that the birth of

Man took place in South Africa, from where humans moved to all over the globe, debunking Eurasian origin theory. The interaction of cultures is not one sided, it is a process taking place over time and evolving. The UN document concludes that all the societal progress has been due to the interaction of cultures. This is the view of inclusive Indian nationalism as well.

In Hindu nationalist view, which is being espoused by Modi and company for this panel, 'Hindu first' is the starting presumption. It can be understood that all observations and results of this panel will be guided by that dictum. The construction of past for present political goals is with the aim of deriving legitimacy

to suppress and marginalise those who do not fit into their definition of Hindu, or to force everybody to adopt Hindu norms as defined by them. A deliberate attempt is being made to 'pick and choose' those aspects from the past which give foundation to Hindu sectarian nationalism. The aim of this entire exercise is to prove that Hindu lineage goes several thousand years into the past; even though the fact is, this should not matter in a democracy. The Indian Constitution correctly begins with 'We the People of India'; in contrast to this, the statement, 'We the Hindus' is being gradually made to dominate.

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Against False Conflation: JFK, MLK, and the Triple Evils

Paul Street

Two Murders

I do not pretend to know the full stories behind the assassinations or executions of either John F. Kennedy (JFK) or Martin Luther King, Jr., the latter killed in Memphis, Tennessee, exactly 50 years ago today. Were one or both them killed by lone gunmen? By the CIA? The FBI? Organized crime? The US military? Some combination of these?

There are good reasons to doubt the official stories and suspect 'deep state' conspiracies in both cases. But don't ask me for any definitive answers. I don't have any and I doubt I ever will. (Don't ask me about Bobby Kennedy either).

I can, however, definitively mark as absurd the messages I periodically get from purportedly left people telling me to see the killing of JFK

in the same light as the murder of Dr. King—as if both iconic 1960s figures were great peoples' leaders fighting heroically for racial equality, social justice and peace.

JFK Atop the Triple Evils

That, it can be definitively said, is nonsense. The super-wealthy corporate-liberal and proto-neoliberal JFK spent the lion's share of his presidency on the wrong side of each of what King called "the triple evils that are interrelated": racism, economic injustice (capitalism) and militarism. Kennedy is a false progressive idol of the highest order.

Let's start with the second of King's "triple evils"—class rule. "The role played by twentieth-century Presidents," political

scientist Bruce Miroff noted 42 years ago, "has been characteristically conservative. 'Liberal' as well as 'conservative' Presidents . . . have bent their strongest efforts, not to alter, but to preserve America's dominant institutions. Whatever their professed sympathies, their actions have served, not to redistribute wealth and power, but to perpetuate existing inequalities . . . [serving as] central figures in the maintenance of established [hierarchical] socioeconomic arrangements."

As Miroff demonstrated in his forgotten 1976 classic *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*, JFK was no exception to the rule. More than a decade before neoliberal Democrats emerged to explicitly steer the Democratic Party further to the

corporate right, JFK's superficially declared sympathies for the poor and working-class took a back seat in his White House to "the real determinants of policy: political calculation and economic doctrine."

As Miroff explained, political cunning "led Kennedy to appease the corporate giants and their allies in government." Economic doctrine "told him that the key to the expansion and health of the economy was the health and expansion of those same corporate giants. The architects of Kennedy's 'New Economics' liked to portray it as the technically sophisticated and politically neutral management of a modern industrial economy. It is more accurately portrayed as a pragmatic liberalism in the service of corporate capitalism."

The regressive nature of JFK's "New Economics" was cloaked by his recurrent, much-publicised spats with certain members of the business community (the executives of US Steel above all), his repeated statements of concern for labor and the poor, and his claim to advance a purely "technical" and "pragmatic" economic agenda that elevated "practical management" and administrative expertise above the "grand warfare of ideologies."

JFK inhabited the same centrist, cautious, cunning and "pragmatic" place on the first of King's "triple evils"—racism. Kennedy might have found it politically useful to intervene on King's behalf during the latter's jailing in the election year of 1960 and, later, to wrap himself in the aura of racial progress and equality by offering some partial and belated federal protections to the civil rights movement (CRM). But the Kennedy administration worked hard to divide and dilute

the CRM, seeking to channel it into staid and narrow legal and electoral grooves. The JFK White House gave some elementary shelter to activists and Southern blacks only when the president and his practically co-presidential brother and Attorney General Bobby Kennedy calculated that rabid white Southern reaction was undermining their ability to sell the United States as a model of enlightened "democracy" in its Cold War contest with the Soviet Union for the allegiances of the nonwhite Third World.

Subsequent elitist 'Mississippi Burning' revisionism notwithstanding, the Kennedy administration was no great friend of the struggle for black equality. Its response to the black freedom movement was dominated by the tension between two competing political calculations: (1) the threat of politically alienating white Americans, above all traditionally Democratic and white Southerners; and (2) the risk of losing Third World hearts and minds in the supposed US struggle to advance 'freedom and democracy'. Kennedy and his brother bent over backward to accommodate Southern racists, leaving them feeling free to kill and maim civil rights activists in the deep South. When the federal Civil Rights Commission announced that it would investigate racist violence in Mississippi, the younger Kennedy denounced the commission as being like the House Un-American Activities Committee "investigating Communism." When NAACP leader Medgar Evers was shot down in his own driveway, Bobby Kennedy said that it was not the federal government's job to protect black activists. It was up the state of Mississippi.

The real experience and struggles of black Americans were not an especially relevant concern to the Kennedys. When Southern racist authorities managed to defeat the CRM without politically problematic and embarrassing violence (as in Albany, Ga., in 1962), the Kennedy administration was happy to withhold protection from King and his fellow activists. When racist police commissioner Bull Connor attacked black protesters in Birmingham, Ala., with high-pressure water hoses, dogs and batons in May 1963, JFK complained that the demonstrations were making the US "look bad in the world" and Bobby Kennedy claimed that 90 percent of the protesters had no idea why they were in the streets. Along the way, Kennedy appointed at least five segregationists to the federal judiciary, turning to the racist Mississippi senator, James Eastland, for advice on appointments. The Kennedy brothers were inordinately obsessed with alleged Communist connections to King and the CRM. They approved racist FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's regular and relentless police state surveillance, smearing and infiltration of the movement.

This ugly Kennedy history would be less surprising to liberals, perhaps, if they would carefully read JFK's bestselling, Pulitzer Prize-winning 1957 book *Profiles in Courage*. There, Kennedy foretold his coming weak civil rights record, purveying Southern white historical mythology by referring to the Reconstruction era after the Civil War as a "black nightmare . . . nourished by Federal bayonets."

Turning to King's third evil, JFK's foreign policy record was militantly imperial and militarist,

contrary to subsequent liberal and left hagiographers' weird determination to reinvent him as a man of the left. As Noam Chomsky noted in his 1993 study *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture*, "One of the most significant legacies left by the [Kennedy] Administration was its 1962 decision to shift the mission of the [US-funded, equipped, and trained] Latin American military from 'hemispheric defense' to 'internal security'," leading, in the words of Kennedy's top Latin American counter-insurgency planner (Charles Maechling) to "direct [US] complicity" in "the methods of Heinrich Himmler's extermination squads. The shift to deadly internal repression was a natural corollary to Kennedy's "export-promoting" Alliance for Progress "development program," which benefited Latin American elites while drastically increasing Latin American unemployment.

When Kennedy was assassinated, the CIA and JFK's advisers were working with his approval to overthrow a democratically elected government and install a fascist military dictatorship in Brazil. The plan was carried out months later. "Brazil," Chomsky observed 11 years ago, "had a moderately populist-democratic government in the early 1960s. The Kennedy administration organised a military coup that imposed a neo-Nazi national security state that was the first of the plague that then spread throughout the continent to Chile, Argentina, Central America and then became one big massacre."

In Cuba, where Washington's Third World fascist allies had been overthrown and forced to flee after Fidel Castro and Che Guevara led a

popular socialist revolution in 1959, the Kennedy administration made repeated attempts to assassinate the nations' leaders and launched an ongoing campaign of terror and sabotage. After the US-run Bay of Pigs invasion operation that Kennedy inherited from Dwight Eisenhower failed spectacularly in its efforts to spark a rebellion against Castro in April 1961, Kennedy "asked his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy," writes historian Piero Gleijeses, "to lead the top-level interagency group that oversaw Operation Mongoose, a program of paramilitary operations, economic warfare, and sabotage he launched in late 1961 to visit the 'terrors of the earth' on Fidel Castro and, more prosaically, to topple him." This explicit terror campaign included the murder of 400 Cuban factory workers in early November 1962, less than two weeks after the Cuban missile crisis.

Kennedy understood the thoroughly conditional nature of "democracy" as a US foreign policy objective when he remarked that while the U.S. would prefer democratic regimes abroad, it will choose "a [pro-American dictator] Trujillo" over "a ['anti-American' dictator] Castro" if those were the only choices. "It is necessary only to add," Chomsky observed in 1991, that Kennedy's "concept of 'a Castro' was very broad," including anyone who challenged US power and global capitalism.

Then there's Vietnam. Kennedy "raised the level of [US] attack [on Indochina] from international terrorism to outright aggression in 1961-62," Chomsky said, justifying the use of US airpower to napalm social revolutionaries, defoliate Vietnamese countryside

and slaughter innocent peasants with the false claims that "we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless [Soviet-Marxist] conspiracy" and that failure to stop "Communism" in Vietnam would open the gates to Soviet world domination. After the epic failure of the CIA's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the erection of the Berlin Wall in East Germany, Kennedy told *The New York Times'* James Reston in late 1961 that "[n]ow we have a problem in making our [anti-Communist Cold War] power credible, and Vietnam is the place."

Would Kennedy, as some of his liberal and left fans like Oliver Stone and James K. Galbraith (son of JFK assistant John Kenneth Galbraith) claim, have withdrawn US forces from Vietnam had he not been assassinated in late November of 1963? (Stone even made a blockbuster movie to claim that the supposed peace advocate JFK was murdered by the CIA to permit US escalation in Vietnam under the leadership of Lyndon Johnson, portrayed as an agent of the defense industry and right-wing military officers.). This has been a topic of dispute between and among left and liberal historians and researchers, including Rick Perlstein, Galbraith, Stone and Chomsky. They dispute the significance and meaning of JFK's apparent October 1963 'decision' and plan to remove US troops from Vietnam by the end of 1965. The winners in the debate are Perlstein and Chomsky, who correctly observe that that Kennedy's "withdrawal plan" was conditional on full US victory over the Vietnamese revolution and independence movement. It would not have been carried out, given harsh realities on the ground. As

Perlstein noted five years ago:

[W]hether John F. Kennedy's formal decision would be carried through in the interim between October 1963 and January 1966 was contingent on what happened in the future. One day this summer I issued a formal decision to go the beach. Then it rained. And so I did not go to the beach . . . And as anyone who knows anything about the Vietnam War knows, the people funneling intelligence to the president were alarmingly adept ('the military phase of the war can be virtually won in 1963') at claiming the sun was shining when it actually was pouring down rain. In fact, when it came to America's military prospects there, it was winter in Seattle just about all the time.

JFK's late-in-life public statements were consistent with Chomsky and Perlstein's sense that the doomed young president had no intention of pulling back from his mass-murderous assault on Vietnam until US "victory" was attained. In Fort Worth, just hours before the assassination, for example, Kennedy said that "without the United States, South Vietnam would collapse overnight." In the speech he would have delivered in Dallas, Kennedy was going to say that the US, in its role as "watchman on the walls of world freedom," had to carry out duties that were "painful, risky and costly, as is true in Southeast Asia today. But we dare not weary of the task." In repeated public statements in the summer and early fall of 1963, Kennedy left no doubt that for him, withdrawal without "victory" was

unthinkable.

Even if Kennedy had survived and removed US forces from Vietnam, this would have meant only that JFK had decided that US-trained and US-equipped South Vietnamese troops and the US-funded regime of South Vietnam were capable of defeating the Vietnamese revolution without the further engagement of US troops—on the model, say, of the mass-murderous US-backed Suharto government in Indonesia.

The most nauseating claim made by members of the liberal Jack Kennedy cult holds that JFK heroically saved humanity from nuclear annihilation during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. I have shown in my previous writings (see my essay *The Cuban Missile Crisis vs. the Korean Missile Crisis*) that the truth is precisely the opposite. "In effect," the British journalist Joseph Richardson noted five years ago in an article properly titled *JFK's Lunatic Priorities During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, "Kennedy's government was prepared to risk a nuclear conflagration to safeguard US prestige. [Kennedy's] Secretary of State Dean Rusk jubilantly exclaimed after the first Soviet ships opted not to run the American blockade that 'we're eye ball to eye ball and I think the other fellow just blinked.'"

Had the Soviets not blinked, it is likely Rusk would not have been around to give his reaction. But for Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's determination to let humanity survive and the heroic intervention of a Soviet submarine commander named Vasili Arkhipov beneath the Western Atlantic in the early evening of October 27, 1962, it seems likely that Kennedy's reckless naval blockade and nuclear machismo

would have set off World War III. At the same time, Kennedy set the stage for the Strangelovian "one minute to midnight" moment by dramatically escalating the international arms race and with his incursions into Cuba, which provoked Castro into seeking a Soviet nuclear shield against US invasion.

Despite all this and more, JFK still maintains a strange reputation as an agent of peace and social justice among certain persistently deluded and bamboozled people of "the left." As the "Unrepentant Marxist" Louis Proyect noted in a sharp 2005 reflection on JFK's undeserved progressive standing, "the search for enlightened bourgeois leadership [past and present] seems never-ending."

MLK Against the Triple Evils

King, by contrast, really was a people's champion—never more than in his final year. You wouldn't know this from the neo-McCarthyite, and whitewashed narrative of King that is purveyed across the nation every year, especially during and around the national holiday that bears his name. This domesticated, bourgeois airbrushing portrays King as a mild liberal reformist who wanted little more than a few basic civil rights adjustments in a supposedly good and decent American System—a loyal supplicant who was grateful to the nation's leaders for finally making noble alterations.

This official Orwellian commemoration never says anything about the Dr. King who studied Marx sympathetically at a young age and who said in his last years that "if we are to achieve real equality, the United States will have to adopt a modified form of socialism." It deletes the King who wrote that

“the real issue to be faced” beyond “superficial” matters was the need for a radical social revolution. It deletes the King who went on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in late 1967 to reflect on how little the Black freedom struggle had attained beyond some fractional changes in the South. He deplored “the arresting of the limited forward progress” Blacks and their allies had attained “by [a] white resistance [that] revealed the latent racism that was [still] deeply rooted in US society.”

“As elation and expectations died,” King explained on the CBC, “Negroes became more sharply aware that the goal of freedom was still distant and our immediate plight was substantially still an agony of deprivation. In the past decade, little has been done for Northern ghettos. All the legislation was to remedy Southern conditions—and even these were only partially improved.”

Worse than merely limited, King felt, the gains won by Black Americans during what he considered just the “first phase” of their freedom struggle (1955–1965) were dangerous in that they “brought whites a sense of completion”—a preposterous impression that the so-called “Negro problem” had been solved and that there was therefore no more basis or justification for further black activism. “When Negroes assertively moved on to ascend to the second rung of the ladder,” King noted, “a firm resistance from the white community developed . . . In some quarters it was a courteous rejection, in others it was a singing white backlash. In all quarters unmistakably, it was outright resistance.”

Explaining to his CBC listeners the remarkable wave of race riots

that washed across US cities in the summers of 1966 and 1967, King made no apologies for Black violence. He blamed “the white power structure . . . still seeking to keep the walls of segregation and inequality intact” for the disturbances. He found the leading cause of the riots in the reactionary posture of “the white society, unprepared and unwilling to accept radical structural change,” which “produc[ed] chaos” by telling Blacks (whose expectations for substantive change had been aroused) “that they must expect to remain permanently unequal and permanently poor.”

King also blamed the riots in part on Washington’s imperialist and mass-murderous war on Vietnam—the war that JFK initiated and had no intention of pulling back from short of US “victory.” Along with the misery it inflicted on Indochina, King said, the United States’ savage military aggression against Southeast Asia stole resources from Lyndon Johnson’s briefly declared and barely fought “War on Poverty.” It sent poor Blacks to the front killing lines to a disproportionate degree. It advanced the notion that violence was a reasonable response and even a solution to social and political problems.

Black Americans and others sensed what King called “the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same school. We watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realise that they would never live on the same block in Detroit,” King said on the CBC, adding that he “could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.”

Racial hypocrisy aside, King said that “a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense [here he might better have said “military empire”] than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.”

Did the rioters disrespect the law, as their liberal and conservative critics alike charged? Yes, King said, but added that the rioters’ transgressions were “derivative crimes . . . born of the greater crimes of the . . . policy-makers of the white society,” who “created discrimination . . . created slums [and] perpetuate unemployment, ignorance, and poverty . . . [T]he white man,” King elaborated, “does not abide by law in the ghetto. Day in and day out he violates welfare laws to deprive the poor of their meager allotments; he flagrantly violates building codes and regulations; his police make a mockery of law; he violates laws on equal employment and education and the provision of public services. The slums are a handiwork of a vicious system of the white society.”

Did the rioters engage in violence? Yes, King said, but noted that their aggression was “to a startling degree . . . focused against property rather than against people.” He observed that “property represents the white power structure, which [the rioters] were [quite understandably] attacking and trying to destroy.” Against those who held property “sacred,” King argued that “Property is intended to serve life, and no matter how much we surround with rights and respect, it has no personal being.”

What to do? King advanced radical changes that went against the grain of the nation’s corporate state, reflecting his agreement with

New Left militants that “only by structural change can current evils be eliminated, because the roots are in the system rather in man or faulty operations.” King advocated an emergency national program providing either decent-paying jobs for all or a guaranteed national income “at levels that sustain life in decent circumstances.” He also called for the “demolition of slums and rebuilding by the population that lives in them.”

His proposals, he said, aimed for more than racial justice alone. Seeking to abolish poverty for all, including poor whites, he felt that “the Negro revolt” was properly challenging each of what he called “the interrelated triple evils” of racism, economic injustice/poverty (capitalism) and war (militarism and imperialism). The Black struggle had thankfully “evolve[ed] into more than a quest for [racial] desegregation and equality,” King said. It had become “a challenge to a system that has created miracles of production and technology” but had failed to “create justice.”

“If humanism is locked outside the [capitalist] system,” King said on CBC five months before his assassination (or execution), “Negroes will have revealed its inner core of despotism and a far greater struggle for liberation will unfold. The United States is substantially challenged to demonstrate that it can abolish not only the evils of racism but the scourge of poverty and the horrors of war.”

There should be no doubt that King meant capitalism when he referred to “the system” and its “inner core of despotism.” This is clear from the best scholarship on King, including David Garrow’s epic, Pulitzer Prize-winning biography,

Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Council (HarperCollins, 1986).

No careful listener to King’s CBC talks could have missed the radicalism of his vision and tactics. “The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both White and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society,” King said. “They must organise a revolution against that injustice,” he added.

Such a revolution would require “more than a statement to the larger society,” more than “street marches” King proclaimed. “There must,” he added, “be a force that interrupts [that society’s] functioning at some key point.” That force would use “mass civil disobedience” to “transmute the deep rage of the ghetto into a constructive and creative force” by “dislocate[ing] the functioning of a society.”

“The storm is rising against the privileged minority of the earth,” King added for good measure. “The storm will not abate until [there is a] just distribution of the fruits of the earth.” The “massive, active, nonviolent resistance to the evils of the modern system” that King advocated was “international in scope”, reflecting the fact that “the poor countries are poor primarily because [rich Western nations] have exploited them through political or economic colonialism. Americans in particular must help their nation repent of her modern economic imperialism.”

King was a democratic socialist mass-disobedience-advocating and anti-imperialist world revolution advocate. The guardians of national memory don’t want you to know about that when they purvey the official, doctrinally imposed

memory of King as an at most liberal and milquetoast reformer. (In a similar vein, our ideological overlords don’t want us to know that Albert Einstein [*Time* magazine’s “Person of the 20th Century”] wrote a brilliant essay making the case for socialism in the first issue of venerable US-Marxist magazine *Monthly Review*—or that Helen Keller was a fan of the Russian Revolution.)

The threat posed to the official bourgeois memory by King’s CBC lectures—and by much more that King said and wrote in the last three years of his life—is not just that they show an officially iconic gradualist reformer to have been a democratic socialist opponent of the profits system and its empire. It is also about how clearly King analysed the incomplete and unfinished nature of the nation’s progress against racial and class injustice, around which all forward developments pretty much ceased in the 1970s, thanks to a white backlash that was already well underway in the early and mid-1960s (before the rise of the Black Panthers, who liberal historians like to blame for the nation’s rightward racial drift under Nixon and Reagan) and to a top-down corporate war on working-class Americans that started under Jimmy Carter and then went ballistic under Ronald Reagan.

Of the two martyrs JFK and King, only the latter posed radical challenges to American racism, classism, militarism and imperialism. JFK, by contrast, was an agent of each of those and other interrelated evils. If Kennedy was killed by the ‘deep state’, his murder was due to rivalries and resentments within the power elite. It had nothing to do with him posing some threat to the US domestic

and/or imperial order. If King was in fact killed by the military police state (and he may well have been), it's because he truly was an enemy of the reigning American capitalist and imperial system by the end of his life. He would have to be counted as one of many people of color who were murdered by the police state authorities during the 1960s and 1970s, alongside Malcolm X, Bobby Hutton, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark, Lawrence "Buddy" Lamont (Ogala Sioux) and Elliot Lames "LD" Barkley—to name just a handful of those liquidated by the authorities as punishment for engaging in popular resistance in those years.

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

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Rohini Gawankar

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Bhai Vaidya was of a Different Mould

Julio Ribeiro

When I belatedly recognised the man on a bicycle on a crowded street in Pune City, I cut him a salute. I was travelling by car on one of my infrequent visits to Pune and did not expect to see my former boss on a cycle! I had forgotten that Bhai Vaidya was of a different mould than the normal politician. Using a form of transport that he could afford to pay for from his own resources was par for the course.

Bhai Vaidya was the Minister of State for Home in 1980 when I headed the Crime Branch in the Mumbai City Police. The Police Commissioner, Madhusudan Kasbekar, dealt with the Chief Minister and the Home Minister on a daily basis. As Crime Branch chief, I did interact with Bhai Vaidya but not as frequently as the Commissioner.

But Vaidya had more confidence and trust in me than he had for my chief as I found out later. I got a call from him to come and meet him at his home. He told me that he had been approached by a despicable character who wanted some work done for which he offered him a bribe of Rs 2 lakh. He wanted the man caught. I was in a fix. Obviously my boss, the Commissioner had not been informed. The Minister had warned me to not inform him about this operation. I consulted a close confidant in the police who advised me to share this information with the Anti-Corruption Bureau and entrust them with the job. By doing so, I could escape my immediate senior's

wrath. The operation was successful. The criminal was caught red-handed and later convicted.

Bhai Vaidya's wife was a working woman. If my memory serves me correctly, she was a teacher. Every day she set off to work by public transport. Some psychopathic officers tried to convince the Minister to advise his wife to travel in the government car provided to him for official use. Bhai Vaidya refused.

Bhai Vaidya is dead. He was made of different stuff from the politicians of today and even the majority of politicians of his day. I mourn his death as I would for any good man or woman. And in my imagination I will cut him another smart salute.

Courtesy: The Indian Express

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Inequality Neither Inevitable Nor Irreversible in 2018

Earl Bousquet

Once upon a time it was impossible to even think of what inequality looked like around the world. Today, it's being assessed globally—and the pictures emerging are all too ugly.

The latest *World Inequality Report*, published on December 14, 2017, indicates that since 1980 the world's richest 0.1 percent (7,000,000 people) have boosted their wealth by as much as the poorest half of mankind: 3.8 billion people. Since then, the richest 1 percent have 'captured' 27 percent of the world's wealth growth; the 0.1 percent have gained 13 percent and the very top 0.01 percent (76,000 people) have 'collected' 4 percent.

Turbo-charged Inequality

The 100 researchers worldwide who contributed to the report found that inequality has worsened in both the European Union and the United States in the 40 years under review, but the situation is much worse in the United States.

The current annual income of the super-rich 1 percent in the United States has risen since 1980 by 205 percent, while for the top 0.01 percent it has ballooned by 636 percent. At the same time, the average annual wage of the bottom 50 percent (117 million adults) has stagnated at about \$16,000.

The report says the stark difference in wealth distribution in the United States is because "the tax system has become less progressive; the federal minimum wage has collapsed; unions have been weakened, and access to

higher education has become increasingly unequal." In addition, "deregulation in the finance industry and overly-protective patent laws have contributed to booms on Wall Street and in the healthcare sector, which now make up 20 percent of national income."

US President Donald Trump's highly vaunted 'Christmas gift' tax bill, the report says, will not only reinforce this trend, but "will turbocharge inequality in America" because what's presented as "a tax cut for workers and job-creating entrepreneurs" is instead "a giant cut for those with capital and inherited wealth." It will therefore "overwhelmingly benefit shareholders who can reap their additional profits without any extra work."

While inequality has also increased in Western Europe, the researchers found, it's been at a lower rate "as wage inequality has been moderated by educational and wage-setting policies relatively more favorable to low- and middle-income groups."

Hidden Hooks

Former US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders has exposed the hidden hooks in Trump's fishy tax plan. He says that in order to curb a \$1.4 trillion deficit accumulated over 10 years, the Trump plan to railroad \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts through Congress will eventually amount to early and permanent payback rewards for the super-rich who backed his 2016 election campaign, eventually

condemning the middle-class and poor to eternal economic damnation.

Sanders posits that while the tax cuts for the corporations and the super-rich are permanent, benefits to working families will eventually expire after a few years, leaving as many as 83 million middle-class families paying more taxes, but Sanders is not the only critic of the loaded Trump tax bill.

Philip Alston, the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, was equally scathing in his condemnation of the Trump administration's policies and their effect on America's poor.

After touring six American states during a two-week period, he not only denounced growing inequality in the world's richest country, but also accused President Trump of racing to turn the United States into "the world champion of extreme inequality."

But exactly who are the world's richest and poorest: the 1 percent and the 99 percent?

Richest of the Rich

According to the *Bloomberg Billionaires Index*, the world's richest person is Jeff Bezos, the founder and chief executive of Amazon, with his \$98.8 billion fortune. In the space of the past year, his wealth has increased by a whopping \$33 billion.

The world's five richest people are Bezos, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Berkshire Hathaway boss Warren Buffet, Zara owner Amancio Ortega and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, in that order. Between them, they own \$425 billion in

assets, equivalent to one-sixth of the entire GDP of the UK. And Bezos, Buffet and Gates—the top three—own as much as half the entire US population.

Across the Atlantic in the UK, the richest on record is the Hinduja family, which controls a conglomerate of businesses including car manufacturers and banks and is worth \$15.4 billion: just half of Bezos' earnings in a year.

Poorest of the Poor

In the United States, the world's richest country, there are officially 41 million poor people. Almost 13 percent of the population is living in poverty, including 13 million children, with 19 million adults (almost half the total) living in deep poverty and 9 million with no cash income at all.

Blacks comprise 13 percent of the US population, of which 23 percent are officially documented as living in poverty, comprising 39 percent of the nation's homeless. A lesser-known statistic is that the majority living in poverty across the United States—some 27 million—are white.

The UK poverty picture is hardly different. Poverty rates increased to 16 percent for pensioners and 30 percent for children last year, while one in five people (20 percent) are living in poverty.

One in eight UK workers, amounting to 3.7 million people, are not earning enough for their needs, while 40 percent of working-age adults living in poverty have no qualifications, making it even harder to earn better pay.

No Hope

The UK government is being urged by charities and trade unions to

unfreeze benefits; increase training for adult workers, and embark on a more ambitious house-building program to provide affordable homes for struggling families, but none of this seems to be even close to happening anytime soon.

Take the state of the British government's response to the plight of the victims of the west-London Grenfell Tower fire, which killed 70 people—including 18 children—and displaced 210 families in June.

A memorial mass was held at St Paul's Cathedral on December 14 to mark the six-month anniversary of the tragic inferno, attended by representatives of the British Royal Family, as well as Prime Minister Theresa May and Opposition Leader Jeremy Corbin.

The very same day, London health authorities indicated that while thousands of affected extended families and relatives are still mourning, survivors of the disaster face a new wave of post-traumatic stress, with chances of treatment hampered because so many remain homeless.

Only 45 of the more-than 200 affected families have been permanently resettled. Victims still cannot begin proper psychological treatment to address symptoms that include horrific flashbacks. In addition, 426 adults and 110 children are still in treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related issues.

Unhealthy Choices

It's not just in the United States and the UK that poverty is causing people to make stark choices. Almost 100 million people worldwide are pushed into extreme poverty each year because of debts accrued through healthcare expenses.

A report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank on December 13 found that the poorest and most vulnerable people are routinely forced to choose between healthcare and other household necessities, including food and education, subsisting on \$1.90 a day.

The report says that more than 122 million people are forced to live on \$3.10 a day—the benchmark for “moderate poverty”—due to healthcare expenditure. Since 2000, this number has increased by 1.5 percent every year.

The report says that 800 million people spend more than 10 percent of their household budgets on “out-of-pocket” health expenses. Almost 180 million spend 25 percent or more: a number increasing at a rate of almost 5 percent per year, with women among those worst affected.

In addition, only 17 percent of women in the poorest 20 percent of households around the world have adequate access to maternal and child health services, compared to 74 percent of women in the richest 20 percent of households.

Taxation Not Enough

“Progressive income-tax regimes not only reduce post-tax inequality, they shrink pre-tax inequality by discouraging top earners from capturing higher shares of growth via aggressive bargaining for higher pay,” the report's authors conclude.

They also note, however, that taxation alone is not enough to tackle the problem “as the wealthy are best placed to avoid and evade tax, as shown by the recent Panama Papers revelation that 10 percent of the world's wealth is profitably parked in tax havens.”

Taxation of the richest—commensurate with their fortunes—can always go a long way, but this is hardly ever treated with the seriousness necessary, especially when politicians depend on the super-rich for contributions in pursuit of power, as with the Trump tax bill.

Instead of trapping tax-evaders in their countries of origin, the overwhelming gubernatorial tendency in rich countries is to pursue and punish those poor countries that seek to overcome their inherited economic difficulties by offering healthy incentives for investment.

For example, the EU recently published a list of countries it's threatening to punish for not doing enough to dissuade rich tax evaders. All of them are small nations, mainly present and past European and American colonies left to fend for themselves after centuries of exploitation.

The rich, punishing nations harbor ambiguous laws assuring the super-rich that “tax avoidance is legal, but tax evasion isn't.” They also compete to attract the most profitable multinational corporations to their shores by offering over-generous tax-free incentives, allowing them to pay the lowest wages to the greatest numbers of poor workers.

Such ingrained guarantees will continue to widen existing inequality gaps everywhere, until the impoverished majority creates the mechanisms for taking full and real control of their destinies instead of investing their blood, sweat and tears in re-electing parties that promise the best and always deliver the worst.

What Can Be Done?

Across the world, the same questions arise: What's to be done?

Who's to do it? And where to begin?

There is a definite need everywhere to protect poor family households by ensuring the breadwinners not only have jobs, but that salaries ensure they can adequately take care of their families.

The authors of the *World Inequality Report* argue that never mind all these deadly facts, inequality is not inevitable. They argue that given the divergent paths documented, “it is possible for institutions and policymakers to tame the un-equalizing forces of globalization and technological change.”

“Just as the policymakers in the United States have made the distribution of income there less equal, they also have the power to make economic growth more equal again.” They also advise that “given the stagnant wages among the bottom 50 percent since the 1980s, governments should focus on how to create a fairer distribution of human capital, financial capital and bargaining power rather than limiting themselves to the redistribution of national income after taxes.”

This, the *Inequality Report* says, “will involve improving access to education; reforming labor market institutions to boost workers' bargaining power; raising the minimum wage; changing corporate governance to give workers a greater say in how profits are distributed, and making tax systems more progressive.”

The researchers conclude that “the United States has run a unique experiment since the 1980s—and the results have been uniquely disastrous. Bad policy can have a real impact on millions of lives for decades, but what government have

done, they can still undo.”

With 2018 on our doorstep, developing countries can still adopt new approaches to sustainable and sustained future development. Rather than perpetuating dependence on handouts from the super-rich to the extremely poor through the failed “trickle-down” economic formula, poor nations should devise new means of using their inherent natural and human resources to their maximum potential.

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Bhai, We Pledge To Continue the Fight to Fulfil Your Dreams . . .

Our dearest Sathi Bhai Vaidya, veteran socialist leader and ideologue and founder president of Socialist Party (India), passed away on April 2, 2018 at the age of 89. He had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer only a few days ago, and had been hospitalised on March 26.

Bhai, as he was more popularly known and which was how we all addressed him, upheld the banner of socialism all his life. He was uncompromising in his struggle against capitalist globalisation. Whenever called to speak on the growing fascist offensive in the country, he was very clear that it was the twin brother of globalisation, and both needed to be fought together, and only fighting for democracy and secularism without talking of anti-capitalism will not lead us anywhere.

Over the past fourteen years since we established Lokayat, we had been gradually moving towards accepting the philosophy of democratic socialism. With the coming to power of the BJP in 2014 and the aggressive fascist offensive launched by it, we realised the need to not only work more closely but also politically unite with other like-minded socialist groups to fight the twin dangers of capitalist globalisation and fascism. It was mainly because of Bhai's principled stand for socialism and against capitalism and imperialism, his firm stand against opportunism and corruption in politics, his refusal to indulge in unprincipled compromises to somehow form coalitions and come to power, his fame for honesty

and uprightness, that led Lokayat to take the decision to affiliate with Socialist Party (India).

Bhai's simplicity is legendary. He would come down to our programs whenever we invited him and he would freely interact with our activists as an equal, and in all this, he never had any airs despite being such a senior national political leader. When we opened a party office in Gokhale Nagar slum, Bhai came down for its inauguration without any fuss and without bothering how many people would be there; he even offered to contribute Rs 10,000 every year from his pension towards its rent.

Bhai thoroughly enjoyed the songs of our cultural team, and would read all our booklets and give his comments. Whenever we went to his house, he would sit down with us as an equal, and would even make tea for us if the maid was not there at home! He would remember each activist's tastes, and would offer sweets and cakes to those of us fond of sweets, himself taking the pains to take them out from the fridge. There would be many magazines in the magazine rack outside his room, and he would ask us to take them for our activists.

Bhai was fully in agreement with our efforts to build a strong socialist cadre based movement. He came down to inaugurate all our Annual Meetings after we joined SPI, and gave inspiring speeches directed at the large number of youth who came down for the annual gathering. He would even sit through the entire first

session of three hours, appreciating and enjoying our presentations and cultural programmes.

Bhai was seriously concerned about the rapid growth of fascist forces in the country that were threatening the very conception of India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic as enshrined in the Constitution of India. And so, together with Dr G.G. Parikh, he launched the platform 'We the Socialist Institutions' in an effort to bring together all socialist organisations and institutions. Lokayat has played an active role in this platform from the very beginning. Over the last two years since the founding of this platform, we have taken many initiatives, and Bhai was very appreciative of our efforts.

Bhai, we pledge to continue your efforts to bring together all the socialists as well as progressive and left forces of our country to fight the growing fascist onslaught, and build a strong cadre-based socialist movement that will advance the struggle to build a democratic and socialist India.

—Lokayat, Pune

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Union Budget 2018-19: What Is in It for the People?



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Contents

Union Budget 2018–19: Creating a Crisis and Missing the Opportunity to Resolve It / 5

Arun Kumar

To Market, to Market, to Buy a Fat Pig; Home Again, Home Again, Jiggety-Jig: Budgets and People / 10

Dunu Roy

An Anti-People Regimen / 15

Sandeep Pandey And Rahul Pandey

Union Budget 2018-19: A Gender Analysis / 18

Vibhuti Patel

Finance Minister Misrepresents Facts about Aadhaar and Unique ID in His Budget Speech / 21

Gopal Krishna

Nehru's Economic Philosophy / 25

H. Venkatasubbiah

Budget 2018–19: What Is in It for the Common People? / 29

Neeraj Jain

From the Editor's Desk

In this issue of *Janata*, we are announcing a couple of new things and we are very happy to do so. Ever since Surendra Mohan died, the Janata Trust was in a search of an editor who could do justice to the original brief of those who founded the weekly. A few names came up and we contacted each of them one by one, but all pleaded their inability. At last we zeroed in on Neeraj Jain, an excellent activist and an intellectual. Despite his numerous engagements as an activist, he has thankfully agreed.

Readers of *Janata* will be familiar with the name of Neeraj Jain, he has been writing for *Janata* for several years now. He is a former Marxist, who gradually began moving towards the socialist ideology and a deep appreciation of both Gandhi and Ambedkar several years ago. In the long discussions that I have had with him over the past few years, I have found him to be a committed socialist. He has a deep understanding of economic issues and is very concerned about the threat of fascism looming over the country. He has also written several books and booklets, some of which have been published by *Janata*. His writings broadly fit with the frame of *Janata* as it has evolved over the years. And so we decided to offer him the responsibility of editorship of *Janata*.

However, Neeraj Jain set a condition. He said that I should continue with him and I had to agree. So he will be *Janata's* associate editor and will be responsible for all editorial matter and also policies. The Trust also decided to constitute an editorial board to help the editor/editors in helping select the matter and fine-tuning the weekly. We requested some of those who write for *Janata* to be on the editorial board, and we are happy to announce that several of our writers have agreed to be on the

editorial board. They include: Qurban Ali, Nandu Dhaneshwar, B.Vivekanandan, Sandeep Pandey, Sonal Shah and Anil Nauriya.

Janata, launched in 1946 by the stalwarts of Indian socialism, has reflected their views and has uninterruptedly continued to be published all these years, except during the Emergency when it was banned. The weekly treats the glorious past of socialists as its heritage and wishes to cherish it. Socialists defined and redefined their 'ism' in the context of the changing conditions of India, and accordingly *Janata* has moulded itself. India was a colony when *Janata* was launched; soon after, India became independent, but has continued to be hobbled by two hundred years of colonial rule and very strong vestiges of a long feudal past. Socialists in India gave up advocating violence and proletarian dictatorship, in fact, all dictatorships, and embraced democracy and unity of means and ends. In the Indian context, socialists have also been deeply concerned about the problem of caste, and have consistently stood for fighting casteism uncompromisingly. Socialists have also been equally

concerned about the deep-rooted patriarchy plaguing Indian society, and have been passionate advocates of the struggle for gender equality. For socialists, the struggle against casteism and patriarchy have always been important, urgent and immediate issues in the long struggle for building a socialist society. While liberty, equality and solidarity remain universal values that socialists have always upheld, the democratic socialists also brought to the table some new, defining elements. *Janata* has consistently upheld all these core values of the socialist movement. Under the new dispensation, *Janata* will be more vigorous and more informative. At a time when even several socialist activists are not willing to label themselves as socialists, *Janata* will, above all, ensure that the word 'socialism' that is today going out of the country's discourse gets re-popularised.

I take this opportunity to appeal to all readers of *Janata* to help the weekly to continue and grow. But it can grow only if you introduce it to some of your friends.

Dr. G.G. Parikh

The Directive Principles of the Constitution outline in unambiguous terms the orientation of economic policies that future governments should pursue. They direct the State to minimise inequalities and ensure that there is no concentration of wealth in the country. They call upon the State to strive to make available education, healthcare and nutrition to all people of the country. They say that the State should direct its policy to secure for all people an adequate means of livelihood. It should endeavour to secure the right to work, and ensure that people get a decent wage that enables them to have a decent standard of living and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. Most importantly, they call upon the State to endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities.

Even though the Directive Principles of the Constitution are not enforceable by law, as Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had declared in a speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 19, 1948, the Directive Principles are called thus because:

It is the intention of this Assembly that in future both the legislature and the executive should not merely pay lip service to these principles enacted in this part, but that they should be made the basis of all executive and legislative action that may be taken hereafter in the matter of the governance of the country.

Not only that, he further stated:

Our intention is (that) even when there are circumstances which . . . stand in the way of the government giving effect to these Directive Principles, they shall, even under hard and unpropitious circumstances, always strive in the fulfilment of these Directives.

Union Budget 2018–19: Creating a Crisis and Missing the Opportunity to Resolve It

Arun Kumar

The Union Budget 2018–19, presented on February 1, 2018 has confused the lay public. It purports to give something to every section and yet it is being criticised by the Opposition and the media has largely called it an election budget. The implication of the criticism is that the budget does not do what it should have done and instead has indulged in ‘populism’. Usually, when the media calls a policy ‘populist’ it means that it is pro-poor and does not benefit the corporate sector. Another meaning that is attached to such policies is that they are meant to garner votes for the ruling dispensation and after the elections are over they are forgotten. The reality is that in spite of the periodic implementation of the so-called ‘populist’ policies, the lot of the poor in the country has hardly improved. So, how should the Union Budget 2018–19 be interpreted?

I. Background to the Budget

The Union Budget has been presented while the economy is still suffering from the after-effects of twin shocks in the last 15 months. There was the demonetisation in November 2016 and then the implementation of the GST since July 1, 2017. Both these adversely impacted the unorganised sectors of the economy and, therefore, the rate of growth of the economy came down sharply, according to reports from the field. The data for the unorganised sectors comes with a time-lag of a few years; so the methodology of estimation of growth needed to be changed but that was not done. A faulty methodology continued to be used to estimate the growth rate of the economy.

The official data has been consistently talking of a six to seven per cent rate of growth in the last one year. This would be based on the data from the

organised sectors of the economy, even though it is quite likely that this is also an over-estimate. As businessmen say, the economy does not feel like growing at such a high rate since they feel good is not there unlike in 2004 to 2008. Be that as it may, a six per cent rate of growth would be one of the highest rates of growth in the world. If that was so, there should be no crisis in the economy and there should be business as usual. On the other hand, if the growth rate was close to zero or even negative, as this author has repeatedly argued, then this is a cause for worry and something drastic needed to be done in the budget to revive the economy. Some observers have said there is a need to kick-start the economy.

Politically, the impact of the twin shocks on the unorganised sectors was evident from the widespread agitation by farmers all over the country and the demand for loan-waivers across various States. Many States, like Maharashtra and UP, announced loan-waivers to meet the demands of the farmers. The youth have been agitating for jobs given that there was a large-scale impact on the unorganised sector which employs 93 per cent of the workforce, according to the *Economic Survey*. Traders also agitated strongly after the implementation of the GST because it hit their business. They were totally confused by its complexity and implementation problems. The markets were greatly disturbed even in the organised sectors due to these factors.

The markets were greatly confused during the period that demonetisation was implemented because of the almost daily changes in the rules and something similar happened during the time the GST was implemented. The design was faulty and difficulties were not anticipated; so there were

repeated changes in the rules. The notes' shortage continued for a much longer period than the 50 days over which the old notes were returned. Similarly, the impact of the GST also persists.

Given all this, how can the rate of growth not be affected by demonetisation and GST implementation? The impact has been on the decline in demand, slowdown of the economy and fall in the rate of investment in the economy. Credit off-take from the banks declined and that is a sign of a slowdown in the economy. (See my *Demonetisation and the Black Economy* published by Penguin India, 2017)

The BJP has brought the problem on to itself by administering the twin shocks to the economy via the uncalled for demonetisation and a poorly designed and implemented GST. A well-functioning economy has been in a tailspin since November 2016.

Any budget tries to address the emerging problems of the economy in the current year (in which the budget is drafted) and give a push to the new policies that the government would like to implement. So, the budget for 2018–19 was expected to give a push to the economy. The question to ask is: in addition to the other things in the budget, does it address this main problem faced by the economy?

II. Key Policy Announcements in the Budget

It is estimated in the budget that the Union Government will spend Rs 24.4 lakh crore in 2018–19. This works out to 13 per cent of the estimated GDP of Rs 187.2 lakh crore in that year. It is estimated that the expenditures would be 10 per cent more than in the year 2017–18. Revenue expenditures are slated to rise by 10.3 per cent while the capital expenditures are slated to rise by 9.9 per cent. The slated increases are less than the 11.75 per cent increase in the GDP given in the budget document. This is strange if the economy has to be boosted.

It has announced a large number of schemes for the deprived sections. It has also announced increase in expenditures on many of the pre-existing schemes. This is not unusual for most budgets. When Rs 24 lakh crore are available for expenditure, a lot of items can be given small sums of money. Like, giving Rs 1,200 crore for the creation of 1.5

lakh Health and Wellness Centres, Rs 1,290 crore to the National Bamboo Mission, Rs 500 crore to Operation Greens to take care of basic vegetables; Rs 10,000 crore for setting up the Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAIDF) and Animal Husbandry (AHIDF) funds.

There are big-ticket items like institutional credit to the agriculture sector that will increase from Rs 10 lakh crore to Rs 11 lakh crore. The creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural areas will cost Rs 14.34 lakh crore. These huge sums will not come out of the Budget but from the banks and the extra-budgetary and non-budgetary resources.

A major announcement is health insurance for 50 crore people to cover their hospitalisation cost of up to Rs 5 lakh. The allocation for this is small; so it appears that the burden of its implementation would fall on the public sector insurance companies. Just as the cost of the Jan Dhan Accounts fell on the public sector banks. Another interesting scheme is to connect habitations by all-weather roads by 2019. The idea of upgradation of the existing 22,000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) is also innovative but would it lead to the penetration of the organised business at the expense of the small and local businesses?

The question as always with any budget is not announcements but implementation. Thus, the first budget of this government had announced that farm incomes would be doubled by 2022. A laudable goal, but is this feasible? Now, three years down the line, can we say that this is likely to materialise? The *Economic Survey* points out that while output in agriculture has gone up, the incomes have not. Clearly, there is a phenomenal rise in costs; so the increased output has not resulted in additional incomes. The government has now announced that it would fix the Minimum Support Prices for various crops at 50 per cent above cost—a promise made at the time of the 2014 elections. Would this help double farm incomes by 2022?

Other laudable announcements made earlier, like Swachh Bharat, Smart Cities and Good Governance do not seem to be anywhere near yielding the expected results. That is the reason why analysts are skeptical about the large number of announcements in this budget. Many of these announcements are supposed to favour the farmers, the poor, the youth and so on. Given the past experience, many of the

targeted beneficiaries are left wondering if they would get anything. The poor, who are now promised medical insurance for hospitalisation, point to the fact that the crop insurance money that the farmers were supposed to get never came to the farmers and instead went to the insurance companies. Given the poor state of health infrastructure, many wonder if the scheme can deliver to the poor.

The health insurance scheme is desperately needed by the poor given the rising cost of health, especially given the rapidly degrading environment—air, water, food and so on—which is impacting the poor the most. But for this to succeed, a low cost and efficient public health system needs to be in place. Since such a system does not exist, the end result is likely to be another failure of expectation for the poor.

The lesson from this and the past budgets is that in the Part A of his Budget speech, the finance minister announces many things so that it appears that he has taken the interest of every section of society. As pointed out above, in this budget also he has referred to every section of society—farmers, SC/ST, poor, youth and increased allocation to all sectors, whether it be education, health, farming, infrastructure and so on. This is the political part of the budget speech.

The effective part of the Budget speech usually is Part B, where the overall revenues and expenditures are discussed. That is the macro-economic part which determines whether the micro part of the Budget in Part A will work out or not. Policies have a financial component and this is determined by the macroeconomic constraints—how resources are to be allotted to competing demands. This clearly depends on the priorities of the ruling dispensation. If health is a top priority, it would receive a large allocation so that the policy will get implemented, assuming that it is well-thought-out and that the administration is capable of delivering it. It often happens that the funds are allotted to a scheme but remain unspent during the year because the scheme does not take off given the difficulties of implementation.

III. Budgetary Arithmetic and Some Tax Proposals

In the last budget (for the year 2017–18), it was

expected that the rate of growth would be 11.75 per cent and revenues were expected to increase as per this expectation. The revenue deficit was expected to fall to 1.9 per cent of the GDP and the fiscal deficit (a number watched by the international agencies) would turn out to be 3.2 per cent of the GDP. These expectations have been belied. Revenues show a decline of Rs 10,000 crore. But expenditures show an increase of Rs 7,000 crore.

More importantly, capital expenditures show a fall of Rs 36,000 crore over what was expected. This is the important component essential to boost investments in the economy—they have been flagging because the private sector is investing less.

The net result is that the bad deficit, the revenue deficit, has shot up from the expected 1.9 per cent of the GDP to 2.6 per cent of the GDP. The implication is that more of the borrowing is being used for current expenditures by the government. This would lead to a further increase in the interest payment in the coming years since on this part of the borrowing no return would be earned by the government. The fiscal deficit has increased from the expected 3.2 per cent of the GDP to 3.5 per cent. If bank recapitalisation is counted then the fiscal deficit will be even higher.

This increase in the fiscal deficit is neither too big nor too bad as is being made out by the fiscal conservatives who dominate budget-making and the financial markets. According to this line of thinking, the rise in the fiscal deficit above the planned one will lead to a decline in resources available to the private investors. However, this is unlikely when demand is slack and there is spare capacity in industry which is leading to a low level of investment and slow credit off-take. Further, this would boost demand and lead to better capacity utilisation in industry. So, it would crowd in private investment rather than crowd it out as the conservatives suggest.

To control the revenue deficit, there was a need to raise more tax and non-tax revenue. Last year, due to the GST implementation, the revenue collection from indirect tax was for 11 months only. Further, the States had to be compensated for the loss of revenue they suffered. On the non-tax revenue front, there was less of transfers from the RBI (due to the cost of demonetisation) and less from auctions of spectrum. These falls in revenue were compensated by the rise in corporation tax collection and the bonanza from

the tax on petro products.

Surprisingly, the customs duties collection fell sharply in 2017–18 from Rs 2.45 lakh crore to Rs 1.35 lakh crore. They are slated to fall further in 2018–19 to Rs 1.12 lakh crore in spite of the increase in customs duties on all kinds of products announced in the budget of 2018–19. So, while the budget gives the impression of greater protectionism, actually it must be lowering the degree of protection in several areas.

The government has garnered extra resources from disinvestment. Instead of the planned Rs 72,500 crore, a sum of Rs 1,00,000 crore has been raised. For the year 2018–19, disinvestment of Rs 80,000 crore is planned. This is due to the big-ticket item of disinvestment in Air India. Thus, the most rapid disinvestment in the last 28 years since the new economic policies were launched in 1991 is now taking place.

Disinvestment implies that the capital expenditure in the budget is less by this much amount. It crowds out private investment in the economy. The funds, that could have been invested elsewhere by the private sector, are invested in the existing capital while the government uses the money it receives to cover its current expenditures and not to boost capital expenditures.

The big news item for the corporate sector, apart from the slippage in the fiscal deficit target, is the reintroduction of the Long Term Capital Gains (LTCG) tax after a decade. This is crucial for curbing speculative increases in share prices. It should be welcomed but the issue is whether this is the correct time to implement this tax.

There is a portfolio adjustment that has taken place in middle class savings. They find that real estate has been stagnant, gold is not giving much of a return and fixed deposit rates have come down substantially and are giving negative returns after adjusting for tax and inflation. Therefore, huge sums of money were put into the stock markets via the mutual funds. So, even though earnings of companies have not risen much, the price of equity has risen substantially. The P/E ratio, as it is called, has risen to record highs (comparable to the levels in 2007–08 when the stock markets collapsed). The motive of stock market investment is capital gain and not dividend return.

With the LTCG tax, even though it is not too

high, the return on investment in mutual funds and equity will decline; so less money will go into mutual funds and capital gains will reduce. The sharp fall in the markets have signalled that. This makes the markets unstable. There is additional instability due to the lowering of the US corporate tax rates from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, announced in the new tax bill approved in the closing hours of 2017. This could lead to an outflow of capital from the Indian markets to the US. In effect, while the capital gains tax is a good thing to have, it has perhaps been timed poorly. The markets needed to be cooled down before the tax was imposed or at least indexation should have been allowed.

IV. Steps to Boost the Economy

The biggest problem faced by the Indian economy was the slowdown. So, if there is one thing the budget needed to do, it was to give a boost to the economy. Since the unorganised sectors were the ones who got hit the most, the need was to revive the fortunes of the unorganised sector and not just the small and medium enterprises. In last year's budget speech, the FM pointed to six crore enterprises of which only a few lakh come in the tax net. The latter can be affected by the budget, but what about the rest? They need a boost via indirect means. It is the decline in these enterprises that has perhaps given a boost to the organised sector which seems to be growing at about six per cent.

The budget has a package to address the crisis in rural and farm sectors but, as argued earlier, it is grossly under-funded and possibly not well conceived. For instance, the huge health insurance plan has been allotted wholly inadequate funds. Revenue buoyancy is not high enough to collect the needed funds. So, additional large expenditures are only possible if the fiscal deficit is allowed to rise. The government is not willing to do this. It has allowed the fiscal deficit to rise by only 0.3 per cent to 3.5 per cent and even that it has done reluctantly.

If the schemes announced had been properly funded, then the economy would have seen a rise in demand. However, that is unlikely from the budgetary resources. The schemes are dependent on the extra-budgetary resources and on borrowings. The burden of all this would fall on the public sector and its profitability would decline.

There is also the worry about non-implementability of the schemes given the poor governance and inability of the government machinery to deliver. For instance, according to farmers, the crop insurance scheme has not benefited them, instead the benefit has accrued to the private insurance companies. The same could happen in the case of health insurance for the poor. Farmers also do not believe that the scheme of fixing the MSP at 50 per cent above the cost of production would be implemented. It has not been implemented for four years since being promised in the BJP manifesto, even though the PM himself promised that this would be done.

Without demand reviving, investment would not get a boost. It cannot be resolved simply by tackling the huge NPA problem or by giving tax concessions. The Economic Survey had noted that investment governs savings and not the other way round. So, higher profits based not on increased sales but greater tax concessions by themselves would not do the trick.

Since private investment is down, public investment required a boost but that is not in sight in the budget. While infrastructure expenditure has been raised, what was needed was to boost capital expenditures in general, which, as pointed out above, has not been done. The capital expenditures planned for 2018–19 (Rs 3,00,441 crore) are slightly less than what was budgeted in 2017–18 (Rs 3,09,801 crore).

So, if the GDP does not rise by the planned 11.5 per cent, revenues will fall short and the deficit would tend to rise and given the conservative fiscal stance of the government, capital expenditures would again be cut. This would further lower demand and the economy would not get the boost it so badly needs.

V. Conclusion

The BJP created the problems that led to slow economic growth due to the twin shocks it administered in quick succession. The budget of 2018–19 was a chance to give a boost to the unorganised sector so that the economy could revive but that chance has been missed. The need was also to revive investment in the public sector so that the private investment (which is at a record low) could be crowded in, but that is also unlikely given

the stagnancy in capital expenditures and the large disinvestment target.

So, while there are a lot of good schemes that have been announced in the Budget as is usually the case in Part A of the budget speech, their funding and implementability are in doubt. It is in this sense that the benefits of the budget to the poor, farmers, traders and unorganised sectors of the economy are going to prove to be illusive. Even if the economy had revived in a general way they could have benefited, but that is most unlikely.

The Union Budget 2018–19 tried to create a perception of feel good in the population but has not been very successful, given the erosion of credibility of the government because the past announcements have not yielded the desired results. The budget just presented is the last full budget before the next general elections; so it was designed as a pre-election budget. However, as has been argued above, it is unlikely to help boost the sentiment of the people in favour of the ruling dispensation because of lack of credibility. The budget falls between two stools—neither changing perceptions nor giving a boost to the economy.

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To Market, to Market, to Buy a Fat Pig; Home Again, Home Again, Jiggety-Jig : Budgets and People

Dunu Roy

Every year around the middle of March, the Union Budget becomes a great source of much native wisdom as well as entertainment for the nation as analyst after analyst tries to decipher what the current Finance Minister's speech and the numbers in the Budget (as well as the Economic Survey) could possibly mean. This year, this entire drama shifted to a month earlier, as the government advanced the budget presentation to February 1. But in this article I propose to take a look at all the budgets in the closing year of every decade since the nation became "free" to see if there are any trends that emerge that will perhaps make more sense of where the nation is heading during 2018.

Beginning with 1948, when the first budget of India was adopted amid the global chaos post-World War II, and looking at that first decade up to 1958, what seems to emerge is that Indian planning was not only trying to emerge out of the international dynamics of war but also the violence and uncertainty of Partition and the shortage of foodgrains. Hence, the focus during those ten years was to maintain strong armed forces, increase grain production and rehabilitate refugees. In addition, the planners had to grapple with floods, cyclones, famines, earthquakes, and droughts.

This decade, therefore, also saw the government establishing the Planning Commission to make national plans; gradually opening its doors to dollar loans from the Bretton Woods institutions (the 'World' Bank and the International Monetary Fund) for 'development'; and begin building up the public sector to provide the basic infrastructure for that 'development'. Priority was given to the agricultural sector in this phase to produce more food; the maximum rate of income tax was reduced

from 30 per cent to 25 per cent; while essential raw materials and capital/consumer goods had to be imported from abroad.

By 1958 industrial development was rapidly progressing; education was given greater emphasis; and the economy had greatly improved—something that is often forgotten in these days of "growth". The next decade up to 1968 continued to see this increase in industrial and agricultural production with exports growing and imports being reduced. Thus, the government could focus on improving the domestic savings, employment and the investment climate. By the end of the decade, India was actually beginning to provide foreign aid to Bhutan, Nepal and countries in Africa.

From 1968 to 1978 governments had the space to provide more employment opportunities, along with universal social welfare; further expand the public sector; introduce high-yielding varieties and fertilisers into agriculture; and nationalise the banks, insurance companies, mineral industries, and coal mines—all of which provided the base for other sectors. However, Congress governments also began to be replaced by other political parties, there was greater social unrest as different groups began to claim their share of the pie, and this eventually resulted in the declaration of a state of National Emergency.

From 1978 there was, therefore, much greater emphasis on the distribution of benefits to the vulnerable sections, in particular the Scheduled Castes; while the Mandal Commission report provided the basis for reservations in government jobs for Other Backward Castes. In addition, sub-Plans were prepared for the advancement of the Scheduled Tribes. Incentives were given for setting

up of small industries, bank loans and insurance for the self-employed. During the decade efforts were also made to flush out tax evaders and book the profitable corporate sector which was avoiding paying tax.

By 1988, as the Indian economy continued to grow, pressure began to build on the government to open the economy to the global market and the process of 'liberalisation' was set in motion. The import-export policy was 'reformed' to expose Indian industry to competition from foreign companies and financial institutions. The 1997-98 budget reformed tax rates (from peaks of 97.5% in the 1960s) to widen the tax base, while launching the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme (VDIS) to extinguish the black economy. The gains in tax revenues were used to increase public expenditure on social welfare and infrastructure, but these were now 'targeted' at the poor rather than being universal entitlements.

The decade from 1998 to 2008 witnessed the beginning of the change in the economy from manufacturing to the service sector, especially in Information Technology-based industry. This was also accompanied by widespread 'informalisation' of the work force through contractual and casual as well as self-employed routes so as to cut down on expenses and be able to compete in the world market. It was not only private industry that adopted this strategy but also the public sector and government departments. Thus, the city became the 'engine of growth' during this period as it encapsulated high productivity accompanied by low wages.

During the ten years since 2008, all attention has been on the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and how without this growth India cannot pull its people out of poverty. The Great Recession hit the international markets in 2008 but the Indian economy remained resilient mainly because it was not fully integrated into the global economy and the rate of domestic savings continued to provide purchasing power for the stability of the internal market. But in spite of this lesson, the Government has continued to push for more reforms and more liberalisation. The 2018-19 Budget is a good example of how pro-rich steps are made to appear to be 'pro-poor'.

In this budget presented near the end of this decade, many pronouncements have been made but

there are no budgetary provisions to back up those claims. Thus, the agriculture budget may have been increased but there is no indication of how that will free farmers from debt in a sector where there is no adequate return from the market. Similarly, there is supposed to be priority for women and youth but allocations for skill development geared towards generating self-employment, and Direct Benefit Transfer Schemes replacing subsidised food with cash, cannot change the dynamic of a market that is not providing jobs.

This Budget claims to roll out the largest health scheme in the world, but the money provided is for an insurance scheme and 'world-class' specialised institutions that will hardly cater to the poor. The allocation for distress schemes for rural employment under MNREGA will not address the steady decimation of farming, especially with public-private partnerships (PPP) being proposed for irrigation. The education sector is also being steadily privatised, as are public transport (including the Railways), housing, water supply and power generation. The 2018-19 Budget carries a message to the private sector that 'reforms' that favour them are still on track.

Revenue and Expenditure Since 1948

It is within this larger context of how the national economy has changed within the pulls and pressures of the international markets and financial institutions, that it may be possible to have a closer look at the figures that lead up to the 2018-19 Budget. Table 1 gives the Revenue and Expenditure figures (in the second and third row) for every tenth Budget since 1948. The fourth row gives an inflation index so that the figures may be adjusted with 1948 as the base year; while the fifth row provides the population figure (in crore); and based on these figures, in the sixth and seventh row, the per capita Revenue and Expenditure are computed.

When the above data is plotted, as in Figure 1, it shows that over the decades the Revenue and Expenditure targets of Union Budgets for the relevant years have been matched quite closely, except for the 2008-09 Budget when Revenue considerably lagged behind Expenditure. This reveals the important role that borrowings and debt play in keeping the budget balanced and (as we

Table 1: Per capita Revenue and Expenditure Adjusted for Inflation for Every Decade

Budget Year	1948-49	1958-59	1968-69	1978-79	1988-89	1998-99	2008-09	2018-19
Revenue Rs cr.	256	669	1461	3447	7297	11479	15568	29989
Expenditure Rs cr.	257	698	1460	3447	7297	11487	19388	30528
Inflation Index	1	1.14	2.08	4.41	10.28	23.34	38.73	79.99
Population cr.	33	43	53	67	83	102	120	135
Revenue* Rs/cap.	7.77	15.57	27.57	51.45	87.91	112.54	129.73	222.14
Expenditure* Rs/cap.	7.80	16.24	27.54	51.45	87.91	112.62	161.56	226.13

* at prices with 1948 as the base year

shall see later) much of the National Budget now is a manipulation of how to obtain and repay that debt. The gap in 2008–09 is also partially explained by this because the global recession did not permit the government to access loans from the stressed multilateral and bilateral finance agencies.

But Figure 1 also poses the question that if government expenditure on each person annually has increased almost 30 times since Independence (from Rs 8 in 1948 to Rs 226 in 2018 at 1948 prices), then why is it that there is still an estimated 22% of the population under the abysmally low official poverty line of Rs 27.5 per day? That is indeed an interesting question and for the answer it would be

useful to look at how the government expenditure is distributed. This is a tricky exercise because over the past 70 years, the budget heads have not remained the same and there are always little additions and deletions from the general heads which can make interpretation very difficult for the ordinary person. Still, we can try.

Distribution of Government Expenditure

Figure 2 shows that until 1978–79 (until after the liberation of Bangladesh) Defence Services had the lion's share of the budget, decreasing from a high of 47% in 1948–49 to 18% in 1978–79. But after that

Debt Servicing occupied prime position increasing to almost 20%. (This, it should be noted, is the interest paid on the debt and not returning the loan itself.) Debt Servicing began decreasing after a high of 28% of Expenditure in 1998–99. This trajectory fully illustrates the importance of accessing loans from the global centres of finance for the growth of the Indian economy. What is also interesting is how this has influenced the grants made by the Union Government to the States, as that too has rapidly declined after the budget of 1998–99.

The retreat of the government in providing welfare services is

Figure 1: Budgeted per capita Revenue and Expenditure Adjusted for Inflation

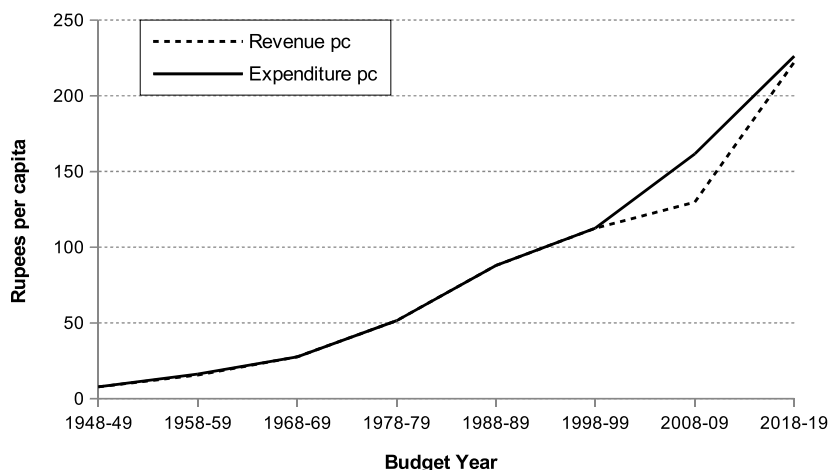
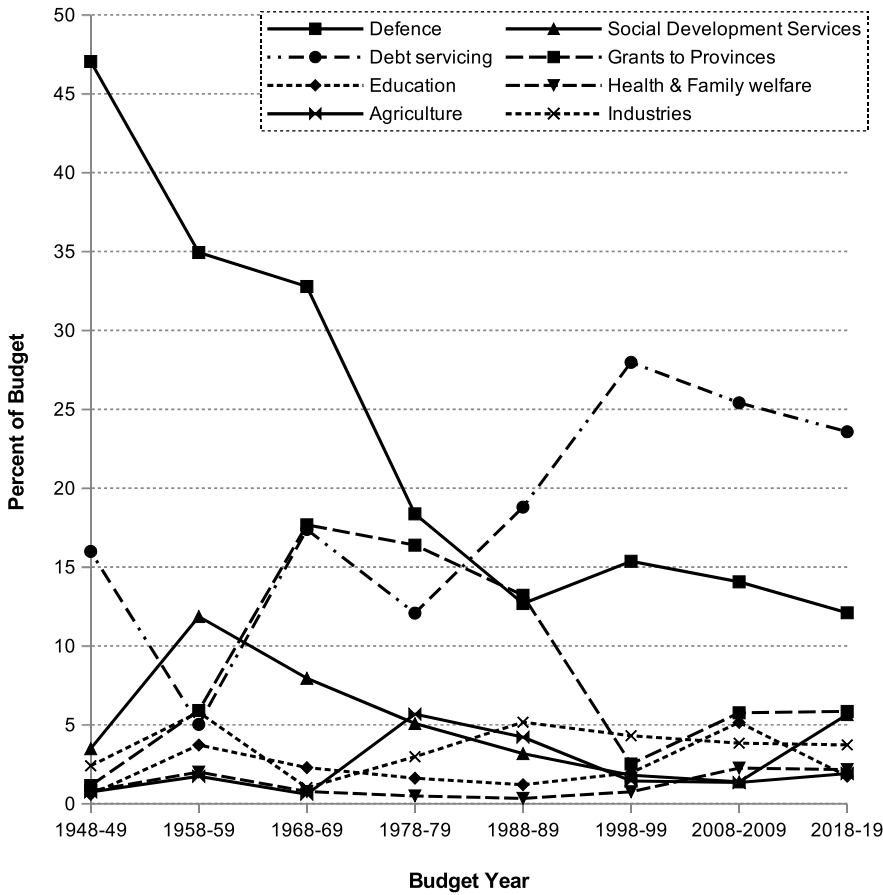


Figure 2: Expenditure Share



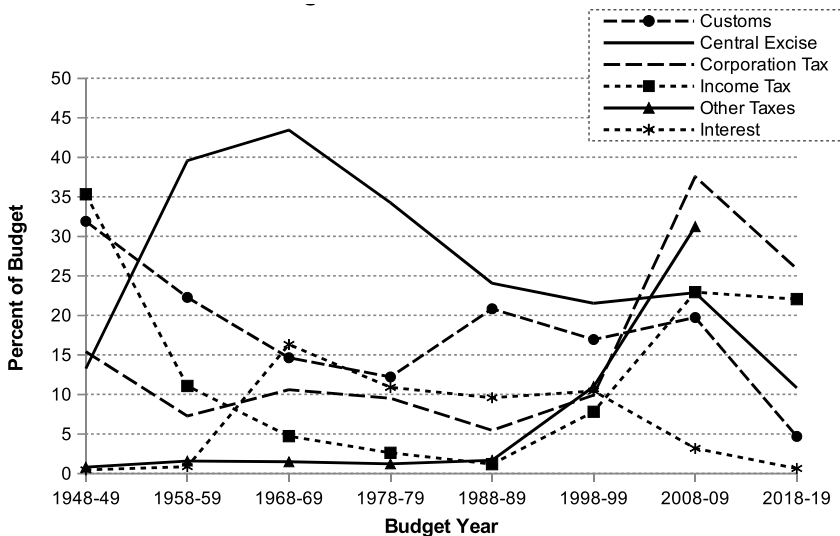
also starkly shown by Figure 2. Social Development Services have steadily decreased from a peak of about 12% of the budget after 1958–59. So have the allocations for health and education from the same year, showing a slight recovery from less than 1–2% to about 4–5% of budget in 2008–09—as has been explained earlier, this is a reflection of the state subsidising private services rather than the citizen. Agriculture and Industry both show a recovery between the years 1978–79 to 1988–89 to a little over 5% each, but after that their place in the national budget declines.

Share of Various Sources in Revenue

Finally, how is the Government of India raising its Revenues? As Figure 3 illustrates, until the early 1980s, the main source was Central Excise, with declining contributions from Income Tax and Customs up to the 1960s. But after liberalisation ‘freed’ the Indian economy, the share of Corporation Tax and Other Taxes has increased sharply, with some assistance from Income Tax. This pattern explains the Government’s vigorous pursuit of General Sales Tax and Corporation Tax because they enable the charges to be passed on to the ordinary citizen, while the share of personal Income Tax from the middle class consumer also increases.

Reading the Budgets in this fashion brings into clear focus how the unfettered market is rapidly overtaking the nation’s economy which is now geared towards attracting foreign investment and paying heavy interests on

Figure 3: Revenue Share



the debts. At the same time, the state is moving away from providing universal welfare to its own population, handing over service after service into the hands of the private corporations. Thus, the average Indian buyer of goods and commodities is at the end of a double whammy. On one hand the consumer contributes heavily to indirect taxes that are used to pay off international debts. On the other hand the private sector extracts more and more as user charges for what used to be public services.

The Budget is opaquely lopsided. While an average of Rs 30,000 is supposed to be spent on every Indian citizen, in fact the wealthy individuals and corporations are extorting far more than their 'fair' share as those at the bottom of the pyramid are denied even a third of what they contribute to the economy where the poverty level is a bare Rs 10,000 per year. This trickle-up of wealth from the bottom to the top, as the fat pigs jiggety-jig crores from the market while the chowkidar looks the other way, is at the core of the Indian fairy tale that successive Finance Ministers have peddled in Parliament since the 1990s.

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Notes:

- Budgets of 1948–49, 1958–59, 1969–70, 1978–79, and 1988–89 have been accessed from the Archive of the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, available at <https://dea.gov.in/budgetdivision/indiabudgetarchive>.
- The 1968–69 Budget speech is from <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/bspeech/bs196869.pdf>, while details of the Budget have extracted from the 1969–70 Budget.
- The Budget for 1998–99 is from Ministry of Finance, <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub1998-99/welcome.html>; <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub1998-99/eb/vol1.htm>; and <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub1998-99/rb/rec.htm>.
- The Budget for 2008–09 is from Ministry of Finance, <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub2008-09/ubmain.htm>; and <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub2008-09/glance.htm>; and

<https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub2008-09/bag/bag1.htm>.

- Details of 2018–19 Budget are at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176062>; <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub2018-19/eb/allsb.pdf>; and openbudgetsindia.org.
- Inflation Index has been computed from the Inflation Record of India (https://www.shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/4319/9/09_chapter%203.pdf) and the Inflation Calculator India 1971–2017 (accessed at <https://www.calculatorstack.com/inflation-calculator-india.php>).

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An Anti-People Regimen

Sandeep Pandey and Rahul Pandey

The 2018-19 budget of the Narendra Modi government has been touted as catering to interests of farmers, rural workers, women, Dalits and small businesses, but nothing can be further from truth. A strikingly paradoxical feature of this budget is the announcement of new schemes for farmers and poor accompanied with a reduction in the funds actually allocated in the budget. For example, allocation for Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojna (rural electrification scheme) has been cut by 30%, from Rs 5,400 crore to Rs 3,800 cr. This budget and this government of Bharatiya Janata Party is probably the most anti-people in the history of independent India as it believes more in publicity than real change.

The farmers have been guaranteed a Minimum Support Price of 1.5 times the cost of their production for kharif crops, which has been a long standing demand of farmers' organisations and recommendation of Swaminathan Commission. However, it has also been said that for some crops farmers are already getting 1.5 times their production cost. It is unclear how the costs are going to be calculated and therefore this has not generated much enthusiasm among farmers. With the past experience of demonetisation and implementation of Goods and Services Tax, people are now skeptical of announcements of the BJP government.

For boosting the rural economy, the number of rural agricultural markets or mandis will be increased from 7,600 to 22,000. A Rs 2,000 crore Agri Market Infrastructure Fund for developing these 22,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets was announced without any actual allocation in the Budget. Similarly, a Rs 10,000 crore Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund has been announced with actual allocation in the Budget of merely Rs 47 crore. There is

also a promise to increase the irrigated area under cultivation. The loans to be given to farmers have been increased by 1 lakh crore to a total of Rs 11 lakh crore, but the budget is completely silent on the most burning issue of farmers today—waiver of past loans, which would be instrumental in arresting their suicides. The government believes that it would empower the farmers so that they will not end up in debt. But the point is, they will be able to reach such a situation only when they emerge out of their present crisis. What use are all the measures if we don't free them from current debt, especially when governments have demonstrated leniency towards big corporate defaulters? The huge amount of money wasted in urban areas in the name of development, like providing air-conditioners to big government buildings, airports, educational institutions and purchase of expensive furnitures and vehicles for government functionaries must be diverted to providing relief to farmers.

A few schemes which have witnessed a good hike in fund allocation, such as Crop Insurance Scheme, are likely to transfer majority of the monetary benefit to private service providers in the garb of helping the poor. A farmer has to register for compulsory insurance when s(he) takes loan from banks, and a certain amount is automatically deducted from the loan amount before it is credited into his/her bank account, which is not the case with urban housing or car loans. But how many farmers have got insurance amount when their crops are damaged due to natural calamity? We hear of only compensation from governments.

Funds allocated to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are at the same level as the previous year, implying a reduction in real terms as wages will increase due to inflation. In addition, there are a lot of pending

arrears for unpaid wages from the past years. This will inevitably result in a significant drop in the total number of person-days of work that will be generated under MNREGS.

One of the major highlights of the budget is National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) which is being referred to as Modicare, under which health insurance for about 10 crore poor or vulnerable families or 40% of the population has been raised to Rs 5 lakh from the present amount of Rs 30,000 offered under Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna. NHPS was first offered in the 2016 budget with a cover of Rs 1 lakh but it never materialised. The fate of the revised version remains to be seen. It is unclear what is novel about Modicare except that the quantum of coverage has been increased. This government has a knack for taking more credit than it actually delivers.

The United Progressive Alliance government under Manmohan Singh for the first time offered insurance cover for treatment in private hospitals empanelled by the government. A common phenomenon was that the private hospitals would defraud the poor by inflating the bills so that their entire amount of Rs 30,000 was exhausted in a single visit to a hospital, leaving the patient without any cover for the remaining year. Hence Modi, as is his wont, has come up with a fantastic scheme to transfer public money to the private health care sector, leaving the government sector poorer in all respects where the common citizen goes for treatment. The NHPS will be a big blow to the public health care system. Justice Sudhir Agrawal and Justice Ajeet Kumar of Allahabad High Court have recently delivered a landmark judgement saying that people receiving government salaries must get themselves treated at government hospitals without any preferential treatment for Very Important Persons. This is something which will improve the functioning of government hospitals.

The education budget has been slashed from 3.8% to 3.71% of GDP. While the government, which is very good with coming up with acronyms, is going to start Revitalising Infrastructure and System in Education (RISE) by awarding Prime Minister Research Fellowships to encourage engineering students from institutions funded by central governments to pursue research in select institutions, it is silent on how it will improve the

quality of basic education. The government hopes to build a 'smart' India and create skill based jobs without strengthening the foundation of education system. In fact, the ground reality is that in spite of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act being in place, about half the children don't cross the Class VIII stage. The obstacles which the government itself is creating are—making Aadhar compulsory for admission to primary schools and taking a decision to not construct any more new primary schools as the enrollment in government schools is dropping in spite of the fact that RTE Act says that every child should have a primary school within a kilometre from her home.

Lottery is being used to decide admissions in schools where more applications are received under RTE section 12(1)(c) whereas the Act clearly says that at least 25% seats have to be filled with children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections. This means if necessary, more than 25% children should also be admitted, if parents so desire. Ideally, lottery should be banned in deciding admissions and every application should be entertained and child admitted if s(he) fulfills all the required criteria.

Additionally, Rs 4,800 crore has been provided to increase the number of beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana for free cooking gas to poor rural women from 5 crore to 8 crore. The ground reality is that because only the connection is free and the beneficiaries have to pay full amount for subsequent gas cylinders, which is unaffordable for the poor, most of them have fallen back on traditional cowdung cakes or biomass based fuel sources, and keep the gas connection only for emergency. What the government doesn't mention in Ujjawala advertisements is that there will be no subsidy for people who get free connections in spite of the fact that they belong to the category of rural poor.

The allocation for PM Awas Yojana with the objective of housing for all has been cut by over 5%, from Rs 29,043 crore in 2017–18 to Rs 27,505 crore in 2018–19, while at the same time the finance minister announced the intention of constructing 51 lakh houses in rural India in 2018–19. The housing available to urban poor under the Central government's Basic Services for Urban Poor scheme for about Rs 16,000 for SC/ST families and about Rs 19,000 for others in

Uttar Pradesh during the previous government's regime is no longer available. The PMAY talks of giving subsidy on loans, assuming that the poor will have a land of his/her own or will be able to get land allotted in cities. Recently, District Urban Development Agency, Lucknow conducted a lottery for allotment of housing for the urban poor in which only applications made on the portal of the Chief Minister were considered and all applications given by hand to the Project Officer, DUDA office were not taken into account. Genuine applicants, especially those not having a mobile phone which is required for registering a complaint on CM's portal, were left out. DUDA conducted a lottery without even conducting any screening process which means a number of undeserving people would have got in. This is a good example of how poor will be excluded from digitalisation of services in New India, for which the PM doesn't lose an opportunity to give a clarion call. Moreover, how can a process of lottery be used to decide a basic need like housing when the government has promised 'housing for all'?

The banking sector 'reforms' are making life difficult for the poor, especially after the horrendous experience of demonetisation. When some parents complained about not receiving the Rs 5,000 from UP government for buying books and uniform for their children admitted under section 12(1)(c) of RTE Act, they were told by the Basic Shiksha Adhikari office in Lucknow that funds could not be deposited into their account as they did not have the required minimum balance of Rs 3,000. The government which allowed zero balance accounts to be opened for the poor expects parents from disadvantaged and weaker sections to maintain a balance of Rs 3,000. When an activist who works with beggars went to get an account opened for a beggar, he was told that the Jan Dhan Scheme was over. When Socialist Party (India) gave a cheque for Rs 3,000 to one of its candidates for the Assembly election, the cheque was not deposited as the bank told the account holder that an activity was required in the Jan Dhan account before any cheque could be deposited.

And finally the tokenism of Modi government is best reflected in the most publicised programme of Swachh Bharat. When a Gram Pradhan Bhola Singh of Gram Panchayat Uttar Kondh in Sandila tehsil of Hardoi district was asked about how much funds he

had received for construction of toilets, he revealed that because the population of his gram sabha, about 750 families, was big he had not received any funds. Only small gram sabhas are being given funds so that more number of villages can be declared 'Open Defecation Free' (ODF). Even in the declared ODF villages not every family has a toilet.

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Books by Surendra Mohan

1. **Vikas Ka Rasta: Nai Arthik Neetiyon ka vishleshan..** Price 600 rupees.
2. **Samajwad, Dharma Nirapekshata aur Samajik Nyaya** Reissued as second edition; Price 500 rupees
3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.
4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

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Union Budget 2018-19: A Gender Analysis

Vibhuti Patel

Introduction

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a means of integrating a gender dimension into all steps of the budget process. It is about taking into account the different needs and priorities of both women and men without gender exclusivity. Gender Responsive Budgeting ensures that budgets are gender sensitive and not gender neutral, which means that they are geared towards establishing gender equality. GRB consists of the use of tools to analyse the gender dimensions of budgets, and adoption of procedures to ensure that the budget supports the achievement of gender equality.

Allocation in the Gender Budget Statement

There has been an increase in the budgetary allocation from Rs 22,095 crore in 2017–18 (BE) to Rs 24,700 crore in 2018–19 (BE) for the Ministry of Women and Child Development. There has been a 7% increase in the magnitude of the Gender Budget Statement from Rs 1,13,311 crore in 2017–18 (BE) to Rs 1,21,961 crore in 2018–19 (BE). For the Nirbhaya Fund meant to combat violence against women, there has been an additional allocation of Rs 550 crore in 2018–19. In spite of very high maternal mortality rate among Indian women, the allocations for Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Swadhar Greh and National Crèche Scheme have witnessed a decline in 2018–19 (BE) in comparison to 2017–18 (BE).

Financial Provision for Social Sector

a. Health and Well-being

The allocation for Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) (including for AYUSH) has

increased from Rs 47,352 crore in 2017–18 (BE) to Rs 52,800 crore in 2018–19 (BE)—a 12% increase. However, as compared to the 2017–18 (RE), the increase is much lower, of about 2.5%. It may be noted that the corresponding increase in 2017–18 (BE) over 2016–17 (BE) was 27%.

The Union Budget allocation for the health sector has stagnated at 0.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 targets 2.5% of GDP as health expenditure by the government (both Centre and States), of which 60% is to be contributed by the States and 40% by the Centre.

For the flagship programme National Health Mission (NHM), there is a slight decline (of about 2%) in 2018–19 (BE) from 2017–18 (RE). In the total NHM budget, while the share of the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) has increased by 34%, the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) budget has decreased by about 5% between 2017–18 (RE) and 2018–19 (BE).

b. Education

Budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is Rs 85,010 crore in 2018–19 (BE), a 7% increase from the previous year's allocation, but its share in total government expenditure is continuously decreasing. A similar picture is observed when the education budget is compared with the country's GDP. The *Economic Survey 2017–18* of Government of India states that of the 6.6% of GDP on social sectors, 2.7% goes to education in 2017–18, down from 3.1% in 2013–14. There is no budgetary allocation for teacher training for imparting quality education under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA).

c. Employment

The Union Budget 2018–19 aims to promote employment via entrepreneurship schemes through promoting Skill India and Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs), and other self-employment programmes like National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), Pradhan Mantri Employment Yojana (PMEY), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) credit scheme.

- The most important wage employment programme, that takes the form of low productivity based construction work, is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) allocation. Its allocation this year is Rs 55,000 crore, the same as last year. But in real terms, taking the rate of inflation into account, the allocation has reduced.
- The incentives announced for formalisation of jobs, using minor tax concessions and the Employees Provident Fund provisions, cannot meet the great challenge of generating employment for millions of unemployed men and women.

d. Freedom from Violence

The Union Budget 2018–19 is most disappointing as regards addressing urgent concerns such as:

- Recognition of women victims of violence as a category in all social security schemes.
- Adequate allocations to address the safety and security of women employed in organised and unorganised sectors.
- A single window which provides holistic package of services for women and girls in distress. The budget allocation for the ‘One Stop Crisis Centres’ that provide medical services, protection officers, counseling, legal aid, referral service for emergency shelter and police intervention is very inadequate.
- Allocations for shelter homes, help lines, legal aid, counseling and referral services.
- Special Women’s Desk in all police stations.
- Rehabilitation, medical aid and contingency (all of which must be accessible at the block level).
- Increased outlays for effective implementation

of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005.

- Prioritise allocations towards implementation of a National Task Force in Conflict Zones.

Learnings from Bangladesh Experience

India can learn a lot from Gender Budgeting process in Bangladesh, which clearly defines indicators for women's advancement. The Government of Bangladesh mainstreamed gender in the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) since 2005–06. GRB was initiated as part of the budget reform process in four ministries, and later gradually expanded. Budget Circular 1 provides scope for ministries to incorporate gender perspectives into their programmes. Gender Training was provided to officials by NGOs and development partners. Each ministry / division has a gender focal point person who is responsible for ensuring inter-ministerial co-ordination on gender issues. The weakness is that these gender focal point persons are not part of the GRB process and their capacity is weak. Ongoing training is required to strengthen the capacities of the Gender Focal Points in every ministry. Gender Budget Report was first placed in the Parliament along with the budget in 2009–10, and since then it has become an annual feature. The report is based on standard criteria prepared by the Ministry of Finance.

Women’s Advancement Criteria Adopted by Bangladesh

1. Access to health care and improved nutrition: Are specific actions being taken to effectively address women’s reproductive and general health needs? Will activities improve the nutritional status of women, particularly pregnant and lactating women?
2. Access to public properties and services: Is access to public properties (i.e. government-owned land, wet-land, social forestation etc.) and services (education, health, electricity, clean water, etc.) being expanded?
3. Access to education and training: Have opportunities to access education and training been created or expanded for girls/women?
4. Reduction in daily working hours of women: Have any steps / programmes been undertaken

- to reduce the daily working hours of women? If so, what are they or how do they achieve the goal?
5. Women's participation in labour market and income generating activities: Have necessary steps been undertaken to increase access and make it easier for women to enter the labour market and undertake income generating activities? How have they been undertaken?
 6. Enhancing social safety for women and reducing probable vulnerability and risk: Have necessary steps been undertaken to increase social safety and reduce probable risk and vulnerability? What necessary steps will help to increase social safety for women and / or reduce probable vulnerability and risks for women, particularly those resulting from natural calamities?
 7. Women's empowerment: Have steps been undertaken to develop / encourage women's empowerment processes through ensuring participation in decision-making in the family, society and workplace and through increased participation in political frameworks? How have these steps been undertaken?
 8. Women's participation in various forums: Have necessary steps / programmes been undertaken in order to include gender related issues at national and international forums? How have these issues been undertaken?
 9. Ensuring safety and free movement for women: Have necessary steps been undertaken to ensure free movement for women in public places and to ensure their safety in the family, in public places as well as in the society? If so, how have these steps been undertaken?
 10. Monitoring and evaluation: Have necessary measures / steps been undertaken to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems pertaining to gender equality issues?
 11. Increasing social status of women: Have necessary measures / steps been undertaken to raise the social status of women (for example, reduction in childhood / early marriage and dowry)?
 12. Access to law and justice for women: Have measures / steps been undertaken to create / expand opportunities for women to access law and justice? How have these steps been undertaken?
 13. Information technology for women: Have necessary opportunities been created for women to access and utilise training on information technology? How will access to and utilisation of these trainings be ensured?
 14. Reducing violence and oppression: What steps / measures have been undertaken to reduce violence and oppression against women? How can violence / oppression against women be reduced within the family and in the public space?

Conclusion

Budgets garner resources through taxation policies and allocate resources to different sections of the economy. There is a need to highlight participatory approaches to pro-poor budgeting, bottom up budget, child budget, SC budget, ST budget, green budgeting, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting, alternative macro scenarios emerging out of alternative budgets and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women's empowerment.

- Gender sensitive budget demands re-prioritisation of financial allocations in favour of:
- Working women's hostels, crèches, cheap eating facilities, public toilets;
- Proper electrification in the communities;
- Women friendly and safe, affordable, efficient public transport—local trains, Metro, buses, etc.;
- Housing—Subsidised housing for single / deserted / divorced / widowed women;
- Nutrition—Strengthening PDS and nutritional mid-day meals;
- Water—Safe drinking water in the community centres;
- Technological upgradation of waste management—Occupational health & safety of recycling workers / rag pickers;
- Health—Abolition of user fees for BPL population, one stop crisis centre in public hospitals for women / girls survivors of violence linked with shelter homes;
- Skill training centres for women and tailor made courses;
- Multipurpose Community centres, half way homes for elderly and mentally disturbed women.

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Finance Minister Misrepresents Facts About Aadhaar and Unique ID in His Budget Speech

Gopal Krishna

At paragraph 118 of his budget speech, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said, “Aadhaar has provided an identity to every Indian. Aadhaar has eased delivery of so many public services to our people. Every enterprise, major or small, also needs a unique ID. The Government will evolve a Scheme to assign every individual enterprise in India a unique ID.” There are three claims made in these four sentences. They do not present a factual picture.

Claim No. 1: *Aadhaar has provided an identity to every Indian.*

Fact:

In his budget speech of 2016–17, the finance minister had said, “The Aadhaar number or authentication shall not, however, confer any right of citizenship or domicile.” In his budget speech of 2017–18, he said, “For senior citizens, Aadhaar based Smart Cards containing their health details will be introduced.” In his budget speech of 2015–16, he said that we have embarked on game changing reforms through “the JAM Trinity—Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile—to implement direct transfer of benefits.” In the budget speech of 2014–15, the then finance minister said, “Who needs Aadhaar? It is those who are at the bottom of the pyramid, the poor, the migrant workers, the homeless, and the oppressed who need Aadhaar, and we will ensure that they get Aadhaar. I have no doubt that in course of time even critics of Aadhaar will realise that Aadhaar is a tool of empowerment.” The question is, if Aadhaar is not meant to “confer any right of citizenship or domicile”, why have Aadhaar based Smart Cards been introduced for senior citizens and why have citizens’ entitlements and benefits been

linked to Aadhaar. There is incontrovertible evidence about how this measure has brought colossal grief and suffering to “those who are at the bottom of the pyramid, the poor, the migrant workers, the homeless, and the oppressed” by making Aadhaar a pre-condition to access their rights as citizens. This has caused unprecedented deprivation.

Government’s claim about providing identity to identity-less through Aadhaar is an exercise in sophistry. This claim is an act of manifest falsehood. Every Indian except 0.03 per cent of the population admittedly already had an identity. This has been disclosed in a RTI reply dated 28 April 2015, which stated that only 2.19 lakh residents (0.03 per cent) were given Aadhaar numbers based on introduction by the introducer system because they did not have a pre-existing identity.

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) issued the first Aadhaar number to Ms. Ranjna Sadashiv Sonwane, a tribal woman from Tembhal village in Nandurbar, Maharashtra on 29 September, 2010. The Press Note of UIDAI claimed, “Today there are a large number of residents, especially the poorest and the most marginalised, who face challenges in accessing various public benefit programs due to the lack of possessing a clear identity proof. The Aadhaar number will ease these difficulties in identification, by providing a nationally valid and verifiable single source of identity proof.” The RTI reply reveals that the claim made by government in its Press Note of September 2010 and in the budget speech of 2018-19 is misleading and glaringly untrue. At launch of the initiative of Aadhaar numbers to the residents, it was announced that it was “the beginning of an ambitious operation to issue 600 million Aadhaar numbers in

the next four years to Indians across the country.”

While presenting the Union Budget 2009–10, the then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had announced the setting up of the UIDAI to “establish an online data base with identity and biometric details of Indian residence and provide enrolment and verification services across the country.” Unlike what is being claimed now, the fact is that there was no claim made about providing identity to Indians because Indians already had pre-existing identity.

In the Union Budget speech of 2010–11, it is admitted that “CIDR will be handed over to the Managed Service Provider (MSP) on a long term contract basis.” CIDR refers to Central Identities Data Repository of biometric UID/Aadhaar numbers. British firm Ernst & Young was given the contract for setting up the CIDR and selection of Managed Service Provider (MSP). The *Economic Survey 2011–12* observed, “The Aadhaar project is set to become the largest biometric capture and identification project in the world” even as UIDAI was “discharging its functions without any legal basis” as per the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance. This has been brought to the notice of the Supreme Court’s 5-Judge Constitution Bench which is hearing some 30 petitions challenging the constitutionality of Aadhaar since 17 January 2018.

Claim No. 2: *Aadhaar has eased delivery of so many public services to our people.*

Fact:

The RTI reply proves that that “an inability to prove identity” was not a major barrier to accessing benefits and subsidies. The death of several citizens including Aadhaar holders due to denial of public services shows that it has made life difficult for citizens who are facing the cruel denial of their citizens’ entitlements due to not having Aadhaar, despite proof of having resided in India for at least 182 days (if a person has stayed in India for 182 during the previous financial year, he/she is a resident of India and is entitled for Aadhaar card). This is despite the fact that it is admittedly not a proof of citizenship. If this trend continues, very soon citizens will be denied the right to vote to elect or reject a government if they do not enroll for Aadhaar by getting themselves biometrically profiled.

Claim No. 3: *Every enterprise, major or small, also needs a unique ID. The Government will evolve a scheme to assign every individual enterprise in India a unique ID.*

Fact:

The minister did not inform the Parliament and the citizens about the conceptual, structural and functional link between UIDAI and goods and services tax network (GSTN) from the very outset. Notably, chief executive officer of UIDAI, A.B. Pandey is also the chairman of the GSTN since 8 September 2017. Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 came into force from 12 September 2016 and Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 came into effect on 1 July 2017. The fact is that Unique Identity Number, the Unique ID to which the minister is referring to, already finds mention in Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017. It has been effectively been mentioned nine times in the Act. Section 25 of the Act deals with the procedure for registration, wherein, under Section 25 (9) (b), it is stated that “any other person or class of persons, as may be notified by the Commissioner, shall be granted a Unique Identity Number in such manner and for such purposes, including refund of taxes on the notified supplies of goods or services or both received by them, as may be prescribed.” Section 150 (1) (o) states that any person under the Act “refers to a person to whom a Unique Identity Number has been granted under sub-section (9) of section 25” as well. Such a person “is responsible for maintaining record of registration or statement of accounts or any periodic return or document containing details of payment of tax and other details of transaction of goods or services or both or transactions related to a bank account or consumption of electricity or transaction of purchase, sale or exchange of goods or property or right or interest in a property under any law for the time being in force”, and “shall furnish an information return of the same in respect of such periods, within such time, in such form and manner and to such authority or agency as may be prescribed.” Notably, the Central Consumer Protection Authority under the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 is empowered to mandate the use of unique and universal goods identifiers. The Bill is pending in the Lok Sabha since 5 January

2018 after its introduction by Ram Vilas Paswan, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. This law in conjunction with Aadhaar will provide 360 degree surveillance of citizens.

Andhra Pradesh has built an Aadhaar-enabled digital People's Hub, whose aim is to build a demographic and socio-economic data base of all residents. It uses Aadhaar to integrate information from every government department for "getting a 360-degree view of citizens". The Telangana government too is planning an "Integrated Information Hub (IIH) for achieving the objective of 360-degree profiling of persons of interest." J. Satyanarayana, the IT advisor of Andhra Pradesh, in a presentation on Direct Benefit Transfers on 22 July 2016, described the hub as a "single source of truth on people data". Two months later, Satyanarayana was appointed chairperson of UIDAI.

IBM, the giant American multinational, is deeply involved in data mining at the global level. According to IBM, a "Single View of a Citizen" is required because it "provides authorised access to citizen master data as a service." It "supports security and privacy requirements for the access and control of data". It "provides data quality management to establish an 'enterprise' record for a party." It "performs as a synchronisation point to control the distribution of citizen master data in a standardised way." It "increases service and accuracy, and decreases the cost of serving the public." It provides a "flexible platform capable of supporting multiple data formats and allowing for new sources to be readily added as requirements change." It also "provides analysis and discovery services to resolve identities and discover relationships."

It may be recalled that Edwin Black's book *IBM and the Holocaust* revealed IBM's strategic alliance with Nazi Germany. IBM and its subsidiaries helped create enabling technologies, "step-by-step, from the identification and cataloging programs of the 1930s to the selections of the 1940s." Notably, IBM was in the census business. The book reveals that IBM technology was used to organise nearly everything in Germany and then Nazi Europe, from the identification of the Jews in censuses, registrations, and ancestral tracing programs to the running of railroads and organising of concentration camp slave labor. Coincidentally, IBM is involved in UID/Aadhaar project as well. Pramod Varma, who is currently a 'Volunteer' Chief Architect at

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), was earlier Chief Technology Architect and Vice President of Research at Sterling Commerce, a software company that was later acquired by IBM. He joined UIDAI in July 2009 and leads the overall technology and application architecture and application development within UIDAI Technology Unit and is based in Bangalore. His role "has been pivotal in ensuring (that) an open, scalable, and secure architecture is built to meet the needs of aadhaar project." If Varma is only a volunteer as per UIDAI Volunteers Guidelines, 2011, and as per these guidelines a volunteer does not get any remuneration from UIDAI, then it implies that he is likely to have continued with Sterling Commerce, which is now part of IBM. The related UIDAI's Guidelines for recruitment of personnel on Sabbatical/Secondment refers to "Conflict of interest from private sector members moving from one category of employment to another". Given the fact that the presentation of UIDAI's Chairman makes it clear that he wants a "360 degree view of Citizens" for a "single source of truth on people data" and IBM also wants to have "Single View of a Citizen", clearly issues of conflict of interest arise with regards to UIDAI's Chief Architect.

The Andhra Pradesh initiative of building a People Hub with a "Single View of a Citizen" is being pursued through "Organic Seeding of Aadhaar" and "Inorganic Seeding of Aadhaar" (to quote from a People Hub document). In the former method, "the Unique People IDs of the beneficiaries are collected through a door-to-door survey or at point-of-sale. Alternative methods are collection of Unique People ID through IVRS, SMS or drop boxes. Departments with large databases can also engage 3rd party service provider". In the method of inorganic seeding of Aadhaar, "the demographic data of the departmental database is matched with that of SRDH through a computer algorithm, and wherever the degree of matching exceeds a threshold level defined, the Unique People ID of the resident as in SRDH database is included in the departmental database." This is stated in a proposal submitted by Wipro Limited to the Government of Andhra Pradesh regarding the People Hub. The "People Hub" and "ePragati Requirements Specifications" which the Chairman of UIDAI refers to is derived from this proposal of Wipro submitted in December 2015.

Wipro's proposal is significant because UIDAI and UID/Aadhaar is a product of a 14-page long document titled *Strategic Vision: Unique Identification of Residents* prepared by Wipro Ltd and submitted to the Processes Committee of the Planning Commission which was set up in July 2006. The vision statement of the document reads: "Creating a unique identification system of all residents in the country for efficient, transparent, reliable and effective delivery of various welfare and private services to the common person." The cover page of the document mentions the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG), Department of Information Technology (now named MeitY-Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) and Wipro Consulting. Wipro was the consultant for the design phase and programme management phase of the pilot UIDAI project. The Hyderabad-based NISG is a not-for-profit company incorporated in 2002 by the Government of India and Nasscom. NISG aims to "establish itself as an institution of excellence in e-governance and to leverage private sector resources through a public-private-partnership mode in establishing eIndia."

Another 15-page long Wipro document, titled *Does India need a Unique Identity Number?* cited the example of the United Kingdom's Identity Cards Act, 2006, on page no. 6 to advance the argument for a biometric UID/Aadhaar number in India. Wipro cited UK's identification project to make a case for UID/Aadhaar for Indians because it aptly inferred that both UID/Aadhaar and UK's ID card are comparable. But when the UK government stopped its biometric National Identity Cards Scheme, neither Wipro nor its donors and promoters in the government examined as to why the UK did so and why this decision too is relevant to India. The decision was announced in the British parliament, the same legislature which passed the India Independence Act, 1947. This Act and the fate of UK's ID card Act are relevant for the fate of Aadhaar Act, 2016.

It may be recalled that UIDAI extended 'undue favour' to Wipro Ltd as well. As a consequence UIDAI incurred an avoidable expenditure of Rs 4.92 crore on an annual maintenance contract, according to a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India presented to the Parliament. UIDAI also incurred a loss of Rs 1.41 crore by not

routing advertisements through the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity. Unmindful of manifest conflict of interest, UIDAI had entered into a contract with Wipro in May 2011 for supply, installation and commissioning of servers, storage systems, security systems and accessories with incidental services in the data centres of the authority in Bengaluru and Delhi/NCR at a cost of Rs 134.28 crore.

The conflict of interest ridden entrepreneurial involvement of IBM and Wipro in the UID/Aadhaar initiative is aimed at ensuring that every person is being "profiled to the nth extent for all and sundry to know" in the words of Supreme Court's verdict on right to privacy using both demographic and biometric information. It emerges that Unique ID for Indians and their enterprises is being pursued to ensure guaranteed revenue flow to these transnational business enterprises through monetisation of citizen's personal data.

The marriage between biometric surveillance and financial surveillance of citizens is breaching the social contract between the State and the citizens, wherein the former is making the latter subordinate to commercial interests of all kinds, while at the same time launching a blitzkrieg of advertisements and misinformation campaigns to mislead the people about Aadhaar. It is evident that State in collaboration with non-state actors is on the one hand dispossessing people of their inherent natural rights, and at the same time, is freeing itself from all accountability as regards this injustice towards its citizens. State's institutional memory has an active and a passive side. The former includes active forgetting of intentional acts of deprivation and exclusion. The latter includes canonisation of the remote as well as recent past by which interpretation of the memory is fixed in a way that it uses a moment in history as a point of reference to the exclusion of other moments and interpretations. But no amount of State sponsored propaganda and engineering of embedded media by commercial czars can obliterate the fact that citizens of the country already had identity and identity proof prior to the illegitimate and immoral bulldozing of biometric identification exercise. It is clear that as a consequence of some Faustian bargain, the finance minister is speaking with a forked tongue.

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Nehru's Economic Philosophy

H. Venkatasubbiah

To one who was so intimate with the masses as Jawaharlal Nehru was, his economic philosophy could not but be intensely humane, a living thing of the present, and practical. In the ultimate analysis, the central point and goal of all economic philosophy is the elimination of poverty and want, and Nehru's was no different. Gandhiji had already focussed attention on poverty with his famous symbolism of the Daridra Narayana. Nehru brought to bear on this central problem his modern mind and its scientific temper. Scientific socialism, tempered by his intense humanism, thus became his intellectual tool. He was a practical idealist, and that is not mutually contradictory.

Fabian Influence

In his youth, Nehru was drawn to British socialist ideas, at a time when, under the banner of the Fabian Society, Shaw Wells and the Webbs were preaching socialisation of essential services and basic industries within the framework of parliamentary government as the best means of eliminating poverty and ensuring work for all. But it was really his study of Marxism and of the communist experiment in Russia that sharpened his interest in the possibilities of socialism for economic development and social equality. It is said that most admirers of Karl Marx have not read his *Capital*, but Nehru was not in this category. At a press conference some years ago, when questions turned on communism, he asked his audience if they had read the Marxist classic. None had the temerity to say yes, whereupon Nehru said that he had read it. When with his father he visited Russia, he was impressed (but not his father) by what Russia was doing to transform the society. But quite

early in this period, he was appalled by the violence of communism, although he believed that capitalism also could be violent. He was deeply affected by the spectacle of the coal strike in England in 1926. The violence of capitalism was, however, of a different kind and there were social remedies for it. It was oppression rather than violence.

Independence First

Intellectually, Nehru came gradually to equate socialism with economic development. The Great Depression of the 1930s convinced him that uninterrupted economic progress was not possible under capitalism. He contrasted the slump in the West with the striking increase in production that Russia was making during those years through her newly-launched five-year plans. While this impression remained in the intellectual plane, when he plunged into Congress politics in India, Nehru found a different situation to which he had to adapt his socialistic ideas.

Attitude towards Capitalism

British exploitation of the Indian economy was obvious and Nehru's views on it were broadly in line with those of nationalist economists like Dadabhoy Naoroji, Ranade and Gokhale. But he carefully refrained from supporting Indian capitalism or justifying its role in Indian economic development. He did not seem to accept that capitalism was necessary for the economic development of India. He fell in line with the prevailing climate of opinion that national independence was the first issue and the best means of achieving economic independence

would be determined later. With this, he always kept in the back of his mind his faith in socialism.

On the economic side, his crusade within the national movement was directed against feudal property relationships in land. He carried on a relentless campaign against landlordism in his home province. The belief that there could really be no egalitarian society in a predominantly agricultural country like India until all feudal vestiges in land were eliminated survived with him to the last.

Non-Acceptance of Gandhiji's Ideas

Since he was wedded to scientific rather than a vaguely humanitarian socialism, Gandhiji's economic ideas did not make much impact on Nehru. Gandhiji's opposition to modern industry and his qualified approval of voluntary poverty could not possibly appeal to one who believed in higher living standards to be attained by the application of modern science and technology to modern means of production. 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. Recently, Western thought has contended that the scientific and humanist cultures are antithetical. But in Nehru was an embodiment of their synthesis. 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.

Humanist Values

The nearest that Nehru came to some practical formulation of his economic ideas before independence was in the work he did in the National Planning Committee set up by the Indian National Congress in 1935. Planning was defined by that committee as something that should be considered from the point of view not only of economics and rising living standards, but of cultural and spiritual values. The concern he expressed at the time for democratic evolution and the inter-connection he stressed between economic and extra-economic life remained with him all along. When years later he addressed the United Nations Economic

Commission for Asia and Far East, he said he was no expert (although experts were inevitable), but he liked to deal with human beings. The work of the National Planning Committee remained academic, without any political power to implement its ideas. So it was really the advent of independence in 1947 that gave Nehru the opportunity to make concrete his vision of economic development of India.

Inevitability of Gradualness

In political power under a democratic system, Nehru realised the conflict, howsoever small it may be, between socialism and the economic development of an underdeveloped country. He, who had admired communism minus its violence and socialism, reminded himself that the time factor was also important for social reconstruction. In his younger days, he must have been influenced by R.H. Tawney's classic, *Acquisitive Society*, but now admitted that the change from such a society to socialism and co-operation cannot be brought about by 'a sudden law'. Speaking at the AICC session at Indore in 1957, he said that Russia had taken 35 years or more to industrialise herself, and Mao Tse-tung had said that China might take 20 years to achieve "some kind of socialism". He added, "We must realise that the process of bringing socialism to India, especially in the way we are trying to do it, that is, the democratic way, will inevitably take time." When he produced his autobiography in 1936, reviewers said he assumed the inevitability of revolution. Twenty years later, he had come to accept the inevitability of gradualness.

Concept of Mixed Economy

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 was the most concrete expression of Nehru's means for achieving socialism in India. It was here that his intellectual appreciation of British socialist thought rather than the Marxist dialectic unmistakably asserted itself.

The resolution adumbrated a 'mixed economy' for India and this concept has stood, despite all that has been said by the Congress about socialism in subsequent years. It was when Nehru spoke on the resolution that he brought out the importance of understanding a socialistic economy in terms of

technological change. In a transitional economy, one must place oneself in a dynamic and not in a static conception of economic progress.

Dynamism came from technological change. The State would build a new and technologically sound sector, and not waste its resources on acquiring productive resources that may have become obsolete. This philosophy meant recognising the role of what has since come to be known as the Private Sector. Again reminding himself that the capitalistic structure is inherently acquisitive, he began to propagate the value of a co-operative sector that would help counteract the anti-social side of capitalism. It is said that in later years Nehru did come to admire 'enlightened capitalism' and that privately he even admired one of the leading Indian business houses.

Planning Commission

The establishment of a Planning Commission and the era of planning that it started gave Nehru a chance to work simultaneously for economic development and social justice. The disappointment he openly voiced in recent years at the failure of Indian planning to achieve these objectives was a measure of his faith in them. His burning wrath against poverty heightened his sense of frustration at the miscalculations of the planning process. Not being an economist in the conventional sense, he just could not understand the frequent breakdowns in the economy.

He continued to emphasise the importance of land reforms, of increasing production through the application of technology and spreading co-operation to ensure distributive justice within capitalism. These indeed were the themes of his annual addresses to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry for some 15 years. His keen interest in atomic energy was the latest manifestation of his scientific temper.

University of Philosophy

Nehru did not have many opportunities of formulating his ideas on international economic co-operation. But when he did get a chance to do so—as when he spoke to the ECAFE or the Colombo Plan meetings or at the United Nations—he reflected in

his ideas the same universalism that was the keynote of his political philosophy. Even in his opposition to such economic blocs as the European Economic Community, his economic philosophy was entirely consistent with his political philosophy. It was based on mutual help, absence of fear and hate and on good neighbourliness. He was fond of the following lines from Euripides, which he quoted at least on two occasions. They seem to sum up his philosophy.

*What else is wisdom? What of man's endeavour,
or God's high grace, so lovely and so great? To
stand from fear set free to breathe and wait, to
hold a hand uplifted over hate, and shall not
loveliness be loved for ever?*

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Budget 2018–19: What Is in It for the Common People?

Neeraj Jain

The media hailed Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's Union Budget 2018–19 as a budget focussed on farmers, the poor, rural India, healthcare and education. Let us see what it really contains.

1. External Accounts Situation

Let us begin our discussion of the Union Budget 2018–19 with a brief discussion of India's external accounts situation. This is obviously be an important part of any discussion about our economy, and the finance minister should mention the state of our external accounts situation, even if briefly, in his budget speech.

This year's budget speech is unique for the fact that it does not contain even a single line as regards the external accounts situation of our country! 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. One of these conditionalities was opening up the economy to unrestricted inflows of foreign capital and goods. Thus began what has come to be known as the globalisation of the Indian economy. 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.

Just two months ago, in mid-November 2017, the international credit ratings agency Moody's had upgraded India's sovereign bond rating by two notches to Baa2 Stable from its lowest investment grade Baa3 Positive. This was the first ratings upgrade by Moody's for India since 2004. This news made the headlines in almost all newspapers. Both the PMO and Finance Minister Jaitley gushed that this was international recognition of the fact that the structural reforms being implemented by the BJP Government were improving business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment, etc.¹

If this is indeed so, then how come there is not even a mention of our external accounts situation in this year's budget speech?

The reason is that Moody's upgrade has nothing to do with how well our economy is doing, and how good is our external accounts situation. As we had explained in an article published in Janata some weeks ago, "The upgradation of India's sovereign rating by Moody's is not an indicator of how well the Indian economy is doing for the people, but is an indicator of how well the economy is doing for profit maximisation of giant foreign and Indian corporations."² So far as our external accounts are concerned, the reality is that they were never in a worse state, and that is why there is no mention of our external accounts situation in the finance minister's budget speech.

Our external debt crossed \$495.7 billion in September 2017³, making India one of the world's most indebted countries. Furthermore, our external accounts situation is getting worse. India's trade deficit, which had registered continuous decline between 2014–15 and 2016–17, widened to \$118.9 billion during the period April–December 2017 as

compared to \$82.7 billion during the corresponding period in the previous year. Because of this, India's current account deficit more than doubled to \$35.6 billion, or 1.9% of GDP, in April–December 2017, from \$11.8 billion, or 0.7% of GDP, during the corresponding period of 2016–17⁴.

Vulnerable External Liabilities

The *Economic Survey 2017–18* claims that our foreign exchange reserves position is comfortable. Our foreign exchange reserves reached \$409.4 billion on December 29, 2017, and foreign exchange reserves cover to total external debt improved to 80.7% at end-September 2017 as compared to 78.4% at end-March 2017.⁵

However, all this glib talk about our large foreign exchange reserves is meaningless. Foreign exchange reserves of a country do not represent the foreign exchange earnings of that country. They are merely the total foreign money held by the government and central bank of a country, including all the foreign capital inflows that have come into the country. This implies that if foreign investors start withdrawing their money from the country, the foreign exchange reserves will fall and the economy can even sink into external account bankruptcy.

Of course, not all the foreign investment can be taken out at short notice. Therefore, to get an idea of the actual safety buffer provided by the country's foreign exchange reserves, they should be compared with what can be called the 'vulnerable external liabilities' of the country. These are our potentially volatile foreign exchange liabilities, that is, foreign capital that has come into the country that can leave the country very quickly. These 'vulnerable external liabilities' include: (i) short term debt (i.e., debt repayable within a year); (ii) portfolio investments (i.e., foreign speculative investments in the share markets and in debt instruments), which can be withdrawn at any time; and (iii) those NRI deposits which are fully repatriable at any time [Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) or FCNR (B) deposits and Non-Resident External Rupee Account or NRERA deposits].

We make an estimate of our vulnerable external liabilities as of June 2017 below:

i) Short term debt by residual maturity: Here, we include not only debt that was originally

contracted as short-term debt, but also that portion of long-term debt which falls due within a year from the reference date. According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), this was 41.1% of our external debt as of June-end, 2017 = \$199.5 bn.⁶

- ii) Portfolio Investments by FIIs as of end-June, 2017 = \$251 billion.⁷ [Note that this is actually an underestimate, as much of what is classified as foreign direct investment or FDI (considered to be stable investment) is actually purely financial investment by private equity firms, venture capital funds and hedge funds—which certainly cannot be considered as stable investment.]
- iii) Outstanding sum in FCNR (B) deposits and NRERA deposits (excluding the NRI deposits included in short term debt of residual maturity) = \$35.3 billion.⁸

Therefore,

- Total Vulnerable Liabilities = 199.5 + 251 + 35.3 = \$485.8 billion;
- Foreign Exchange Reserves on June 30, 2017 = \$386.5 billion.⁹

It is thus clear that if the foreign investors decide to pull out their money, our foreign exchange reserves are simply insufficient to prevent the economy from once again plunging into a foreign exchange crisis, similar to what happened in 1990–91.

The *Economic Survey 2017–18* says: "Moderation in FDI flows in Q2 of 2017–18 led to a cumulative decline in FDI flows by 6.3% in H1 of 2017–18 over its level during the corresponding period of the previous year. However, foreign portfolio investment (FPI) increased by 78.0%, from US\$ 8.2 billion in H1 of 2016–17 to US\$ 14.5 billion in H1 2017–18 reflecting positive outlook about growth potential of Indian economy."¹⁰

The truth is the exact opposite. Increasing dependence on FPI inflows only means our economy is becoming more dependent on unstable foreign capital inflows, increasing the vulnerability of our economy to foreign capital outflows. This in fact was candidly admitted by the then RBI Governor at a Governors' Meeting in Kyoto, Japan in January 2011: "Our reserves comprise essentially borrowed resources, and we are therefore more vulnerable to sudden stops and reversals, as compared with countries with current account surpluses."¹¹

The Indian economy has become totally dependent on foreign capital inflows, including both foreign direct investment inflows and speculative capital inflows, to stay afloat. That is why the BJP Government is desperately trying to woo foreign investors to invest their capital in the country. Over the past four years, the government has announced huge liberalisation of FDI rules for foreign investors; it is allowing them to enter and take over each and every sector of the Indian economy; it is allowing them to take over our mineral resources, agricultural lands, public sector corporations and even our public sector financial institutions. It has gone to the extent of permitting FDI even in defence. More than two centuries ago, the British had to use force to colonise this country. Now, our rulers are themselves allowing foreign corporations to enter and take control of the country's economy.

2. Hype over Growth Rates

Regarding GDP growth figures, 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:

Indian economy has performed very well since our Government took over in May, 2014. India achieved an average growth of 7.5% in first three years of our Government. . . . GDP growth at 6.3% in the second quarter signalled turnaround of the economy. We hope to grow at 7.2% to 7.5% in the second half. . . . We are now firmly on course to achieve high growth of 8% plus.¹²

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% during its first two years, GDP growth rate started falling again from 2016 onwards. It fell consecutively for six straight quarters, from 9.2% in the 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. The official estimate of the economy growing at 6.3% in Q3 of 2017 is based

on quarterly data, and this quarterly data is largely based on information provided by the organised sector of the economy only. It does not include data from the unorganised sector of the economy, which contributes to 93% of the employment and 45% of the total output.

Now, data for the unorganised sector is collected by the government through periodic surveys. This unorganised sector was hit hard first by 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 both these policy measures on the unorganised sector. With no data available, how has it estimated the contribution of the unorganised sector to the overall quarterly GDP growth data? The government admits that it has estimated this using the data for growth in the organised sector.¹³ While this may work during normal times, after demonetisation and GST, when the unorganised sector contracted sharply due to these policy measures but organised sector was less affected, this is no longer true. Therefore, all that can be said about the official growth rate figure given by the finance minister for the third quarter of 2017 is that at best, it shows that organised sector growth accelerated in the third quarter as compared to the second quarter.

While the government has not carried out any surveys to estimate the shock experienced by the unorganised sector due to demonetisation and GST, data provided by various private surveys point to a large negative rate of growth for this sector. Combining this with the positive growth experienced by the organised sector, the overall 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.

Furthermore, since the informal sector provides employment to more than 90% of the population, it implies that while only a small section of the population in the organised sector has benefited by the government claimed "recovery that has begun in Q3 of 2017", the overwhelming proportion of the population has continued to suffer a fall in its income due to the negative growth caused by the government-effected policy measures of demonetisation and GST.

3. Pandering to Global Capital

Despite the sharp contraction suffered by the informal sector and the numerous reports in the newspapers about the worsening unemployment crisis, Jaitley makes no attempt to give a boost to the economy by increasing government spending. The increase in total budgetary spending of the government is shockingly low. It has increased by just 10%—when the projected increase in nominal GDP is expected to be 11.5%. And so the budgetary outlay as a proportion of GDP has fallen from 13.21% in 2017–18 RE to 13.04% in 2018–19 (Table 1). This implies a contractionary fiscal stance, whereas what was required was a macroeconomic stimulus to combat the economic disruption caused by demonetisation and GST.

Another important figure is the government capital expenditure as percentage of its total spending and as a percentage of GDP. Capital expenditure is that portion of the government spending that goes to create lasting productive assets, such as rail lines and power plants and factories and schools and hospitals. This spending has sharply come down ever since the neoliberal reforms began (Table 2).

This sharp fall, to roughly one-third of the pre-liberalisation expenditure, is because of the World Bank–IMF imposed neoliberal reforms on the economy. Arvind Subramanian, their man who has been parachuted directly to Delhi from Washington as the Indian Government’s Chief Economic Advisor, clearly says in this year’s *Economic Survey* that “India must continue improving the climate for rapid economic growth on the strength of the only

Table 1: Budget Outlay, 2014 to 2018¹⁴ (Rs crore)

	2014–15 A (1)	2017–18 RE (2)	2018–19 (3)	Increase: (3) over (2), (%)	Increase: (3) over (1), CAGR
Budget Outlay (4)	16,63,673	22,17,750	24,42,213	10.12%	10.07%
GDP (nominal)		1,67,84,679	1,87,22,302	11.54%	
Budget Outlay as % of GDP		13.21%	13.04%		
GST Compensation Cess (5)		61,331	90,000		
Actual Budget Outlay (4 – 5)	16,63,673	21,56,419	23,52,213	9.08%	9.04%
Actual Budget Outlay as % of GDP		12.85%	12.56%		

Actual budgetary outlay is even less than the above figure. That is because Jaitley has included in his budget outlay the ‘Funds collected due to the GST Compensation Cess’. This amount is actually to be compulsorily transferred to the states to compensate them for loss in revenue due to the introduction of GST. This should have been deducted from Gross Tax Revenue, like the ‘Tax Revenue Transferred to States’. But the government has included this in its ‘Net Tax Revenue to Centre’ and in its budgetary outlay, thus artificially inflating the latter. Deducting this, the actual budgetary outlay for 2018-19 comes to only 12.56% of GDP, a fall of more than one percentage point as compared to the last year of the UPA Government, when it was 13.88% (in 2013-14).

two truly sustainable engines—private investment and exports.”¹⁶ What he is therefore saying is that increasing public investment is not the way to advance economic growth. Foreign capital wants Indian Government’s capital expenditures, that is, its expenditures on the productive sectors of the economy, to fall, so that private capital, especially multinational capital, can take over these sectors. This policy had been implemented by all previous governments; the BJP is further accelerating it.

Table 2: Central Government Capital Expenditure¹⁵ (%)

	1985–90	1991–97	2015–18
Percentage to Total Expenditure	30.10	22.70	13.0
Percentage to GDP	6.10	4.00	1.70

4. How Can the Government Increase Its Budgetary Outlay

The total budgetary receipts of the government, which are equal to its budgetary outlay, include tax revenue, non-tax revenue and capital receipts. (i) Tax revenue includes direct taxes (income tax, corporation tax, etc.) and indirect taxes (customs duties, excise duties, sales tax, etc.). (ii) Non-tax revenue includes profits of public sector enterprises, interest receipts on loans given by the government (to public sector enterprises, state governments, etc.), and income such as sale of spectrum. (iii) Capital receipts include disinvestment income and return of loans.

Table 3: Union Budget 2018–19, Receipts (Rs crore)

Gross Tax Revenue	22,71,242
Net Tax Revenue to Centre	14,80,649
Non-Tax Revenue	2,45,089
Capital Receipts (incl. Borrowings)	7,16,475
Total Receipts	24,42,213

The total receipts, and hence the total budgetary outlay of the Central government in 2018–19, is Rs 24.4 lakh crore. If the government wants, it can significantly increase this by increasing its tax and non-tax revenue. Can it do so? Yes, it can.

India: Low Tax Revenue

The budget projects gross tax revenue in 2018–19 to increase by 16.7% over the revised estimate for 2017–18. This is highly optimistic, given that the government expects a nominal GDP growth of 11.5% (and as mentioned earlier, even this latter figure is an optimistic projection). In the previous year, the gross tax revenue (2017–18 RE over 2016–17 A) had increased by 13.4% only.

Even if the projection for gross tax revenue for 2018–19 comes true, the fact of the matter is,

Table 4: Gross Tax Revenue, 2016 to 2018 (Rs crore)

	2016–17 A	2017–18 BE	2017–18 RE	2018–19
Gross Tax Revenue	17,15,822	19,11,579	19,46,119	22,71,242

the total tax revenue of the government is actually very low. This can be understood by comparing the total tax revenue of the Indian Government (Centre and States combined) as a proportion of GDP with other countries. The *Economic Survey 2015–16* says that India's tax-to-GDP ratio at 16.6% is lowest among BRICS countries (Brazil 35.6%, South Africa 28.8%). It is lower than both the Emerging Market Economy (EME) and OECD averages, which are about 21% and 34% respectively. India's tax ratio is the lowest even among economies with comparable (PPP adjusted) per-capita GDP such as Vietnam, Bolivia and Uzbekistan. The *Economic Survey 2017–18* in fact says that: "It is striking that the centre's tax-GDP ratio is no higher than it was in the 1980s, despite average economic growth of 6.5%, the most rapid in India's history."¹⁸

It is thus obvious that there is a huge scope for the government to increase its tax revenue. If India's tax-GDP ratio is to be brought to 25% (that is, a 50% increase), and since the Central government collects the bulk of the tax and non-tax revenue in the country, this means that the Centre's tax revenues can be increased by at least 50%. Let us discuss some possible steps that it can take to do so.

Curbing Illicit Capital Flows to Increase Tax Revenue

One way the government can increase its tax revenue is by curbing illicit outflows and inflows of money. According to the latest report by the international watchdog Global Financial Integrity released in April 2017, between \$8–23 billion was illegally taken out of India and between \$39–101 billion illegally came into India in 2014, primarily through trade mis-invoicing. Even if we take the lower figures, the total illicit financial flows total \$47 billion.¹⁹ These illegal flows primarily take place to escape taxation; had the government taken strong steps to curb these flows and tax them, they could have yielded at least \$12 billion or Rs 78,000 in taxes—this amount is 6.3% of the total tax revenue for the financial year 2014–15.

Unfortunately, neither the previous UPA Government, nor the present BJP Government, is interested in taking firm steps to curb these illegal flows. As we have explained in our

booklet on demonetisation, all the chest thumping by the new government about fighting corruption and curbing the black economy is a lot of hot air; the truth is that it is actually diluting anti-corruption legislations.²⁰

Huge Tax Concessions to Rich

The most important reason for the low tax revenue of the Government of India is the huge tax concessions given by it to the rich. Every year, for the past several years, the budget documents have included a statement on the estimated revenue forgone by the government due to exemptions in major taxes levied by the Centre in the past year. This statement is included in the annexure attached to the Receipt Budget in the Union Budget documents, and is titled: *Revenue Impact of Tax Incentive Under the Central Tax System*. The budget documents reveal that in its first three years in power, the tax exemptions given to the country's uber rich by the Modi-Jaitley government total a mind-boggling Rs 16.5 lakh crore. These tax write-offs are in corporate income tax, customs and excise duties.²¹

This year, the government has not made a full estimate of the tax concessions given to the rich under excise and customs duties. A part of these indirect taxes have been subsumed under GST, and the budget says that the revenue forgone due to exemptions under GST will be calculated next year. So far as the revenue forgone due to corporate tax concessions is concerned, the budget document of 2018–19 estimates this amount to be Rs 85,026 crore for the past year, that is, 2017–18. This subsidy was estimated at Rs 83,492 crore in 2016–17 (this has been revised to Rs 86,145 crore in the 2018–19 budget statement). Since the corporate tax concessions for 2017–18 have actually increased over the previous year's budget estimate, we can safely assume that the total tax concessions given to the rich in 2017–18 would be at least at the same level as in 2016–17, that is, Rs 5.5 lakh crore.

But for the tax concessions given to the rich, the

tax revenue of the government would have gone up from Rs 19.5 lakh crore in 2017–18 RE to Rs 25 lakh crore, an increase of 28%.

Tax Collections: Putting Burden on People

Not only is the government giving huge tax concessions to the rich, the larger portion of the taxes it collects is from the people. To understand this, let us take a look at the tax structure of the government.

There are two types of taxes, direct taxes and indirect taxes. Direct taxes are levied on incomes, such as wages, profits, property, etc., and so fall directly on the rich; while indirect taxes are imposed on goods and impersonal services, and so fall on all, both rich and poor. An equitable system of taxation taxes individuals and corporations according to their ability to pay, which in practice means that in such a system, the government collects its tax revenue more from direct taxes than indirect taxes.

Even in unabashedly capitalist countries across the world, be it the developing countries of South Africa and Brazil, or be it the developed countries of the OECD, the direct tax revenue as a percentage of total revenue varies from 55% to 65% and more. But in India, for every Rs 100 collected by the government as tax revenue, only around Rs 30 comes from direct taxes (and the rest, Rs 70, from indirect taxes). The government is aware of this. The *Economic Survey 2017–18* admits that direct taxes account on average for about 70% of total taxes in Europe. It also admits that India has much lower proportion of direct taxes in its total tax revenue as compared to other emerging market economies (except for China, which is a non-democratic country).²³

Most of the taxes collected by the States are in the form of indirect taxes. The direct taxes are mostly collected by the Centre. In the Centre's tax revenue, the share of direct taxes has been falling since the UPA-II regime. The share of direct taxes in Centre's gross tax revenue fell from 61% in 2009–10 to 56% in 2013–14, the last year of the UPA Government.

Table 5: Revenue Forgone Due to Tax Exemptions and Fiscal Deficit (Rs lakh crore)

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	Total
Revenue Forgone	5.49	5.51	5.50	5.50*	22
Fiscal Deficit RE	5.13	5.35	5.95	6.24	

*Our Estimate

Under the Modi Government, this has fallen further to 52% in 2017–18 RE. In other words, it has fallen by a full 9 percentage points in less than a decade. The *Economic Survey 2017–18* admits that with the introduction of GST, reliance on indirect taxes is going to further increase; the share of direct taxes in Centre's gross tax revenue is expected to fall to 51% in the 2018–19 budget.²⁴ This means that at the national level, including both the Centre and the States, the ratio of direct to indirect taxes is going to be even more skewed this year.

India: Low Non-Tax Revenue

The government has actually resorted to statistical jugglery to boost its non-tax revenue in the 2017–18 RE. Just a few days before the budget was presented, the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) borrowed money from a clutch of banks to acquire the 51.1% government share in another state-owned company, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL). The government earned Rs 36,915 crore from this sale, and included this in its disinvestment income for 2017–18. This boosted its receipts from disinvestment to Rs 1,00,000 crore as against the budgeted Rs 72,500 crore. Thus, to avoid borrowing from the market—something which would lead to a further increase in its fiscal deficit (more on this below)—the government got one government-owned company (ONGC) to borrow and buy the government stake in another company (HPCL).

Even if we leave aside this issue, the actual non-tax revenue of the government is very low because of the huge transfers of public funds and resources to private corporations and the super-rich. But for these transfers, the government could have hugely increased its non-tax revenue, or it could have saved on its budgetary expenses. These transfers to the rich include loan write-offs, handing over control of the country's mineral wealth and resources to private corporations in return for negligible royalty payments, transferring ownership of profitable public sector corporations to foreign and Indian private business houses at throwaway prices, direct subsidies to private corporations in the name of 'public-private-partnership' for infrastructural projects, and so on. These transfers of public wealth to private coffers total several lakh crore rupees.

This implies that *had the government not given these transfers, it could have increased the budget outlay by several lakh crore rupees*. To give just two figures:

- During the first three years of the Modi Government, public sector banks have waived loans given to big corporate houses to the tune of Rs 1.87 lakh crore;²⁵ additionally, they have also restructured loans of the 'high and mighty'—which is a roundabout way of writing off loans—again to the tune of several lakh crore rupees (the actual amount is not known). Despite this, the total non-performing assets (that is, bad loans) of the banks have gone up to Rs 9.5 lakh crore as of June 2017; the RBI has now initiated a process of accelerated restructuring of these loans too.²⁶

The government compensates the public sector banks for these losses by pouring in public funds into them in what is known as bank recapitalisation. This year, the government announced that it was infusing Rs 2.11 lakh crore in public sector banks over the next two years. But it avoided the mention of this amount in the budget by a sleight of hand: it announced that it was going to do so by issuance of recapitalisation bonds to the tune of Rs 1.35 lakh crore, while Rs 58,000 crore would be raised by the banks from the market; the allocation from budgetary resources was only Rs 18,000 crore. Issuance of bonds means that in the coming years, the government would have to pay out interest on the bonds—thus it has shifted the burden to the subsequent years.

The other way the bank loan write-offs are affecting government income is that the affected banks either do not pay or pay lower dividends to the government. For fiscal 2017–18, this has resulted in shortfall in government revenues to the tune of several thousand crore rupees.²⁷

- In the five budgets presented by it, the Modi Government has allocated a total of Rs 2.68 lakh crore just for construction of roads and highways. The government no longer constructs highways. They are now constructed by private corporations, who collect toll from the users to recover their investment. Then why is the government allocating so much money for

construction of roads and highways? This is the subsidy being given by the government—not as loan but as grant—to private corporations as an ‘incentive’ so that they invest in construction of highways;²⁸ it is another matter that apart from this subsidy, which is as much as 40% of the project cost, they get to keep the earnings from the toll as well.

This vampyreal plunder of the country's wealth and resources by corporate houses has reached such rapacious proportions that even the RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, himself an ardent votary of neoliberalism and globalisation, has lambasted the collusion between “venal politicians” and “crony capitalists”. After observing that India has the second highest number of billionaires in the world per trillion dollars of GDP (after Russia), he pointed out that “three factors—land, natural resources, and government contracts or licenses—are the predominant sources of the wealth of our billionaires. And all of these factors come from the government.”²⁹

The imposition of the World Bank imposed neoliberal policies has resulted in rapid increase in the wealth of the super rich in the country. And with neoliberalism accelerating under the swadeshi Modi Government, this concentration of wealth has further increased. In 2000, India's richest 1% held 36.8% of the country's total wealth. When Modi came to power in 2014, this tiny section held 49% of the country's wealth. And within just 2 years, by 2016, this figure has gone up to 58.4%.³⁰

India: Low General Revenue

These huge concessions / subsidies / transfers being given to the rich, both in the form of tax concessions and non-tax concessions, are responsible for the government's low revenues and low budgetary outlay. Readers will be surprised to know that India's total government revenue as percentage of GDP is amongst the lowest in the world. It is more than 40% for most countries of the European Union, going up to above 50% for countries like Belgium, France, Denmark and Finland. It is 29.7% for South Africa, 36.6% for Argentina and 31.6% for Brazil. The world average is 30.2%. But India ranks far below—the Indian Government's total revenue is only 20.8% of GDP

(this is total government revenues, Centre + States combined).³¹

From the data given above about government's tax revenue as compared to other countries, or from the data on government's total revenue as compared to other countries, it is obvious that there is huge scope for increasing total government revenues in India—it needs to be raised by at least 50% to reach the world average. Since the bulk of the revenues are collected by the Centre, this means that for the year 2018–19, the Centre could have increased its total revenue by 50% from Rs 24 lakh crore at present to at least Rs 36 lakh crore, if not more (and therefore increased its budgetary outlay also to Rs 36 lakh crore, an increase of Rs 12 lakh crore over the 2018–19 BE).

5. Budget and Agriculture

The finance minister in his budget speech stated that the “government is committed to the welfare of farmers”, and repeated the promise made in his two previous budget speeches about doubling farmers' income by 2022. As if to prove his concern for farmers, he repeated the word ‘farmer’ and ‘agriculture’ several times in his budget. He also announced several big ticket schemes for farmers. Virtually every newspaper and TV channel dutifully headlined the budget as an agriculture friendly budget.

While there is some ‘window-dressing’ in all budget speeches, Jaitley's 2018–19 budget speech must surely be unprecedented in the annals of Indian budget making for its outright lies. The finance minister announced several grandiose schemes, without actually allocating a paisa for them!

- Thus, Jaitley announced two funds together valued at Rs 10,000 crore to develop infrastructure for the fisheries and animal husbandry sectors. But in the actual budgetary allocations, he has allotted only Rs 10 crore to the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund and Rs 37 crore to the Dairy Processing and Infrastructure Development Fund—implying a total allocation of Rs 47 crore only. There is no mention of an Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund.
- He also announced an Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs 2,000 crore for

developing nearly 22,000 rural haats into Grameen Agricultural Markets and upgrading the 585 state-run Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees, where farmers are obliged to sell their produce. This too is only on paper; there is no allocation for this fund in the budget document.

- He promised Rs 2,600 crore to develop groundwater irrigation in 96 districts where less than 30% of the land is assured of irrigation. But actual allocation is only Rs 310 crore; the fine print of the budget says Rs 2,290 crore of this budget allocation is going to go towards payment of interest for a NABARD fund set up in the 2016–17 budget to fund incomplete irrigation projects across the country.
- Jaitley also proclaimed the launch of a “Restructured National Bamboo Mission with an outlay of Rs 1,290 crore” to promote rural income from bamboo cultivation. The actual allocation—Rs 300 crore.

MSP Promise

The announcement that made the biggest splash, and which was highlighted by every media outlet, was Jaitley’s promise that the government will fix Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for crops at 50% over costs. But here again, there was a sleight of hand. Jaitley claimed that MSP for most rabi (winter) crops announced by the government was already more than 50% over the cost of production, and that for the remaining crops, the government would soon implement this promise made in the BJP party manifesto of 2014 Lok Sabha election.

Strangely, this same government had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in February 2015 saying that the demand of MSP at 50% above cost of production cannot be met. And just a few months ago, in May 2017, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh declared that Modi never promised 50% increase in support price.³² So how is the finance minister now claiming that the government is already giving MSP at more than 50% margin over cost of production for most crops this rabi season?

The trick lies in Jaitley’s definition of production cost. He has changed the formula for calculating production cost. The Commission for Agricultural

Costs and Prices (CACP), which declares minimum support prices, has three definitions of the concept:

- A2: This covers the actual payments for all inputs made by the farmer while growing a particular crop, and includes expenses such as on seeds, fertilisers and pesticides and payment made to hired agricultural labourers.
- A2+FL: This covers the actual costs (A2) plus the imputed cost of family members working on the farm.
- C2: This is A2+FL plus the imputed value of rent and interest on the owned land and capital assets.

The report of the National Commission on Farmers, chaired by Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, had clearly stated that farmers should get an MSP which is 50% higher than ‘C2’ production cost, which is the comprehensive cost of production.³³ Farmers’ organisations have been demanding the implementation of this for more than a decade. Therefore, when Modi went around promising that MSP will be set at cost plus 50% during the 2014 election campaign, and when the BJP put this in its manifesto, they were obviously talking of C2 cost. Jaitley has now changed this to A2+FL—he in fact has admitted this while replying to a debate on the Union Budget 2018–19 in the Rajya Sabha.³⁴

When the CACP calculates the “returns to farmers” provided by MSP, it calls the margin over A2+FL as “gross returns” and the margin over C2 as “net returns”. Anyone with an elementary understanding of household economics knows that it is “net income” that matters.³⁵

In Table 6, we give the net return and gross return for the top 9 crops in the country, ranked according to area of cultivation (excluding sugarcane, whose price calculation is different) during the five years of UPA–II and the first four years of BJP.

Note that there is a huge difference between the returns when we take C2 instead of A2+FL as the baseline cost. Also note that the returns have fallen significantly during the BJP regime as compared to the previous Congress regime.

Table 6 makes clear why the farmers’ organisations are angry and are protesting Jaitley’s announcement that the government is already giving MSP at above 50% of production cost for most rabi crops. It is yet another addition to the long list of betrayals by the BJP of its election promises.

Table 6: Gross Return and Net Return for Various Crops³⁶ (%)

Crop	Net Return of MSP over C2		Gross Return of MSP over A2+FL	
	UPA II average (2009–14)	BJP average (2014–18)	UPA II average (2009–14)	BJP average (2014–18)
Rice	23%	6%	69%	39%
Wheat	36%	32%	112%	101%
Cotton	30%	2%	80%	39%
Soyabean	11%	8%	50%	48%
Maize	10%	7%	46%	41%
Gram (chana)	17%	16%	76%	71%
Bajra	16%	12%	57%	47%
Jowar	-8%	-18%	19%	9%
Mustard	36%	29%	120%	97%

Procurement Lies

Whatever be the MSP declared, another problem faced by farmers is that most farmers do not get this price for their crops. Government procurement operations cover only a few crops, mainly rice, wheat, cotton and occasionally pulses. (While there is no government procurement per se in sugarcane, mills are legally obligated to buy cane from farmers at prices fixed by government, an effective MSP-like arrangement.) And these procurement operations are mainly confined to only a few regions in a few states, most of which are more irrigated (like Punjab, Haryana, western UP and Andhra Pradesh). The Shanta Kumar committee admits that 94% of farmers do not get MSP, even if it is low.³⁷

The finance minister admitted this problem in his budget speech, a late acknowledgement, after 4 years. Meanwhile, another few thousand farmers had committed suicide. Be that as it may, he proposed, “Niti Aayog, in consultation with Central and State Governments, will put in place a fool-proof mechanism so that farmers will get adequate price for their produce.” But true to form, he has sanctioned no budget for the implementation of this promise!

Government procurement from farmers comes under the budget head, ‘food subsidy’. Last year, the government allocated Rs 1.45 lakh crore for this in the budget, but spent only Rs 1.40 lakh crore. This year, the food subsidy has gone up to Rs 1.69 lakh crore, an increase of 16.5% over last year’s

allocation. Even assuming that all of it will be spent, it is too less an increase for a significant expansion of the government’s procurement operations even at last year’s prices, forget a higher MSP.

That Jaitley is not serious about increasing government procurement from farmers is also obvious from the allocations for other schemes related to crop procurement. Thus, the government has a Market Intervention Scheme to

procure pulses and oilseeds for limited periods. This year, the government cut the budget for it from Rs 950 crore to Rs 200 crore. Jaitley has also slashed the budget for the Price Stabilisation Fund (this fund has been transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Department of Consumer Affairs), whose aim is to create a buffer stock of pulses and address problems arising out of volatility in prices, from Rs 6,900 crore in 2016–17 and Rs 3,500 in 2017–18 to just Rs 1,500 crore in 2018–19. Earlier, this fund was meant for cereals and vegetables also; now it has been confined to pulses only.

Other Empty Promises

Another form of output support provided by the government to farmers is the much-hyped crop insurance scheme—Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. The scheme aims to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events. The farmer pays the premium at a subsidised rate, the rest is borne by the Centre and the respective State. Even this scheme has turned out to be a way of transferring public funds to corporations—in the name of public welfare, it has resulted in windfall profits for insurance companies. Data tabled in Parliament in July 2017 reveals that eleven insurance companies received a total of Rs 20,374 crore as crop insurance premium during the 2016–17 kharif and rabi seasons, but paid out only Rs 3,655 crore to settle the claims. Even this claim

amount paid out was only 63% of the amount of claims submitted. The insurance companies thus earned over Rs 16,700 crore as profits. That's a wow!³⁸

Probably one of the most important ways in which the government can ease the agrarian distress is by waiving all agricultural loans. This is one of the most important demands being raised by farmers' movements all over the country. Because of the anti-farmer policies being implemented in the country since 1991—as a part of the World Bank imposed neoliberal policies—the agricultural crisis has been worsening, resulting in falling incomes for 70% of Indian farmers who have land holdings of less than 1 hectare. Consequently, over the two decades 1992 to 2012, the percentage of indebted cultivator households (defined as rural households operating at least 0.002 ha of land) has nearly doubled from 25.9% to 45.9% (according to the All India Debt and Investment Survey conducted by the NSS). Per indebted household, the average amount of debt has gone up by many times and was Rs 1.5 lakh in 2012.³⁹ For India's marginal farmers, the share of this debt from informal sources, especially moneylenders, has been rising. It is because of this worsening crisis that more than 3.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide over the past two decades.⁴⁰ The number of farmers' suicides doubled during the first year of the Modi Government;⁴¹ after that, the government has stopped releasing data about farmers' suicides.

Of course, it is no one's claim that waiving farmers' loans by itself will alleviate the agricultural crisis. That would call for a holistic national agrarian policy. But undoubtedly, waiving of all agricultural loans would be an important first step of any such policy. Instead of farm loan waiver, Jaitley has offered more debt to farmers! He has promised to increase the flow of institutional credit to agriculture from Rs 10 lakh crore last year to Rs 11 lakh crore in the coming financial year. Even with regard to this announcement, it is only on paper—look in the budget documents, and you will not find this number anywhere. Jaitley is only promising that the banks will lend this much money to farmers—something that has got nothing to do with the budget. It is another matter that a large part of the bank credit that goes under the name of agricultural lending today is

going to agribusiness corporations and not farmers.⁴² Farmers' organisations have been demanding that the government take steps to bring many excluded sections of the farming community into the ambit of institutional credit, such as women farmers, Adivasi farmers, tenant farmers and landless farmers. But Jaitley has ignored this demand too. The only budgetary provision related to farm debt is interest subsidy to farmers—the allocation for this remains the same as the allocation last year, Rs 15,000 crore.

Budget Allocation for Agriculture

The single most important allocation that indicates how serious the finance minister is with regards to agriculture is the budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare. In absolute terms, this is only Rs 46,700 crore. Though this amount is 11.6% above the budget estimate for 2017–18, in relative terms, it is a mere 1.91% of the total budget outlay (Table 7).

The finance minister stressed the significance of non-crop activities in his budget speech. Although the contribution of agriculture to national GDP has been steadily declining over the years, the contribution of the livestock sub-sector (includes sectors like dairy, poultry and meat) and fisheries sub-sector to agricultural GDP has increased impressively over the last two decades, from less than 15% in the late 1970s to more than 33% by 2012–13.⁴³ The livestock sector provides additional income to a large section of small and marginal farmers; the *Economic Survey 2010–11* estimated that fishing, aquaculture and allied activities provide livelihood to more than 14 million people. Although the total budget of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries for 2018–19 has gone up by Rs 930 crore as compared to 2017–18 RE, in absolute terms the total budgetary outlay is very low, only Rs 3,100 crore in 2018–19. Of this increase, the total increase in the budget for what is called the 'White Revolution' is only Rs 596 crore, which is scarcely enough to compensate for the increasing *gau rakshak goondaism* across the country that has made it difficult if not impossible for farmers to keep cattle.

Falling Investment in Rural Development

Conditions in agriculture are intimately tied to

Table 7: Budget Allocations for Agriculture Related Ministries (Rs crore)

		2017–18 BE (1)	2017–18 RE	2018–19 (2)	Increase: (2) over (1)
1	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare	51,026	50,264	57,600	12.88%
	<i>Within this:</i>				
	<i>Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare</i>	41,855	41,105	46,700	11.6%
	<i>Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries</i>	2,371	2,167	3,100	
	(1) as % of Budget Outlay	2.38%	2.27%	2.36%	
2	Ministry of Rural Development	1,07,758	1,10,874	1,14,915	6.64%
3	Ministry of Water Resources	6,887	7,660	8,860	28.65%
4	Department of Fertilisers	70,033	65,033	70,125	0.13%
5	Total Agriculture Spending (1+2+3+4)	2,35,704	2,33,831	2,51,500	6.70%
	(5) as % of Budget Outlay	10.98%	10.54%	10.30%	
	(5) as % of GDP	1.4%	1.39%	1.34%	

the general state of the rural economy, and that is why public spending on rural development is also crucial for the overall development of agriculture. Here the outlays are hugely disappointing. Total rural development spending (Ministry of Rural Development) is slated to increase by only 3.6% over the previous year's revised estimate—not even keeping pace with inflation (Table 7)!

One important head under the Department of Rural Development is the 'Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana – Grameen'. In his budget speech, the finance minister declared that the government has launched this scheme so that “every poor of this country may have his own house by 2022”; he announced that the government planned to construct 51 lakh houses in 2017–18 and the same number in 2018–19 exclusively in the rural areas under this scheme. But he was silent on how many houses had actually been constructed in 2017–18. The reason is simple: the website of the Ministry for Rural Development says that only 7.45 lakh houses had been constructed as on March 14, 2018.⁴⁴ Now, for 2018–19, he has cut the allocation for this scheme by 9% over the

previous year (from Rs 23,000 crore to Rs 21,000 crore). Obviously, the government has no intention of constructing many houses under this scheme, it is just another of Jaitley's fibs. The finance minister also made big claims about constructing roads in rural areas. This year, the amount allocated for this scheme, known as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, is exactly the same (at Rs 19,000 crore) as was budgeted last year—a drop in real terms (Table 8).

The allocation for the National Social Assistance Programme is also budgeted under the Department for Rural Development. Why is it under this Department? God alone knows. Anyway. This is the main programme for providing social security to the poor and especially those working in the unorganised sector. It provides a ridiculously low pension of Rs 200 per month to all widows above the age of 40 and all old people above the age of 60. The government has been consistently attempting to save on this

little allocation too by making no attempt to enrol all old people under this scheme—so the revised estimate for 2017–18 is less than the budgeted estimate by as much as Rs 750 crore!

The most important scheme under the Department of Rural Development is obviously the allocation for the government's rural employment guarantee programme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). It guarantees a minimum of 100 days of employment in a year to every willing household—though this is very inadequate, at least it is something. This scheme has the potential to lessen the crisis gripping the rural areas and improve food security. Numerous studies have shown that NREGA has had several positive effects, including increasing rural wages, enabling better access to food and thereby reducing hunger, and reducing distress migration from rural areas.

The budgetary allocation for this important scheme has been kept at the same level as last year's revised estimate, at Rs 55,000 crore. This means that it is a cut in real terms. Further, a part of this

Table 8: Budget Allocations for Dept. of Rural Development (Rs crore)

	2017–18 BE	2017–18 RE	2018–19
Department of Rural Development	1,05,448	1,09,042	1,12,404
<i>of which:</i>			
<i>National Rural Livelihood Mission</i>	4,500	4,350	5,750
<i>Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna</i>	23,000	23,000	21,000
<i>Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna</i>	19,000	16,000	19,000
<i>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</i>	48,000	55,000	55,000
<i>National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)</i>	9,500	8,745	9,975

year's allocation is going to be spent on meeting last year's liabilities. The liabilities are estimated to be around Rs 6,000 crore.⁴⁵ This means that to keep the outlay at last year's level, the allocation for 2018–19 should have been 55000+ 4400 (inflation at 8%) + 6000 = Rs 65,400 crore. The actual allocation for 2018–19 is 16% less than this.

Secondly, even if the Centre had allocated the desired funds to keep the allocation at the same level as last year, it would have been insufficient for a full roll-out of the scheme. MNREGS is a demand-driven scheme, it guarantees 100 days of employment to all those who desire it. Ever since the scheme was rolled out in 2006, successive governments have never allocated enough funds to make this many days of employment available to all those seeking work. During the Modi Government's four years so far, on the average less than 50 person-days of employment had been generated per household (Table 9). The primary sufferers of this cut are some of the poorest and most vulnerable workers of rural India.

Another scheme, that does not come under the Ministry of Rural Development but under the Ministry of Power, but which has the potential of benefiting the rural economy, is the government programme for enhancing power supply to the rural areas (and urban areas too)—the Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana. The finance minister in his budget speech stated, “You can very well imagine our anxiety and restlessness even with one

hour power cut. Think about those women and children whose houses will not get electricity.” And so he announced, “We are spending Rs 16,000 crore under this scheme” to provide electricity to 4 crore rural and urban households in the country by December 2018. He has muddled up the dates. This scheme had been launched in September 2017, and the government had approved Rs 16,320 crore as the total spend for two years from 2017 to 2019 for this (of which the outlay for rural households was to be Rs 14,025

Table 9: NREGA Performance Indicators⁴⁶

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Person-days of employment generated (in crore)	166	235	235	230.95
Average days of employment per household	40.17	48.85	46	45.36

crore). Of this, the Centre was supposed to provide Rs 12,320 crore. In the financial year 2017–18, the scheme was to get Rs 3,600 crore from the Centre but received only Rs 2,000 crore. For this year, the allocation was supposed to be Rs 8,720 crore, but the Centre has allocated only Rs 3,500 crore.⁴⁷ The finance minister is lying again!

Total Agriculture Related Allocations

Let us now take a look at the budget for all agriculture related sectors (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Water Resources as well as the Department of Fertilisers). As can be seen from Table 7, the total spending for all these ministries / departments is Rs 2.51 lakh crore. As a percentage of the budget outlay, this has fallen from 11% in 2017–18 BE to 10.30% this year. As a percentage of the GDP, total spending on all agriculture related sectors is just 1.34% of GDP. It was 1.4% in last year's budget estimate. This, for a sector on which more than 50% of the population depend for their livelihoods!

As we have shown in several of our previous writings,⁴⁸ while the Modi–Jaitley duo has indulged in a lot of bluster regarding welfare of farmers, promising to double farmers’ income by 2022 and so on, the actual policies implemented by them have led to a sharp worsening of the agrarian crisis. It is because of this that agricultural GDP growth rate has come down by half to just 1.9% per annum during the first four years of the Modi Government as compared to the ten years of the previous UPA Government (2004–05 to 2013–14), when agri-GDP registered a growth rate of 3.7% per annum.⁴⁹

Does the Modi Government not have enough money to increase agricultural spending? Of course it has. As discussed above, if it reduces the enormous subsidies and transfers being given to corporate houses, it can easily double or even triple its total investment on all agriculture related sectors, from the Rs 2.5 lakh crore at present to Rs 5–7.5 lakh crore. It can also waive all agricultural loans—this would cost the government at the most Rs 3 lakh crore.⁵⁰

Instead of this, why is the Modi Government implementing anti-farmer policies, which are driving out lakhs of farmers from agriculture, and have led to a sharp increase in farmer suicides? This is made clear in a paper by Niti Aayog, the government’s policy making body, prepared in 2015, that says that small scale farming is a major hinderance to growth of agriculture:

With the corporate sector keen on investing in agribusiness to harness the emerging opportunities in domestic and global markets, time is opportune for reforms that would provide healthy business environment for this sector. Small scale has been a major constraint on the growth of this industry and hence on the diversification by the vast majority of India farmers into high value agriculture.⁵¹

So this is the real objective of neoliberal policies in agriculture—to corporatise farming, which is only possible if small farmers are driven out of agriculture. This is in fact bluntly stated in another more recent official document, that lays out a target of bringing down the population engaged in agriculture from the existing 57% to 38% over the next five years, by 2022.⁵² Interestingly, this is elucidated in a report of the National Skill

Development Council. The reason is obvious—after the farmers have been pushed out of their farms, they will need to be trained to work as workers in the factories.

Clearly, the Modi Government is the most anti-farmer government in the history of independent India.

6. Jaitley and the Social Sectors

Public Social Sector Expenditures: India vs Other Countries

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

The average public social sector expenditures for the 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have risen significantly over the past decade, from an average of 4.8% of GDP in 2001–02 to 18.6% in 2009–10. These expenditures are as high as 27.8% of GDP for Argentina, 27.1% for Brazil, and a fantastic 40.7% for Cuba (all figures for 2009).⁵³

In contrast, the public social sector expenditure of the Government of India is very low! Jaitley and his predecessors in the Finance Ministry and the ‘Chicago boys’ who are their economic advisors are all blithely lying when they claim that the subsidies to the poor are very high! The *Economic Survey 2017–18* admits that the total social services expenditure of the Government of India (Centre and States combined) was around Rs 11 lakh crore in 2017–18 BE, which amounted to just 6.6% of GDP.⁵⁴

Of the total social sector expenditures of the government (Centre + States combined), the larger portion is spent by the states. The Central share of total social sector spending was around 25% during the UPA years of 2007–08 to 2010–11; after that,

it has fallen and was around 18% in 2017–18.⁵⁵ A significant part of the social sector spending of the States is done from tied grants provided by the Centre. Therefore, on the whole, the priorities of the Centre influence the overall social sector spending in the country considerably.

We do not have an exact estimate of the social sector expenditure of the Central government in 2018–19, the budget document does not mention this figure. But considering the overall budget outlay and the expenditures on various ministries related to the social sectors (discussed later in this essay), the social sector expenditure of the government must roughly be the same as in 2017–18 (as a percentage of GDP), if not lower; that is, we can assume that it was around Rs 2.2 lakh crore.

Can't Jaitley increase the government's revenues (and increase the government's transfers to the States), and thereby increase the total social sector expenditure of the government (Centre + States combined) to at least 15% of GDP? That is actually not much; it is only half the level of EU-27. That would require a total social sector expenditure of Rs 28 lakh crore. Assuming that the Centre spends 25% of it, this would require the social sector expenditure of the Centre to go up to Rs 7 lakh crore from the Rs 2.2 lakh crore at present—an increase of just Rs 4.8 lakh crore. The Centre, if it so wants, can easily afford this by reducing the loan write-offs of the corporate houses, or reducing the tax concessions to the rich, or by cancelling the mineral leases given to corporate houses at very low royalty rates, or . . .

Allocations for Ministries Related to Public Welfare

This year being a pre-election year, it was only to be expected that Arun Jaitley's pre-election Budget Speech would go on and on about how much his government cares for the people, for the farmers, for

the poor, for the women, for those running small and micro enterprises, and other vulnerable sections of our society. He made many claims, not only about the recent past, but also about the coming fiscal year, and how his government is implementing numerous schemes with supposedly massive increases in public spending directed towards benefiting these sections of the people.

But when it came to actually allocating money for the social sectors, the budget did not put the money where the mouth is. The figures for the government expenditures on all ministries related to what can be called the social sectors are given in Table 10. (Note that this is a more liberalised definition of government social sector spending than that given in the *Economic Survey*.)

From Table 10, it becomes evident that there is no significant increase in the government's expenditure on all social welfare related ministries. It is projected to increase by only 9.18% over the revised estimates for 2017–18, which means it will barely beat inflation. As a proportion of the budget outlay and of the GDP, this has actually fallen.

We have mentioned above that first demonetisation and then GST have had a devastating effect on the livelihoods of India's poor. Had the Modi Government the slightest concern for the common people of the country, it would have taken steps to increase its allocations for those sectors that directly affect the people, that is, the social sectors. The anti-people nature of the Modi government becomes evident from the fact that the total expenditure on all public welfare related ministries of the Union government, even on the basis of the liberalised definition given by us above, at Rs 5 lakh crore, is less than the total tax exemptions given to the rich, which total Rs 5.5 lakh crore.

Boosting Demand by Social Sector Expenditures

Let us for a moment drop this fact-based critical examination of the budget from a socialist perspective, and examine it purely from the perspective of mainstream capitalist economics. In the *Economic Survey 2017–18* presented by Arvind Subramanian, the Chief Economic Advisor of the Government of

Table 10: Union Budget, Expenditure on Social Welfare Related Ministries⁵⁶
(Rs crore)

	2017–18 RE	2018–19	Increase
Total Exp. on Social Sector Ministries (1)	4,66,271	5,09,095	9.18%
(1) as % of Budget Outlay	21.02%	20.85%	
(1) as % of GDP	2.78%	2.72%	

India, he devotes a good deal of space to a discussion of the serious decline in gross investment in India as a proportion of the GDP. The *Survey* notes: “The ratio of gross fixed capital formation to GDP climbed from 26.5% in 2003, reached a peak of 35.6% in 2007, and then slid back to 26.4% in 2017.” It admits that such sharp swings in investment rates “have never occurred in India’s history”, and that while “the past 15 years have been a special period for the entire global economy, no other country seems to have gone through such a large investment boom and bust during this period.”⁵⁷ The *Survey* frankly and ominously adds: “India’s investment decline seems particularly difficult to reverse . . . The deeper the slowdown, the slower and shallower the recovery.”⁵⁸ And as we have pointed out in our discussion above, the economic slowdown has worsened since the second half of 2016, after the twin disasters of demonetisation and GST. It is another matter that the finance minister in his budget speech denies this crisis and instead claims that “India stands out among the fastest growing economies of the world.”

The way out of this economic slowdown is to boost demand, and one way of doing it is by boosting social sector spending. It is now fairly well established that government spending on social sectors such as education and health has significant positive multiplier effects.⁵⁹ [The fiscal multiplier is an estimate of the effect of government spending on economic growth. A multiplier greater than 1 corresponds to a positive growth stimulus (returning more than Re 1 for each rupee invested), whereas a multiplier less than one reflects a net loss from spending.]

But the finance minister does no such thing in the budget. He says, in his budget speech, that the government attaches “utmost priority to prudent fiscal management and controlling fiscal deficit”. In layman’s language, this means that the government must reduce its expenditures. And so he has reduced the government’s social sector expenditure relative to the budget outlay.

Jaitley has no problems in giving lakhs of crores of rupees as subsidies to the rich in the name of ‘tax incentives’, or ‘investment subsidies’, or bank loan write-offs, and so on. But when it comes to increasing welfare spending on the poor, he says that the government cannot afford that as the fiscal deficit needs to be curbed.

This is precisely what neoliberalism is all about—it means running the economy solely for the profiteering of giant foreign and Indian corporate houses, including shamelessly cutting down the public welfare expenditures on the poor and transferring the savings to the coffers of the corporate houses. Every government that has come to power at the Centre since the beginning of globalisation in 1991 has dutifully implemented these policies; the Modi Government is even more unashamedly implementing these policies.

Such is the nationalism of the BJP–RSS. It is confined to unfurling giant sized flags in universities, and forcing people to stand up while the national anthem is being played in cinema halls—while on the ground, it is doing *shastang dandavata* before the international financial institutions and giant foreign corporations, betraying the interests of the common people.

Let us now take a look at the budget allocations for some of the more important social sectors.

Allocation for Education

Back to the Dark Ages

No country in the world has developed without making provisions for providing free, compulsory, equitable and good quality elementary education to ALL its children in the initial stages of its development, and later expanding it to secondary and higher secondary education. Since the private sector will only invest for profit, all countries, including the avowedly capitalist countries of the West, have done this entirely through public funding. Unfortunately, India has not been able to provide this to a majority of its children seven decades after independence.

The Planning Commission of India admits that 42.4% children drop out of school before completing elementary education.⁶⁰ And for those attending schools, the conditions in a majority of the schools are simply terrible:

- In a majority of the primary schools in the country, a single teacher is teaching two or three different classes at the same time in a single room!⁶¹
- Nearly one-third of the schools do not have usable toilet facilities. And 40% schools do not have electricity.⁶²

Table 11: Budget Allocations for Education, 2014 to 2018 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 A (1)	2017–18 RE (2)	2018–19 (3)	Increase: (3) over (2), %	Increase: (3) over (1), %, CAGR
Department of School Education and Literacy	55,115	47,006	50,000	6.37%	– 33%
Department of Higher Education	27,656	34,862	35,010	0.42%	– 7.0%
Ministry of Human Resource Development: Total	82,771	81,868	85,010	3.84%	– 24.5%
MHRD Budget as % of GDP		0.49%	0.45%		
MHRD budget as % of total budget outlay		3.69%	3.48%		

- Around a million teaching posts are vacant in schools across the country (9,00,000 in elementary schools and 1,00,000 posts in secondary schools), amounting to nearly one-fifth of the teaching positions.⁶³

With such dismal conditions, is it any wonder that a survey found that 48% of Class V students were unable to read Class II–level text; and 43% of Class VIII students could not divide numbers.⁶⁴

Betraying Our Children

Despite this dismal situation, the government continues with its push towards privatisation of education, as demanded by the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programme. The strategy is simple: ruin the quality of government school system by cutting the funding of school education and keeping teaching posts vacant; children will automatically exit government schools, and those who can afford it will join private schools. This privatisation drive has accelerated under the Modi Government.

In this year’s budget, the allocation for school education is just 6.4% higher than the revised estimate for last year, implying a cut in real terms. The allocation for school education in all of Jaitley’s five budgets has fallen so sharply that in real terms, the allocation for 2018–19 is less than the allocation in the 2014–15 BE by as much as 33% (Table 11). The consequence: more than 2 lakh government

schools have closed down till date.⁶⁵

To cover up for this cut in spending, Jaitley has once again resorted to his standard ‘smoke-and-mirrors-routine’. In his budget speech, he announced: “Technology will be the biggest driver in improving the quality of education. We propose to increase the digital intensity in education and move gradually from ‘black board’ to ‘digital board’.” But he has cut the outlay for digital e-learning from an already low Rs 518 crore in the revised estimates for last year to a paltry Rs 456 crore

this year. In any case, only a very few government schools are in any position to take advantage of this scheme. Official data tell us that in 2015–16, only 62% of schools had electricity connections and only 24% had functional computers—and only 9% had both!⁶⁶

Business of Higher Education

Coming to higher education, the number of students in colleges, defined by the Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER (number of students as a percent proportion of the youth population in the age group 17–23 / 18–24) is way below the developed countries—the GER for India is only around 20, whereas for developed countries it is above 60, with several countries having a GER above 70.⁶⁷ An important reason for this is the accelerating privatisation and commercialisation of higher education—already, more than half of higher education enrolment is in private educational institutions.⁶⁸ Since all these are for-profit institutions, very few students can afford their fees. With the government reducing its higher education spending, most government funded colleges are starved of funds and so, to meet their expenses, are being forced to increase student fees using all kinds of excuses. Consequently, studying in government funded educational institutions too is becoming unaffordable for students from poor families.

This trend has gained momentum under the Modi Government. The higher education budget has increased by a tiny 0.42% over the revised estimate for last year—a huge cut in real terms. A comparison with Jaitley’s first budget in 2014–15 reveals that in real terms, the allocation for this year has actually fallen by 7% (CAGR) (Table 11). The All India Council for Technical Education, the regulator of engineering education in India, has been given only Rs 485 crore, the same as last year, a cut in real terms. The allocation for the University Grants Commission, that regulates the higher educational institutions in the country and provides grants to more than 10,000 institutions, has been reduced to Rs 4,723 crore from last year’s revised estimate of Rs 4,923 crore. It had been allocated Rs 9,315 crore in 2015–16 RE; in other words, even in nominal terms, the allocation for it has fallen by half in three years.

Within the higher education budget of the Central government, the trend so far has been that a major part of its allocations (more than one-third) have gone towards funding the so-called ‘institutions of excellence’ such as the IITs, IIMs and the Central Universities. This year, the budget for even these institutions has been cut, which means that the fees in these colleges, which has risen sharply in recent years, is going to further go up.

The main increase in this year’s budget is for what the finance minister has called a new initiative, ‘Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education’, or RISE, to “step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions”. He announced an investment of Rs 1,00,000 crore for this over the next four years. The catch is, this investment will not be from the budget. Educational institutions will be given loans from a new non-bank finance company set up last year by the government, the Higher Education Financing Authority (HEFA), which will borrow money from the market for this. The college will have to repay the principal, the Central government will bear the interest costs. The budget will only fund the interest costs, for which the budget allocation for HEFA has been hiked from Rs 250 crore in 2017–18 to Rs 2,750 crore in 2018–19. This means that universities and colleges will have to borrow from HEFA for upgrading themselves, which in turn means that they will have to increase

student fees to repay the loans, making higher education even costlier.

Narendra Modi and the BJP had promised to increase spending on education (Centre + States combined) to 6% of GDP during their 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign. The Economic Survey 2017–18 admits that this has actually fallen under Modi rule, from 3.1% of GDP in 2012–13 to just 2.7% in 2017–18 BE.⁶⁹ With the Centre’s educational budget as a percentage of GDP falling further this year, the combined spending of Centre and States on education is going to be even lower in 2018–19.

If Modi was indeed serious about implementing his election promise, it would require a total educational spending (Centre + States) of Rs 11.2 lakh crore in 2018–19. Even if the Centre had spent 25% of this so as to give a boost to total educational spending in the country (the Centre had spent 17.4% in 2017–18 BE), it would have required Jaitley to allocate Rs 2.8 lakh crore for education, an increase of Rs 2 lakh crore over the actual allocation made in the budget—not an unaffordable amount for a government that gives several times this amount as subsidies to the rich every year.

Cogs in Corporate Wheel

The neoliberal model looks at everything, including education, from the perspective of maximising corporate profits. There is no need to look at education from the perspective of human development, as a means of unlocking the inherent potential of human beings, so that they can enjoy an enhanced quality of life. All this is gibberish. The sole aim of education must be to prepare youth for employment in the assembly lines of multinational corporations. For this, the youth must be imparted the necessary skills, so that they can become cogs in the corporate wheel.

This philosophy also fits well with the fascist philosophy of the BJP–RSS regime, which wants to transform our youth into mindless automatons in the service of virulent Hindutva.

And so, while on the one hand, the Modi–Jaitley regime is slowly strangulating our higher educational institutions by starving them of funds, on the other hand, the government has hugely increased funding for skill development. The BJP Government inaugurated the Ministry of Skill Development and

Entrepreneurship soon after coming to power in 2014. Its main programme is the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, the allocation for which has more than tripled in the last three years. This year, the allocation for this programme has increased by 12% over the budget estimate for last year (Table 12).

Table12: Budget Allocations for Skill Development (Rs crore)

	2015–16 A	2017–18 BE	2018–19
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	991	2,924	3,273

Allocation for Health

Biggest Hoax of Budget

Another budget showstopper was Jaitley's announcement of "the world's largest government funded health care programme." It was a scheme to provide medical insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh per family to 10 crore poor families (roughly 50 crore people) in case of hospitalisation (that is, out-patient care is not covered).

It is proof of the vacuity of our media that this announcement was highlighted by every TV news channel and hit the headlines of nearly every newspaper the next day. It was actually the biggest hoax of the budget.

Even assuming that the finance minister is serious about providing medical insurance to the poor for hospitalisation, the allocation is simply inadequate. He has allocated only Rs 2,000 crore for the scheme. Even government functionaries admit that the scheme will require a minimum outlay of at least Rs 10,000 crore; other experts peg the burden on the exchequer to be much higher.⁷⁰

It is not the first time the finance minister has made such an announcement. In his 2016 budget speech too, he had announced a "new health protection scheme" to provide health insurance cover of up to Rs 1 lakh per family. Six months after Jaitley's budget speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi too reiterated this promise in his Independence Day address on August 15, 2016. Yet, one and a half years later, that is, till end-2017, the Union Cabinet had still not approved the proposal, and so the scheme never took off.⁷¹ The previously existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)

therefore continued. It provides an insurance cover of Rs 30,000 per year to every BPL household in case of hospitalisation.

It is not clear if the Modi Government spent anything on RSBY in 2015–16. Though the 2015–16 RE shows an expenditure of Rs 595 crore, no mention of this scheme can be found in the budget documents of 2017–18, where actual expenditure of 2015–16 is mentioned. The allocation for the new avatar of RSBY was increased to Rs 1,500 crore in the 2016–17 budget, but since the new scheme remained dormant, only Rs 466 crore was spent (actual expenditure, taken from 2018 budget documents). It was allocated Rs 1,000 crore in the 2017–18 budget; again, only Rs 471 crore was spent (2017–18 RE). It remains to be seen how much will the government actually spend of the increased allocation of Rs 2,000 crore for the latest avatar of RSBY.

How many poor families have benefited from RSBY? The government has not been very willing to release RSBY data, and so comprehensive evaluations have not been done. But independent evaluations of the RSBY based on NSS data for 2014 show that only 1.2% of the hospitalisation cases of the rural population and 6.2% of the urban population received even part reimbursement. Studies have also shown that private hospitals often force people to pay extra money even after receiving RSBY insurance funds.⁷² Therefore, it is doubtful if many poor families will benefit from the latest version of RSBY.

More importantly, this is not really a universal healthcare scheme even for the poor. That is because it does not cover outpatient costs, and these constitute 63.5% of the health related out-of-pocket expenditure (that is, personal spending by people) in India. India's health-related out-of-pocket expenditure, which pushes families into indebtedness and deeper poverty, is among the world's highest.⁷³

The biggest beneficiaries of publicly funded health insurance schemes are private hospitals and insurance companies. This has been the experience all over the world. The only way in which reliable and good quality health care can be provided to ordinary people is by strengthening public hospitals. But for that, the government needs to increase its health care budget.

Declining Allocation for Healthcare

The WHO recommends that countries should allocate at least 5% of their GDP for public health services; India allocates barely 1%. India ranks 171 out of 175 countries in public health spending.⁷⁴ The National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 promises to increase the government's (Centre and the States combined) health expenditure from the existing 1.15% of GDP to 2.5% by 2025.⁷⁵ A simple back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that for achieving this target, government spending on health needs to grow by at least 20% a year.⁷⁶ But the allocation for Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has increased by only a minuscule amount, from Rs 53,294 crore in last year's revised estimate to Rs 54,600 crore this year, an increase of only 2.45%, implying a cut in real terms (Table 13). Minus the budget for the RSBY insurance scheme, the allocation for this ministry has actually declined!

The allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for this year has declined both as a percentage of the budget outlay and as a percentage of GDP as compared to the revised estimate for last year.

Table 13: Budget Allocations for Health (Rs crore)

	2017–18 RE	2018–19 BE
Dept. of Health and Family Welfare (including Department of AIDS Control)	51,551	52,800
<i>Within this:</i>		
<i>Pardhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana</i>	3,175	3,825
<i>National Rural Health Mission</i>	25,459	24,280
<i>National Urban Health Mission</i>	652	875
Dept. of Health Research	1,743	1,800
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: Total	53,294	54,600
Health Budget as % of Budget Outlay	2.40%	2.24%
Health Budget as % of GDP	0.32%	0.29%

Prioritising Tertiary Over Primary Care

Even within this low allocation, the entire orientation of the finance minister is to shift priority in spending from primary care to tertiary care. The allocation for building AIIMS-like institutes and upgrading government medical colleges (given the deceptive name of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana) has been increased by Rs 650 crore in nominal terms (Rs 3,175 crore in 2017–18 RE to Rs 3,825 in 2018–19). On the other hand, the funds for the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) have been cut even in nominal terms by almost Rs 1,200 crore. While the NRHM's urban counterpart, the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) has got an increased funding of Rs 875 crore this year, it is actually one-fourth of its requirement (Table 13). The Union Cabinet had estimated the share of Central funding for this scheme to be around Rs 3,400 crore per annum way back in 2013 when it had given approval to this scheme aimed at addressing healthcare challenges in towns and cities with focus on urban poor.⁷⁷

Note that we are not arguing that new high quality public tertiary care hospitals are not needed—the point is that this should be not done at the cost of neglecting the primary sector. The present rush at the district and high-end hospitals can be much reduced if primary health centres (PHCs) and community health centres (CHCs) are improved; if primary level health services are good, most illnesses can be taken care of at this level itself, and this will not only improve the efficiency and reduce the cost of delivery of public health services, it will also improve the overall health status of the people. Therefore, priority should be given to improving primary health care; but like last year, this has been completely ignored in this budget too.

The cut in the budget for NRHM means that the existing shortfalls in public health and primary care facilities—20% shortage of health sub-centres, along with 22% and 30% shortage of PHCs and CHCs (as per Rural Health Statistics 2016)⁷⁸—are unlikely to be addressed.

But then what about the announcement made by Jaitley in his budget speech about

allocating Rs 1,200 crore for converting all the 1.5 lakh health sub-centres into health and wellness centres? Again, this is mere tweaking of numbers. This allocation is probably under the head ‘Health Systems Strengthening’, for which the budget has been increased by Rs 1,177 crore (Table 14). This works out to an average of Rs 80,000 per centre—which is simply too inadequate. About 20% of the sub-centres do not even have regular water supply and 23% are without electricity. Over 6,000 sub-centres do not have an ANM/health worker (female) and almost one lakh centres do not have a health worker (male). There are 4,243 centres without either.⁷⁹ For a sub-centre to become a health and wellness centre, at the least, these basic facilities and human resources need to be provided. It is hard to understand how this can be done with the meagre funds allocated. There is also no increase in allocation for maintenance of supportive infrastructure. All this only proves that all the talk of ‘health and wellness centres’ by the finance minister is mere prattle.

Simultaneously, the finance minister has made drastic cuts in the funding for reproductive and child healthcare (Rs 2,291 crore in nominal terms, or 32% in real terms) and for communicable diseases care (Rs 720 crore in nominal terms, 28% in real terms)—this is the reason why despite the increased allocation for health sub-centres, the overall budget for NRHM shows an absolute decline.

Can’t Jaitley Increase Health Budget?

The NHP promises to increase Central government health spending to 1% of GDP. To meet this target, Jaitley needed to allocate Rs 1.8 lakh crore in 2018-19; he has allocated only 29% of this. It is not that the government does not have the required funds to make this allocation; it is a question of priorities—whether priority should be given to profiteering of corporations, or providing essential health and education facilities to the people.

The headlines have got it wrong. This Budget is not about the world’s largest health protection plan. It is about a country which has the highest number of deaths in the world due to disease, a country with the

Table 14: Budget Allocations for Rural Health Mission (Rs crore)

	2017–18 RE	2018–19 BE
National Rural Health Mission	25,459	24,280
<i>Within this:</i>		
<i>Reproductive and Child Healthcare</i>	7,545	5,254
<i>Health Systems Strengthening</i>	8,396	9,573
<i>Communicable Diseases Care</i>	2,648	1,928
<i>Infrastructure Maintenance</i>	5,518	5,693

highest number of child and maternal deaths in the world, criminally neglecting this health ‘crisis’ and spending less than almost all other countries in the world on improving public health facilities—while at the same time giving lakhs of crores of rupees as subsidies to its uber rich.

Allocation for Nutrition-Related Schemes

India may be one of the world's fastest growing economies, but its hunger levels are amongst the worst in the world. The Global Hunger Index (GHI), a multidimensional statistical tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger globally and by country and region, ranked India at a very low 100 out of 119 countries for which the GHI was calculated in 2017. The GHI is calculated by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).⁸⁰

India’s shamefully high hunger levels are also borne out by recently released data from the National Family Health Survey–4 (2015–16). According to this survey:⁸¹

- 38.4% of children under the age of five are stunted (low height for age, indicating chronic malnutrition);
- 35.7% are underweight (low weight for age, indicating both chronic and acute malnutrition); and
- 21% have wasting (low weight for height, indicating acute malnutrition).

The survey also reveals that 58.4% children between 6–59 months of age and 50% pregnant women between 15–49 years are anaemic.

Food Subsidy

The most important programme in the country to tackle this hunger and malnutrition crisis facing the country is the food subsidy programme, wherein the government provides essential food and non-food items to the poor at subsidised rates through the public distribution system (PDS). This food subsidy programme is mandated under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), passed by the Parliament in 2013.

As we have discussed elsewhere, the NFSA is a very inadequate Act. It is actually a disgrace for a country that claims to be an emerging economic superpower: (i) It provides only starvation foodgrains—5 kg per person per month; (ii) Provides only for cereals, with no entitlements to other basic food necessities such as pulses and edible oil required to combat malnutrition—whose prices have soared in recent years; (iii) It does not provide even this limited coverage to all the poor, but to only around 67% of all families.⁸²

The most important step the government needs to take to tackle the nutrition crisis facing the country—which is actually nothing less than a national emergency—is to universalise the PDS and include distribution of other food essentials in it. (Discussing this issue in greater detail is beyond the scope of this essay.⁸³) The BJP, when it was in the opposition and during its election campaign of 2014, had derided the NFSA and had promised ‘universal food security’, even claiming that it was integral to national security. BJP leaders had gone on record demanding the expansion of the Act to include other food essentials too.⁸⁴ But after coming to power, the Modi Government has gone completely silent on all these issues. In an article published in an earlier issue of *Janata*, we have shown that the total increase in food subsidy required for universalising the PDS and providing all citizens 35 kg of wheat /rice and 5 kg of millets per household per month will cost the exchequer an additional Rs 85,000 crore at the most (calculation made for 2017–18).⁸⁵ Additionally, if the government decides to distribute 2 kg of pulses and 1 kg of edible oil to all families through the PDS, even assuming a subsidy of Rs 50 per kg for both

these food essentials, that would cost the exchequer at the most Rs 40,000 crore. This means that the food subsidy bill would go up by a total of Rs 1.25 lakh crore, for universalising and expanding the PDS. That is not much, for a government that gives Rs 5.5 lakh crore as tax concessions to the super-rich every year.

This year, Jaitley has increased the food subsidy outlay by 16.5% over the previous year’s allocation, which implies that the government is not planning to significantly increase its food procurement as compared to last year. As we can see from Table 15, the food subsidy as a percentage of budget outlay and as a percentage of GDP is actually less than the actual expenditure on this during the first year of the Modi Government, 2014–15.

Table 15: Budget Allocations for Food Subsidy, 2014 to 2018 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 A	2017–18 BE	2018–19 BE
Food Subsidy	117,671	145,339	169,323
Food Subsidy as % of Budget Outlay	7.07	6.77	6.93
Food Subsidy as % of GDP	0.94	0.87	0.90

Other Nutrition Schemes

Apart from the food subsidy programme, the Central government also has several other ‘nutrition’ schemes oriented towards pregnant women and children. Most of them are included under the umbrella of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and include Anganwadi services and the Maternity Benefit Programme (MBP), apart from some other smaller schemes. Another important scheme that is also nutrition-oriented, but comes under the Human Resource Development Ministry, is the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

This year, the allocation for these schemes is more than the allocation for last year by 9.2%. But taking a more long-term view, in all the five budgets presented by Jaitley so far, the total allocation for all these nutrition oriented schemes has gone up by only 3.99% (CAGR) over the actual expenditure in 2014–15 (Table 16)—again a sharp reduction in real terms! To give three glaring examples which sharply bring out the BJP Government’s insensitivity towards the 5 crore malnourished children and 2

Table 16: Budget Allocations for Nutrition-Oriented Schemes, 2014 to 2018*(Rs crore)*

Schemes	2014–15 A	2017–18 BE	2017–18 RE	2018–19
Core ICDS/ Anganwadi Services	16,664	15,245	15,245	16,335
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana/MBP	343	2,700	2,595	2,400
Mid-Day Meal (MDM)	10,524	10,000	10,000	10,500
National Nutrition Mission	20	1,500	950	3,000
Scheme for Adolescent Girls	622	460	460	500
National Creche Scheme	98	200	65	128
Child Protection Scheme	446	648	648	725
Scheme for Welfare of Working Children in Need of Care and Protection	5	2	.01	.01
Total	28,722	30,755	29,963	33,588

crore pregnant women and lactating mothers in our country:

- The most important of these nutrition schemes is Anganwadi services. It is a programme aimed at providing health, education and supplementary nutrition to mothers and children below 6 years of age. While the budget for this year is more than last year's budget allocation by 7.15%, it has been cut so sharply in the previous years that it is less than the actual expenditure of 2014–15 even in absolute terms. In real terms, the budget allocation for Anganwadi services this year is less than 2014–15 (Actuals) by 39%.
- After coming to power, the BJP Government delayed distribution of Rs 6,000 to all pregnant and lactating mothers in the country as mandated by the NFSA for three years, and only announced its full implementation across the entire country in the 2017–18 budget. However, Jaitley made a financial allocation of only Rs 2,700 crore for this scheme (earlier the Maternity Benefit Programme, now known as the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana) in last year's budget, which is only 28% of the amount needed for its genuine implementation. This year, the government has announced that it would give maternity benefit of only Rs 5,000, thus violating the provisions of the NFSA, and accordingly, Jaitley has further reduced the allocation for this scheme to Rs 2,400 crore.

- The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is another very important scheme to combat the huge malnutrition levels among children in the country; another equally important purpose is to improve school enrolment and child attendance in schools. The Modi Government in its very first year cut the budget allocation for this scheme from Rs 13,000 crore proposed in Chidambaram's interim budget to Rs 10,000 crore, and then kept the allocation for this scheme at roughly the same level for the subsequent years. This year, the allocation is Rs 10,500 crore—a reduction of 36% in real terms even over the reduced actual expenditure on this scheme in 2014–15.

7. Budget and the Marginalised Sections

The broad contours of the budgetary allocations for the most marginalised sections of Indian society, women, and the Dalits and Adivasis, remain the same as in the previous Jaitley budgets.

Allocations for Women

These allocations are outlined in the Gender Budget Statement. It compiles information submitted by the various ministries and departments on how much of their budgetary resources are targeted for benefiting women.

In a country where a crime against women takes place every 90 seconds, an insensitive Modi Government had reduced the gender budget in real terms as compared to last year. In fact, over the five budgets submitted by Jaitley so far, the allocation for 2018-19 is more than the estimated allocation for 2014-15 by only 5.61% (CAGR), implying a cut in real terms. This reduction is also reflected in the gender budget allocation as a percentage of total budget outlay and also as a percentage of GDP (Table 17).

A closer look at the GBS makes it clear that a large part of the allocations shown under it have

Table 17: Budget Allocations for Women, 2014 to 2018 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE (1)	2017–18 RE (2)	2018–19 (3)	Increase: (3) over (2)	Increase: (3) over (1), CAGR
Gender Budget	98,030	1,17,221	1,21,961	4.04%	5.61%
Ministry of Women and Child Dev.	21,194	21,237	24,700	16.31%	3.90%
Gender Budget as % of Budget Outlay	5.46%	5.28%	4.99%		
Gender Budget as % of GDP	0.79%	0.70%	0.65%		

actually nothing to do with the welfare of women. The GBS is in two parts. Part A details schemes in which 100% provision is for women. In Part A of the GBS this year, there is an allocation of Rs 21,000 crore for Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana. Even if women are given joint ownership of houses built under this scheme, how is this a scheme that is meant to benefit women exclusively? The allocation for this under Part A of the Gender Budget constitutes 71.5% of the total budget under Part A (Rs 29,378 crore).

Part B of the GBS includes spending for those schemes where allocation for women constitutes at least 30% of the provision. All important ministries claim that 30–40% of their allocations are for women, and this is routinely shown as such in Part B of the Gender Budget.

Thus, for instance, the Department of Health and Family Welfare has claimed an allocation of Rs 22,267 crore for the Gender Budget, out of its total allocation of 52,800 crore, or 42% of its total allocation; the Department of School Education and Literacy claims gender oriented allocation to be Rs 14,455 crore out of its total allocation of Rs 50,000 crore, or 29%; while the Department of Higher Education claims this to be Rs 10,367 crore out of Rs 35,010 crore, or 29.6%. No attempt is made to ensure that this much allocation is targeted to benefit women, neither do these ministries attempt to make an estimate of how many women have benefited from these women-oriented allocations. Part B (Rs 92,583 crore) constitutes 76% of the total gender budget.

This basically means that most, probably more than three-fourths, of the gender budget has really

nothing to do with benefiting women exclusively.

Genuinely Women Oriented Schemes

Let us now take a look at some of the schemes under Part A which are genuinely and exclusively meant to benefit women.

The scheme that has got a large allocation and has received the most publicity in recent

times is the Ujjwala scheme to provide free cooking gas connections to poor women (Rs 3,200 crore). Last year too, Jaitley had allocated a similar amount—but amazingly, managed to save Rs 1,000 crore from it, while claiming that more than 2 crore poor women had been provided free gas connections. In this year’s budget speech, while keeping the allocation the same, Jaitley says that the government has increased the target of providing free gas connections to 8 crore poor women as against the previous target of 5 crore.

This scheme is also turning out to be a hoax like many other Modi–Jaitley announcements. Under this scheme, while poor women don’t have to make any initial payment at the time of taking the gas connection, the gas stove and first cylinder given to them are not given free, but as a loan, to be recovered from them from the subsidy they receive at the time of each refill (the subsidy is roughly one-fourth of the market cost presently). Which means they have to pay the market rate for all subsequent cylinders (presently around Rs 650), till the loan (around Rs 1,500) is recovered. But for most BPL families, the market rate of the cylinder is unaffordable. Therefore, according to newsreports, a very low number of Ujjwala beneficiaries are coming back for refills.⁸⁶

Most other genuinely and exclusively women-oriented schemes in Part A come under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The total allocation for them is a miniscule Rs 4,286 crore, just about the same as last year’s allocation of Rs 4,270 crore. The allocation for the ‘Scheme for Adolescent Girls’, also called SABLA, has increased from Rs 460 crore in 2017–18 (RE) to Rs 500 crore

this year. The government announced last year that this scheme is being extended from 205 districts in 2016–17 to cover the entire country over the next two years (by 2018–19). But strangely, at the same time, it has reduced the allocation for this scheme—it had been allocated Rs 700 crore in 2014–15.

The other schemes have received such tiny allocations that it is obvious that the government is not serious about them, and they have been announced for propaganda purposes only. Thus, 'Women's helpline' has been allocated Rs 29 crore; working women's hostels have been allocated Rs 60 crore (last year, the allocation was Rs 50 crore, of which only Rs 30 crore was spent); Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, that is supposed to provide micro-loans to women for livelihoods, micro-enterprises, etc. has been given a princely Rs 0.01 crore; the Central Social Welfare Board, that is supposed to run several important programmes for the welfare and development of women and children, especially in rural areas, has been given a measly Rs 71.5 crore; while the National Commission for Women, a statutory body that investigates complaints related to deprivation of women's rights, has been allocated Rs 24 crore. The allocation for the much tomtomed *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan* has been increased to Rs 280 crore, but how serious the government is regarding this scheme can be seen from the fact that of last year's allocation of Rs 200 crore, only Rs 180 crore was spent.

But what reveals the government's total unconcern towards women's safety, despite the newspapers daily carrying reports of rapes, acid attacks and domestic violence, is the under-utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund. Following the brutal gang rape of a young girl in Delhi in December 2012 that shook the conscience of the nation, the then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram announced this fund in his 2013 Union Budget to support initiatives by the government and NGOs that support the safety of women in India, with a corpus of Rs 1,000 crore. Jaitley too added Rs 1,000 crore to this fund in both the 2014 and 2015 budgets, and then reduced it to Rs 500 crore in the 2016 and 2017 budgets. But astonishingly, most of this money has remained unutilised. According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, of the total Rs 2,711 crore that had accumulated in the Nirbhaya fund in 2017–18, only Rs 825 crore has been utilised.⁸⁷ This year,

again, Jaitley has allocated Rs 500 crore to this fund.

Allocations for Dalits and Adivasis

Jaitley in his 2018–19 budget says that he has allocated Rs 56,619 crore for programmes for SCs and 39,135 crore for STs this year, a marginal increase from last year's revised estimate of Rs 52,719 crore and Rs 32,508 crore respectively.

While, as discussed in great detail above, Jaitley's 2018–19 budget is full of sophistry, this is probably the biggest fraud in the budget.

In the 1970s, the government launched the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP). The aim was to ensure the flow of targeted funds from the Central Ministries towards the development of the Dalits and Adivasis, so as to bridge the development gap between these communities and the rest of society. The guidelines under these two programmes clearly stated that each ministry/department must allocate funds from their Plan expenditure under separate budget head/subhead for these sub Plans, and that these allocations as a proportion of the Plan expenditure should be at least in proportion to the share of the Dalits and Adivasis in the total population. According to the 2011 Census, the population share of Dalits is 16.6% and of Adivasis is 8.6%, implying that the allocations for the SCSP and TSP out of the total Plan expenditure should be at least this much respectively. It is another matter that the actual allocations for these sub Plans never reached the stipulated norm. During the BJP regime, the allocations fell to even below the low levels of the previous UPA Government—they were 7.06% and 4.36% of the Plan expenditure respectively in the 2016–17 budget estimates!

In 2017, the government merged the Plan and Non-Plan heads of expenditure in the budget. A side effect of this was that the strategy of ensuring targeted flow of funds for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes got diluted. Neither in the 2017 budget, nor in this year's budget, has the government come up with a revised framework for earmarking funds for the SCSP and TSP. All that it has done is to ask the ministries to allocate funds for these plans from their total allocations. Therefore, the allocations made under SCSP and TSP, now renamed as 'Allocations for Welfare of Scheduled

Castes' and 'Allocations for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes' respectively, are no longer targeted Plan allocations for welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. They are merely rough estimates made by the various ministries of how much will these most oppressed sections of Indian society benefit from general schemes and programmes. Therefore, the allocations for welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes made in the budget this year (and in last year's budget too) are not comparable to the allocations made for SCSP and TSP in the earlier years.

Table 18: Estimating Under-Allocation for Welfare of SCs and STs, 2018–19 (Rs crore)

	2018–19
Total Budget Outlay	24,42,213
Desired allocation for SCs welfare: 4.62% of Budget Outlay	1,12,830
Actual Outlay	56,618
Shortage in Outlay	56,212
Desired allocation for STs welfare: 2.39% of Budget Outlay	58,369
Actual Outlay	39,135
Shortage in Outlay	19,234

Be that as it may, let us make a rough comparison of how much is the under-allocation for Scheduled Castes and Tribes in this year's budget as compared to the stipulated guidelines for SCSP and TSP. The guidelines state that SCSP and TSP should be allocated at least 16.6% and 8.6% of the total Plan expenditure respectively. The last Union Budget where Plan and Non-Plan budgets were specified was the 2016–17 budget. In that budget, the due allocation for SCs (16.6% of the Plan budget) should have been Rs 91,302 crore, and due allocation for STs (8.6% of the Plan budget) should have been Rs 47,301 crore. These figures amount to 4.62% and 2.39% of the total budget expenditure for 2016–17. Let us assume that for this year (2018–19), the budget should have allocated at least this much for welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes from the total budget allocation. This means that in the 2018–19 budget, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes should have been allocated at least Rs 1,12,830 crore and Rs 58,369 crore respectively. The actual

allocations are less than this desired allocation by Rs 56,212 crore and Rs 19,234 crore respectively (Table 18).

8. Conclusion

The Modi Government is not just an anti-farmer government, it is also an anti-poor government. The above analysis makes it clear that the basic orientation of the Modi Government is to:

- transfer public money and resources to the tune of lakhs of crore of rupees to giant foreign and Indian business houses in the name of promoting GDP growth;
- reduce welfare expenditures on the poor—whose aim is to provide the bare means of sustenance to the poor at affordable rates—in the name of containing the fiscal deficit, and privatise and hand over these essential services to private corporations for their naked profiteering.

The Modi Government is running the economy for the benefit of the big corporations and the super-rich with such shamelessness that in 2017, the richest 1% cornered as much as 73% of the total wealth generated in the country, while 67 crore people, comprising the bottom half of the population, got only 1%.⁸⁸ A country which has the largest number of hungry people in the world, where 40% of the children do not complete basic schooling, and where millions of people die of entirely curable diseases because of low public health expenditure, now has the third largest number of billionaires in the world. In just one year (2016 to 2017), the number of billionaires in the country has gone up from 102 to 121. The wealth of Mukesh Ambani, the country's richest man, went up by a whopping 73% to \$40 billion or Rs 2.6 lakh crore. The number of billionaires in the country has more than doubled during four years of the Modi Government (in 2014, the Forbes list had 56 Indian billionaires).⁸⁹

This is also the real reason behind the fascist offensive launched by the BJP and its parent organisation, the RSS. They are brazenly attempting to polarise Indian society along communal lines—by launching campaigns such as *Ghar Wapsi* and *Love Jihad*, indulging in hooliganism in the name of gau raksha and taking out aggressive religious processions and thereby inciting riots—so as to

divert the attention of the people from their real agenda, of running the economy exclusively for the profiteering of giant foreign and Indian corporations. As Mussolini famously put it, fascism is corporatism.

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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.

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

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

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

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

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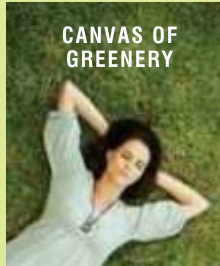
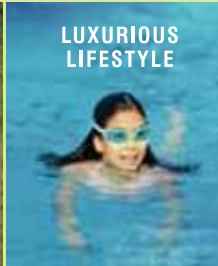
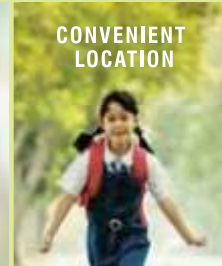
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**Goodbye Bhai: The Struggle
Will Continue**
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**Hopeless Implementation
of Right to Education
Act in UP**
Sandeep Pandey

It's Modi's BJP!
Kuldip Nayar

Yes, That's What Israel Is!
Jawaharlal Jasthi

**Indo-Pak Amity:
Necessary Compulsion for
the Survival of Both**
Pratap Reddy

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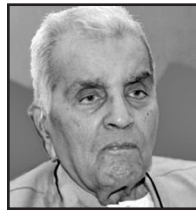
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Justice Rajindar Sachar 1923-2018: Our Finest Has Gone

Qurban Ali



V e t a r a n Socialist leader noted jurist and champion of human rights Justice (retired) Rajinder Sachar passed away in Delhi on 20th April 2018. He was 94. A distinguished advocate for the protection of human rights, and poor, Justice Sachar was a former Chief Justice of Delhi and Sikkim High Courts. He vociferously promoted the cause of human rights and was also head of People's Union of Civil Liberty (PUCL). He authored many reports on Kashmir.

Paying emotional tribute on the sad demise of late Justice Rajindar Sachar, senior journalist Seema Mustafa wrote "One of our finest has gone. Justice Rajinder Sachar has left us, fairly suddenly without too much notice except that delivered by age. A mentor, a friend, a man whose doors were always open he will be sorely missed. He did not really care--unlike Delhi's famous---whether he was invited to speak or not, if he supported the cause he was there in the audience, listening attentively. For many of us he was the person

we turned to when the times seemed very bleak and dark, just to hear Justice Sachar tell us that it will get better. The wisdom of experience and age gave his voice authority, and lifted spirits when little else would".

Rajindar Sachar was born on 22nd December 1923 at Lahore in undivided India. His father Lala Bhim Sen Sachar was a well-known Congress leader and later become Chief Minister of Punjab. He educated at D.A.V. High School in Lahore, then went on to Government College Lahore and Law College, Lahore. During his students days he was attached to National movement and joined Congress Socialist Party. After the partition of the country he came to Delhi and joined Socialist party.

In May 1949, the Socialist Party under Rammanohar Lohia's leadership held a demonstration in front of the Nepal embassy in New Delhi to protest against the autocratic and repressive regime of the Rana government in the Himalayan kingdom. There was violence and the police used teargas shells to disperse the mob.

Lohia was arrested for violating Section 144 CRPC. Young Rajinder

Sachar was also arrested with Lohia and remained in jail for a month and a half. According to Sachar sahib "It was during that imprisonment that Nehru and Indira sent a basket of mangoes to Lohia. Sardar Patel was very angry and wrote to Nehru expressing his annoyance over sending mangoes to a person who had violated the law. Nehru in his quiet way told him that politics and personal relationships should not be mixed up". It was a first movement and arrest in free India where Socialist offered civil disobedience".

On 22 April 1952 Rajinder Sachar enrolled as an advocate at Simla. On 8 December 1960 he became an advocate in the Supreme Court of India, engaging in a wide variety of cases concerning civil, criminal and revenue issues. But at the same time he was actively associated with the Socialist Party led by Lohia. In 1963 a breakaway group of legislators left the Congress party and formed the independent "Prajantra Party". Sachar helped this group prepare memoranda levelling charges of corruption and mal-administration against Pratap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of Punjab. Justice Sudhi Ranjan Das was appointed to look into the charges, and in June 1964 found Kairon guilty on eight counts.

On 12 February 1970 Rajinder Sachar was appointed Additional Judge of the Delhi High Court for a two-year term, and on 12 February 1972 he was reappointed for another two years. On 5 July 1972 he was appointed a permanent Judge of the High Court. He was acting chief justice of the Sikkim High court from 16 May 1975 until 10 May 1976, when he was made a judge in the Rajasthan High Court. The transfer from Sikkim to Rajasthan

was made without Sachar's consent during the Emergency (June 1975 – March 1977) when elections and civil liberties were suspended. Sachar was one of the judges that refused to follow the bidding of the Emergency establishment, and who were transferred as a form of punishment. After the restoral of democracy, on 9 July 1977 he was transferred back to the Delhi High Court.

In June 1977 Justice Sachar was appointed by the government to chair a committee that reviewed the Companies Act and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, submitting an encyclopaedic report on the subject in August 1978. Sachar's committee recommended a major overhaul of the corporate reporting system, and particularly of the approach to reporting on social impacts. In May 1984 Rajinder Sachar reviewed the Industrial Disputes Act, including the backlog of cases. His report was scathing. He said "A more horrendous and despairing situation can hardly be imagined... the load at present in the various Labour Courts and Industrial Tribunals is so disproportionate to what can conceivably be borne ... that the arrears can only go on increasing if the present state of affairs is not improved... It is harsh and unjust to both the employers and employees if the cases continue to remain undecided for years".

In November 1984, Justice Sachar issued notice to the police on a writ petition filed by Public Union for Democratic Rights on the basis of evidence collected from 1984 Sikh riot victims, asking FIRs to be registered against leaders named in affidavits of victims. However, in the next hearing the case was removed from the Court

of Mr. Sachar and brought before two other Judges, who impressed petitioners to withdraw their petition in the national interest, which they declined, then dismissed the petition.

As an Indian lawyer and a former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court Sachar sahib was a member of United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. He has served as a counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties. He chaired the Sachar Committee, constituted by the Government of India, which submitted a report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India.

Rajinder Sachar was one of the authors of a report issued on 22 April 1990 on behalf of the People's Union for Civil Liberties and others entitled "Report on Kashmir Situation". In January 1992 Sachar was one of the signatories to an appeal to all Punjabis asking them to ensure that the forthcoming elections were free and were seen to be free. They asked the people to ensure there was no violence, coercion or unfair practices that would prevent the people from electing the government of their choice. Rajinder Sachar was appointed to a high-level Advisory Committee chaired by Chief Justice Aziz Mushabber Ahmadi to review the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and determine whether structural changes and amendments were needed. The committee prepared a draft amendment Bill incorporating its recommendations. These included changes to the membership of the National Human Rights Commission, changes to procedures to reduce delays in following up recommendations and a broadening of the commission's scope. The recommendations were

submitted the Home Affairs ministry on 7 March 2000.

In April 2003, as counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Sachar argued before the Supreme Court of India that the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA) should be quashed since it violated fundamental rights. On 24 November 2002 the police arrested twenty six people in the Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, and on 10 January 2003 they were placed under POTA by the government on the grounds that they were members of the Radical Youth League of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist). On 26 August 2004, still being held without trial, the detainees began a hunger strike. Sachar led a team of human rights activists who visited them in jail on 15 September 2004 and persuaded them to end the hunger strike. POTA was repealed on 10 November 2004. However, all the POTA provisions were incorporated in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. In October 2009 Sachar called for abolition of these laws.

He said "Terrorism is there, I admit, but in the name of terror probe, many innocent people are taken into custody without registering a charge and are being detained for long period".

Rajinder Sachar, who had formerly been a United Nations special rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, headed a mission that investigated housing rights in Kenya for the Housing and Land Rights Committee of the Habitat International Coalition. In its report issued in March 2000 the mission found that the Kenyan government had failed to meet its international obligations regarding protection of its citizens' housing rights. The

report described misallocation of public land, evictions and land-grabbing by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats.

In March 2005 Justice Rajinder Sachar was appointed to a committee to study the condition of the Muslim community in India and to prepare a comprehensive report on their social, economic and educational status. On 17 November 2006 he presented the report, entitled "Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India", to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The report showed the growing social and economic insecurity that had been imposed on Muslims since independence sixty years earlier. It found that the Muslim population, estimated at over 138 million in 2001, were under-represented in the civil service, police, military and in politics. Muslims were more likely to be poor, illiterate, unhealthy and to have trouble with the law than other Indians. Muslims were accused of being against the Indian state, of being terrorists, and politicians who tried to help them risked being accused of "appeasing" them.

The Sachar Committee recommendations aimed to promote inclusion of the diverse communities in India and their equal treatment. It emphasised initiatives that were general rather than specific to any one community. It was a landmark in the debate on the Muslim question in India. The speed of implementation would naturally depend on political factors including the extent of backlash from Hindutva groups. The Sachar Committee Report recommended setting up an institutional structure for an Equal Opportunity Commission.

In March 2003 Sachar was a signatory to a statement that

condemned the US-led invasion of Iraq, calling it "unprovoked, unjustified and violative of international law and the United Nations Charter". Other signatories included Shanti Bhushan, Pavani Parameswara Rao, Rajeev Dhavan, Kapil Sibal and Prashant Bhushan.

He was a Judge who set an example. That after retirement Judges did not need to go into holes, and in fact were required to play a major role in keeping India on the Constitutional track. He spoke fearlessly, boldly, did not look for favours from the establishment regardless of who was in power, and as a result rubbed all the wrong way saying when we used to laugh, "well I am with the people and that's all that matters."

One does not really know where to begin, or for that matter end this tribute. Does one remember him for the Sachar report on the status of the Muslim community in India that created a storm as it was an honest and starkly revealing document; or for his stand on civil liberties for all; or for his criticism of established political parties; or for his love for the Indian Constitution that was always so visible; or for his gentle enquiries when he knew an individual was troubled; or for his willingness to walk the extra mile at any time of the day or night to help a person in need or for a cause; or for his consistency in advocating peace in South Asia; or for his fearlessness in taking on the communalists; or for his strong support for gender equality and justice.

By the end Justice Sachar was visibly frail, a little bent with age, and clearly with many off days that he made sure none of us really knew about. This would not prevent him from attending meetings, signing

statements and organising fact finding reports till his last days.

One never heard him complain about his health. One never heard even a note of pessimism in his voice. One never heard him talk about his ailments or his problems. He was always there for everyone else, for India and her people. In these years one did, however, hear some pessimism in his voice. A 'what will happen to our country' tone, with worries that he would share occasionally. Excerpts from an article he wrote for The Citizen in December 2017:

Justice Sachar's admiration for Ram Manohar Lohia spanned his life, never diminishing. But he never allowed that to come in his way of relationships with those who were perhaps, very critical of his mentor. As he said, "your view is yours, mine is mine." And would then tell us stories about the differences between Jawaharlal Nehru and Lohia that never came in the way of mutual respect.

There are not many left now who say it like you did Justice Sachar, without mincing words, or looking over your shoulder, or bothering how the chattering classes would react. You looked for no favours, no positions, no awards. Respect Sir, Always!!!

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Goodbye Bhai: The Struggle Will Continue

Prem Singh

His full name was Bhalchandra Bhai Vaidya but people used to call him Bhai Vaidya. I always addressed him as 'Bhai'. In our village, it was an accepted norm to call a father 'Bhai' and a majority of people followed this practice. I came in personal contact with Bhalchandra Bhai Vaidya after my father passed away, therefore I never really missed that close connection one feels with one's father. Before the re-launching of the Socialist Party, he used to call me Professor, but I would always call him 'Bhai'. An invisible thread of the almost familial relationship that developed between us from the very first meeting continued ever since.

Bhai was the founding President of Socialist Party (India). I worked with him as general secretary and spokesperson of the party. While he was working in the Socialist Party for the last seven years, he considered everything suggested by me in the policy matters of the party very seriously and had an endearing sense of respect which he displayed clearly. He would give brief hints when was asked about his opinion about policy decisions, resolutions, memorandums, even press notes/releases of the party. Whether it was a government decision or a national-international incident or event, in order to send a statement of the party, he, as president of the party, used to send an SMS every time through his mobile phone from Poona, giving some directions and suggestions regarding it.

I remember that when I took a stand against the so called India Against Corruption (IAC) and the

Aam Aadmi Party, on the basis of socialist ideology, Bhai always said that the party was firmly behind me. There was no deviation from any member of the Socialist Party despite the deceptive headiness provoked and organised by those vested interests in defense of neo-liberalism. This unequivocal support could only happen solely due to Bhai's personality, understanding and ideological perseverance.

He died on 2 April 2018 from pancreatic cancer, shortly after he was admitted to Poona Hospital on March 26, barely three weeks after his ailment was first detected. I learnt about his illness only after he was admitted to the hospital. His son, Dr. Abhijit Vaidya, told me on phone that operation or chemotherapy at his age were not suitable. He also told that Bhai was insisting on going back home from the hospital. But this was not to be and he took his last breath in the clinical confines of the hospital. Several comrades from Poona and Maharashtra visited him there. The news of Bhai's death was a sudden blow for the comrades outside Maharashtra.

I reached Poona on 3rd April to bid a last good-bye to Bhai. His mortal body was kept for a last glimpse at Sane Guruji Smarak, the headquarters of the Rashtra Seva Dal (RSD). There was a continuous flow of people from the morning till late afternoon to pay their last salute. There were a large number of women among them. Sainiks and Sainikayen of the RSD kept working the whole day with promptness to help and facilitate the visitors.

At 4 pm, the officers of the police administration came and wrapped the body of Bhai in the national flag. On reaching the crematorium, a police band played in his respect and he was also given a gun salute. This state honor was given to him due to his position as a former State Home Minister of Maharashtra (1978-1980) and former Mayor of Poona (1974-75). After that, his body was taken to the electric crematorium.

I was surprised that thousands of people participated in the last journey of a leader who was away from the corridors of power for the past three decades, who fought anonymously in remote towns and villages against governments bringing in neo-imperialist slavery to the nation. People thronged the funeral journey to the cremation ground, a distance of about two and a half kilometers. Among the crowds that surged to bid their last farewell and respects, the activists of the Socialist Party (SPI) and Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS) forcefully raised revolutionary slogans like 'Bhai Vaidya amar rahe' (Bhai Vaidya will remain immortal), 'Bhai tere sapano ko ham manzil tak pahunchayenge' (Bhai we will take your dreams to their destination), 'Lokshahi samajwad – zindabad zindabad' (democratic socialism – long live long live), 'Bhai Vaidya ko lal salaam' (red salute to Bhai Vaidya), and 'ladenge jeetenge' (will fight will win).

Most of the people present in the procession were not activists but from the general civil society. It was evident they were influenced by the rare personality of Bhai that was an amalgam and wonderful combination of love, service and compassion. Almost all the newspapers of Marathi and English

published reports on his demise. One newspaper wrote that his honesty was actually the stuff of legends. I found that like Kishan ji, Bhai had no sense of bitterness or malice towards anyone. Medieval saints have described 'sahajta' (innateness) as a rare quality that can be attained only by a rigorous practice of austerities. Bhai had attained this innate spiritual nature through great perseverance in life.

He participated in the Quit India movement of 1942. When some people were acting as informers of the imperialists, then, at the young age of 14, Bhai was participating in the decisive battle of the Independence Movement. Gandhi gave the call for British to 'Quit India', but it was led by young socialist leaders. It is natural that in 1946, at the age of 18, Bhai became a member of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). In 1948, he joined the Socialist Party, through which he continued his long political struggle that prominently includes the Goa Liberation struggle (1955–1961) and the JP Movement (1974–77). During the Emergency, he remained in jail from 1975 to 1977 under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). He played an important role in the Rashtra Seva Dal and became its president in 2001. Bhai's wish was that the Rashtra Sewa Dal should take the responsibility of cadre building for the Socialist Party so that the youth could be saved from the grip of communal politics.

Bhai was an MA in Sociology and Political Science. He was a multi-dimensional and studious person. However, he was essentially a political person. Born out of the womb of socialist movement, Bhai, along with Gandhi, was deeply influenced by the thoughts of Jyotiba

Phule and B.R. Ambedkar. At the global level he had done a thorough study of the ideologies/systems of capitalism and communism. He used to keep himself updated with articles and books published on various subjects.

In my opinion, the political innings of Bhai that started after 1991 is most important. This year, against Constitutional values and provisions, the Congress imposed New Economic Policies on the country. At that time, senior BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said that the Congress had now taken over the work of his party (BJP). This illegitimate decision was to breed disastrous consequences for the society and nation building.

It is true that instead of giving a political fight to the neo-imperialist attack, most socialists made power the goal of politics. In doing so, they not only destroyed the socialist movement but also defamed it.

At the same time, the fact also remains that several other socialists also put up a comprehensive and decisive ideological challenge to neo-imperialism. Socialist leaders / thinkers such as Kishan Patnaik, Sachchidand Sinha, Vinodprasad Singh, Surendra Mohan, Bhai Vaidya, Justice Rajindar Sachar, Pannalal Surana, Dr. G.G. Parikh and Sunil have endeavoured to create a small but new political stream as a genuine alternative to neo-imperialism. It is also notable that in mainstream politics, socialist leader Chandrashekhar had constantly opposed the New Economic Policies from the very beginning.

Bhai became the general secretary of Samajwadi Jan Parishad (SJP), formed in 1995. When the Socialist Party was reinstated in 2011, he became its first president. At that

time his age was eighty plus. He did not want to take this responsibility. But on the insistence of Justice Sachar and young socialists, he agreed to be the president. Despite his advanced age, he fulfilled that responsibility admirably.

After 1991, Bhai's life was spent in constant struggle against neo-imperialism. He fought a long struggle against privatisation of education. It is not that other leaders or political organisations are not active in opposing neo-imperialism. But they are either confused with the concept of development or they accept capitalism, the conjoined twin of imperialism, as the only path of development. Bhai clearly stated in the Socialist Party's policy statement and in his several comments that actually communists are not ready to leave the idea and model of capitalist development. They consider industrialisation as the yardstick of development. Bhai used to consider democratic socialist ideology as an alternative to capitalism. He had a firm conviction in the imminent defeat of capitalism. From this ground of faith, he continued to inspire Socialist Party workers. That inspiration is alive even after his death.

Goodbye Bhai! May you rest in peace. We pledge to continue the struggle for equality and freedom against neo-imperialist designs.

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Hopeless Implementation of Right to Education Act in UP

Sandeep Pandey

It is now the fourth year since the government of Uttar Pradesh started taking Right to Education Act 2009 seriously. Section 12(1) (c) of this Act is the most attractive feature from the point of view of parents from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections as they can get their children admitted to even the most expensive schools for free education from Classes I to VIII. In UP, 3,135 children were admitted in the academic year 2015-16, 17,136 in 2016-17 and 27,662 in the year which just got over. However, there are some schools like the City Montessori School, Navyug Raidance, City International, St. Mary's Intermediate College and Lucknow Model Public School in Lucknow, Virendra Swaroop and Chintal Public School in Kanpur, and Blue Bird School and Nehru Children's Junior High School in Aligarh which are making a mockery of the Act by not admitting any children in spite of orders from Basic Shiksha Adhikari or even the District Magistrate.

As no action is being taken against these errant schools, they've been emboldened to form associations which are publicly challenging the RTE Act itself in courts, and are also holding rallies demanding that it be scrapped. The excuse being given is that the compensation amount of Rs 450 per child per month is too low and arbitrary, and even that is not being reimbursed in time. They abhor the government's interference in their

functioning in what is a largely unregulated system.

The private schools stand on morally very weak ground. Their fees structures are not rational either. Most of them would not be able to justify the exorbitant fees which the parents have to pay. In addition, a number of schools have found other ways of making money, for example, by making certain books, dresses, etc. Compulsory, to be bought from either the school itself or from chosen shops intimated by the school. Private education is a flourishing business with assured returns.

This year is the second year of the online application process in UP. Out of 82,388, only 20,427 schools, which is less than 25%, are mapped, implying parents can't even choose more than 75% schools when filling their children's forms online. The second round of application process is over and only last round remains. Surprisingly, some schools which admitted children last year, like R.D. Memorial Intermediate College and Siddharth Global School in Lucknow are missing from the options available on the website. The various branches of the biggest school of Varanasi, Sunbeam, are not listed in any of the Wards here. Some of the Wards in Varanasi are not mentioned at all on the website which means parents cannot get the benefit of section 12(1)(c) there. It is inexplicable how the UP government is even accepting applications without complete mapping of all

schools. Trying to rush through the admission process without the necessary preparation is reflected in the fact that only 48 out of 75 districts of UP came out with their first lottery list. Verifications of all 2597 forms were not complete in Varanasi when the first lottery was held. What is the point of this half-hearted effort?

There are problems with quality of mapping too. When Ruby Bano, resident of Raja Bazar in Chowk area of Lucknow filed an application for her son Saiyyed Altamash Ali's admission, she was allotted a school—Fatima Girls' Junior High School—shown on the RTE website in her Ward, but it turned out that this school was in Mahanagar Ward, nowhere in the 'neighbourhood' of her home, a requirement of the Act. It is physically impossible for her to send her little son so far away with another baby in her lap.

There is also a question mark on the lottery process itself. When the Act says that at least 25% children have to be admitted under section 12(1)(c), why should there be a cap in any school on the number of admissions? Only if the number of applicants exceeds the intake capacity of the school may the children be admitted other nearest available options. Such a situation has not arisen yet.

Some of the students who got admission in earlier years are not sailing smoothly. Ansh Kumar, admitted two years ago in Universal Montessori School and Girls' Intermediate College in Lucknow, has been failed in Kindergarten. Last year he got 31.93% marks in Nursery but was passed, as he stood fifth in class. This time he got 17.77% marks and has been expelled from the school, even though Section 16

of the RTE Act forbids holding back or expelling children. In 2016-17, his parents had to pay Rs 250–350 thrice in the name of examination fee, whereas the Act is named as Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education. Physical punishment is prohibited under Section 17 of the Act, but a teacher beat Ansh Kumar one day. On another day, when Ansh Kumar relieved himself in the class room, his mother was called from home to clear his latrine. Question is whether the school would have called the mother of a fee paying child to come and do such a thing? It is clearly a case of discrimination and humiliation for the family merely because they are poor, in addition to mental harassment for the child which is also prohibited under section 17.

Shakti Bal Vidyalaya in Gadhi Kanaura is run by a lawyer Anil Singh, even though lawyers are forbidden from undertaking any other commercial activity. The lawyer manager has charged thousands of rupees from parents to get the date of birth, caste, income certificates made which are supporting documents required to fill the application form for admission under section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act. He is also demanding sums ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,500 for making the marksheets of last year available. The manager also says that parents should share a part of the Rs 5,000 which they are getting from the government for buying books and uniform for their children.

Blooming Flower Junior High School is similarly demanding Rs 200 each for making available the marksheets of two children of Mohammed Ashique, Muskan and Rehan, who are in classes KG and I respectively. After a demonstration

outside the school, it is now not insisting on the payment, but is not releasing the marksheet either.

Although not admitted under section 12(1)(c), three students Manish, Sanjay and Kamal, all belonging to Valmiki community, who were studying in a parallel stream by the name of 'Navsrijan' of the prestigious Seth M.R. Jaipuria School of Lucknow, were expelled after being enrolled there for close to 7 years, as the school thinks they cannot cope with English medium and must move to a Hindi medium school. This violates the provision of the Act forbidding expulsion from school before class VIII. It would not be out of place to mention that the Sanskrit loving Bhartiya Janata Party government has decided to create 5,000 English medium schools in the State, justifying it on the basis of demand for such schools.

Lord Meher School admitted Shivanshu and Shubham Sharma under section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act last year, but has discontinued their education from this year, again violating section 16 of the Act.

In the face of violations of such serious nature, one would have expected the officials, government or the courts to intervene but unfortunately no action is being taken. The officials make an excuse that there is no punitive clause in the RTE Act. Combined with the tyrannical behaviour and assault of private schools, the Act has virtually been held to ransom with no authority willing to own it.

(Note: With inputs from RTE activists Mahesh in Kanpur, Aman Agarwal in Aligarh and Praveen Srivastava, Shraddha Mishra, Saleem Khan and Ravindra in Lucknow.)

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It's Modi's BJP!

Kuldip Nayar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is now well in control of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). He has installed his close lieutenant Amit Shah as the party president. However, people's memory is short. The founding president of the BJP was Atal Behari Vajpayee who subsequently occupied the office of Prime Minister to lead the NDA government, a coalition of several parties.

The miracle of Congress demise took place under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narain, a Gandhian socialist. There was such a strong anti-Congress movement that all non-Congress parties, including the Jana Sangh, came together on one platform. The old Jana Sangh members were very particular about maintaining their links with the RSS. This meant that the Hindutva ideology would remain to define the party's agenda.

JP's clothes of secularism did not fit the pro-Hindu Jana Sangh. Despite that, JP admitted it into the opposition coalition fighting the authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. JP was conscious that the Jana Sangh was a political arm of the RSS. But he had been given an undertaking that the two would part company.

When the Janata Party came into being, JP insisted on the Jana Sangh members, who occupied key positions in the Janata Party and government, severing links with the RSS. JP knew how they had created an atmosphere where a Hindu would assassinate Mahatma

Gandhi. Nathuram Godse touched Gandhi's feet and shot the Mahatma point blank. It became clear later that there was a well prepared plan. The RSS was banned. The organisation's chief M.S. Golwalkar was arrested. He was released after a year or so on the assurance that the RSS would not enter into electoral politics. It is another matter that they hid the fact that they are the guiding force of first the Jana Sangh and today the BJP. It is the RSS that selects the BJP candidates for both the State Assembly elections as well as the Lok Sabha.

The undertaking given by the Jana Sangh regarding severing its links with the RSS was a ruse to join the Janata Party. JP's reminders to Jana Sangh leaders to make good on their promise had no effect. How could they do so, when the Jana Sangh itself was an RSS creation, with the avowed aim of creating a Hindu Rashtra? Initially, the Jana Sangh members tried to explain to JP that the RSS wasn't what it was made out to be. When it came to the crunch, they refused point-blank to break ties with the RSS. JP felt cheated. But by then he was too sick to go back to the people to expose the Jana Sangh. He did make it public that his trust had been violated but he was helpless because of ill-health.

When the Janata Party raised the question of membership issue, the Jana Sangh members preferred to walk out. But by now, the Jana Sangh, now metamorphosed as the BJP, had acquired considerable

credibility, something that the Jana Sangh had not managed for several decades after Gandhi's assassination.

The two-year stay in the Janata Party and the portfolios they held in the central ministry helped the BJP immensely. It sought and got control of important portfolios like information and broadcasting. It also gave it the credibility to rapidly gain new members and saffronise them.

The BJP also adopted at that time a positive stance which confused the Hindu intelligentsia. Atal Behari Vajpayee was at helm of affairs, and he did a balancing act and rode two horses at the same time. Simultaneously, issues like Ayodhya-cum-Babri Masjid dispute and other factors, also enabled the BJP to gain considerable following and led to the BJP winning 181 Lok Sabha seats in 1998, against its usual single digit tally, in a 545-member house. After that, even JP's close followers found alibis to join hands with the BJP in the NDA so as to stay in the driving seat.

The BJP was now desperate to widen its base. Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani minimised the differences between the political BJP and the totalitarian RSS. He had done everything to "unify" the Hindus, the most dangerous being the rath yatra to Ayodhya that he led across northern India, dividing Hindus and Muslims who had lived together for centuries. Advani was so satisfied with the result that he equated the rath yatra with Gandhi's Dandi Salt march.

Yes, That's What Israel Is!

Jawaharlal Jasthi

Prime Minister Modi is underlining all the time that he is bigger than the party. Even after four years' of rule, it is not clear in which direction he is taking the country. Granted that his diluted form of Hindutva is spreading in the country, but this process has stopped at the Vindhyas. The southern states do not seem to give the impression of full participants.

And once again, the introduction of Hindi is creating the same problem, as it did during the last days of Jawaharlal Nehru. Then his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, assured the nation on the floor of the house that the switch over to Hindi would take place only when the non-Hindi speaking states were ready for it. It is up to Modi to see how he is able to reconcile the two different trends. Only time will tell if he can to do so.

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It's high time for India to understand and acknowledge what Israel is. They don't have a law which they can be forced to follow. They follow their own law in their own way. Those who recognise Israel are not supposed to recognise that there is some country called Palestine. No, there is nothing called Palestine. All the area west of Jordan River and spreading up to the Mediterranean Sea belongs to them. After all, it has been given to them by no less an authority than God himself. How can anybody question it? Moreover, it is under their control for over a half century—de facto or de jure does not make any difference. It is their law that runs throughout that area.

On 12 April, 2018 roared a headline, "Israel detains Indian delegation on way to Palestine, deports back to India." Their visas were cancelled they were told to go back. Mohammed Salim, a Member of Parliament, was one of the delegates. He had diplomatic status. After verifying the same, he was allowed to enter the Palestine area subject to the condition that he shall not go to Ramallah and attend the conference. He declined the offer.

Over the past more than a decade, India has embraced Israel as a bosom friend, knowing fully well what it is. First the UPA and now the NDA government feel that Israel can be a reliable ally that can help in boosting our defences. Israel is supposed to be efficient as it has survived

the 'terrorist' attacks of displaced and disabled Palestinians. It is an open fact that Israel could not have survived but for the unconditional support extended by the sole super power, the United States of America. Once you want the friendship of the Israelis, they declare their conditions. You need their help in defence, but they will not allow you to restrict the relationship to defence alone. It has to be extended to trade and commerce. They are in need of markets for their innumerable products. They are facing resistance from democratic countries because of the BDS movement—boycott, divest and sanction. Iraq, the country devastated by America, has become the market for Israeli products. India has also been offered help in improving its agriculture and industry, and India has not been able to refuse it even though what they offer is not in any way superior to what India already has. Even in defence, they have used as a bait some equipment that India needs and along with it pressurised India to buy other defence equipment too. India initially fell for it—on Israeli, that were detrimental to indigenous development. But later, India scrapped the agreement. Don't expect Israel to forget or forgive this. Israel craves for diplomatic recognition from other countries as many countries refuse relations because of their policies. Even then, they insist that any relationship shall be on their own terms.

The life of Palestinians in the

West Bank is completely controlled by Israel—through their army. That is, West Bank is factually under military rule of an alien country. This is continuing for over half a century. Only the people who have experienced life under military rule, that too a hostile force, can understand what this means. They control the visitors in and out of this entire area. Even the movement of people living inside this area is subject to strict control of Israel forces. It is in this situation that the Government of India sent a delegation to attend a conference organised by the Palestine Liberation Organisation at Ramallah, within the West Bank. The topic of the conference was: Jerusalem: The Eternal Capital of Palestine. But Palestine is not yet liberated. With Israel not willing to define the boundaries of their country, Palestinians do not know what area they can call as their own. They do not know when will get a State of their own and, in what shape. Being suffocated under the military rule of Israel, they try to claim Jerusalem as their 'eternal' capital. Naturally, it irritates Israel.

Having established diplomatic and trade relations with Israel, India is also trying to step on the Palestine boat and also claims to be a supporter of Palestinian aspirations which are quite contradictory to those of Israel. It sent a team of delegates to attend the conference in Ramallah. The Israel army refused them entry into the West Bank. The delegation insisted that they have a right to enter as they have visas. The army took hold of their passports and stated that their visas were cancelled by a committee of the army. After all,

the area is under their control. The question is, who issued the visas? If they are issued by the Israel embassy in India, how can their army cancel it? If the visas are issued by the Palestinian authorities, how are they valid as they do not have their own country? The State of Palestine is not yet formed. Even the UNO has given only an observer status to the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli army did not allow the Indian delegates to enter the West Bank, and after waiting for four hours they were forced to return to Jordan and come back to India.

Meanwhile, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs pleaded with the Government of Israel, but it was of no use. India pointed out that one of the delegates is a Member of Parliament and has a diplomatic status. Israel agreed to allow that one delegate to enter, without any restrictions. He was allowed to attend the conference. He had come with his family and all were allowed. Thus, one member attended the conference as a delegate from India. That is the respect India has got as an ally of Israel with diplomatic and trade relations. Obviously, India expected Israel would be courteous enough to allow the delegates. But it failed to realise how sensitive is the matter of control over West Bank, and more particularly Jerusalem, for Israel. On the question of control over the West Bank, Israel did not care even for the suggestions of America, despite the fact that America stands by them in every crisis. Yes, that is Israel, and it is like no other country.

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Indo-Pak Amity: Necessary Compulsion for the Survival of Both

Pratap Reddy

Before entering into a discussion on the subject of Indo-Pak amity, it is necessary to take a brief look at the history of India before its partition.

The development of India before partition is the history of advent of various races, religions and civilisations into India, such as, Aryans, Kushans, Huns, etc. All of them intermixed with the local people who were called 'Dravidians' and lived together with them, as it is revealed by archaeological researches of Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Taxashila, etc.

While there is no historical or chronological data of the birth and growth of Hindu religion except mythological beliefs, people of various other religions that originated in Asia, such as, Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews, also came to India and started mixing with the local people. All these factors had contributed to the growth of India as a civilisation with a unique blend of various cultures and religions.

Going into details of the growth of this syncretic Indian civilisation is beyond the scope of this short article. However, it is an accepted truth that India was very prosperous and a great centre of trade. Enticed by the manufacturing growth of India and opportunities of trade, various expeditions from the West to India took place. Earlier, the Western powers came to India by land route which necessitated wars with the countries that lay in between. To avoid such conflicts and war and

some Western powers attempted to explore the sea route for trade with India. The first attempt to find a sea route was made by Columbus; in his search for a sea route to India, in 1492 he reached a new world that had so far been unknown to the rest of the world, a region that is now known as the Americas. Some years later, the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama, sailing via the southernmost part of Africa, landed in India in 1498, followed a century later by the Dutch.

In order to compete with the Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch traders, the English traders formed a Trading Company under the name of 'East India Company' on 31 December 1599 and obtained the Charter from the then British Monarch, Elizabeth I, on 1 January 1600. After obtaining the Charter, the English traders, under the leadership of Sir Thomas More, landed in Surat, India. In 1602 Sir Thomas More obtained his first audience with the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Thereafter, East India Company began to expand its trade with different towns in India, such as Madras (Chennai), Calcutta and Bombay. The decline of the Mughal Empire created a great opportunity for East India Company to not only expand its trade adventures but also develop itself into a political power by winning diwani rights in Bengal, Awadh, etc.

After the decline of Mughal power, there emerged several chieftains calling themselves as

Rajas, Maharajas, Nawabs, Nizams, etc. These chieftains were spread all over the country. Taking advantage of the rivalry of local chieftains among themselves, the East India Company became a powerful political entity, capturing the whole of India by mid-nineteenth century. Its massive plunder eventually led to the first war of independence against British in 1857.

On account of rivalries of local chieftains, the first war of independence was unsuccessful, following which the British parliament enacted the first Government of India Act, 1858, by which the British imperialists took over direct control of India, assisted by local chieftains, who named themselves as Rajas, Maharajas, Nawabs, etc.

These treacherous acts of British imperialists brought an awakening among Indians led by Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and several others. The Indian National Congress was established in 1885 to get some concessions and reforms in the British imperialistic rule. This awakening among Indians brought Mahatma Gandhi into the freedom struggle in 1915. He had gained some experience of fighting British imperialistic rule in South Africa. Mahatma Gandhi realised that the only way of fighting the British imperialistic force was by awakening the ordinary people of India who had been suffering from the atrocities of British Empire

and their local stooges—the Rajas, Maharajas, Nawabs, etc. Mahatma Gandhi's first campaign began in Champaran in 1917, and gradually spread all over the country as a non-violent movement, one of whose slogans was non-cooperation with the British Government and resisting and rebelling against the laws of British Empire.

The mass movement that Gandhi successfully built up started shaking up the British imperialistic force. It was a movement that was historically unknown in any part of the world. The British government realised that the only way of weakening this mass movement was to divide Indians on the basis of religion. So, they invented the 'Two-Nation Theory' and made efforts to divide Hindus and Muslims, and ultimately became successful in dividing this land into two countries, India and Pakistan.

We request our readers to pardon us for encumbering them with these historical facts about the

development of India. The main aim behind this effort is to equip all of you with the past history of India and give an idea about what were the factors that led to the partition of India into two nations, India and Pakistan. The fact is that the division of our country under the Two-Nation theory was a British imperialistic invention, this theory was entirely their creation and not of any Indian, including Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Even after this successful action of the British Empire in dividing this country, nobody can deny that these two nations (now three—India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) have the same civilisation, race, heritage, etc.

Without going into further details of the division of India into three nations, all these three nations must realise that they are the divisions and parts of ONLY ONE NATION with a common heritage and common civilisation.

I appeal to the people of these three nations, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to recognise who are

their common enemies who are keeping them still divided and not allowing them to unite, if not as one nation, then as one amity of nations of this sub-continent. The common enemies of these three nations are poverty, ignorance and Western imperialistic forces like Britain and America. If these three nations, along with Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Afganistan, come together, they will work as a BULWARK against the Western imperialistic forces. It is, therefore, necessary that these three nations come together and develop closer trade relations, while maintaining their political and territorial sovereignty, by building up a Common Economic Zone like the European Union. This will enable them to keep Western imperialistic forces at bay and make this region one of the most prosperous in the world, as it was three centuries ago.

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The Year Climate Change Began to Spin Out of Control

James Temple

For decades, scientists have warned that climate change would make extreme events like droughts, floods, hurricanes and wildfires more frequent, more devastating, or both. In 2017, we got an up-close look at the raw ferocity of such an altered world as high-category hurricanes battered the East and Gulf coasts, and wind-whipped fires scorched the West.

We're also seeing with greater clarity how these dangers are interlinked, building upon one

another towards perilous climate tipping points. And yet for all the growing risks, and the decades we've had to confront them, we have yet to address the problem in a meaningful way.

In fact, despite all our climate policies, global accords, solar advances, wind farms, hybrid cars and Teslas, greenhouse-gas emissions are still moving in the wrong direction. And as long as we're emitting any at all, we're only making the problem worse.

Here are the five most worrisome climate developments we saw in 2017.

Emissions are rising again

After three relatively flat years, greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels and industry picked up again in 2017, rising an estimated 2 percent, according to the Global Carbon Project. The shift was driven by rising carbon pollution in China and India, which more than offset a slight decline in the United States.

The news punctured tentative hopes that the recent flattening was solidifying into a trend. Among other things, it means that our collective climate efforts haven't even prevented greenhouse gas levels from increasing, at a point when we need to be radically cutting them. Keeping temperatures from rising beyond a dangerous 2°C will require slashing emissions as much as 70 percent by midcentury, according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

At more than 400 parts per million, we're already well beyond dangerous levels of carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere, as climbing temperatures, melting ice caps and extreme weather events have made clear.

In early November, the World Meteorological Organisation declared that 2017 was likely to end up as "one of the three warmest years on record," and the warmest one altogether that wasn't influenced by an El Niño event. That also makes the global average temperature during 2013–2017 the hottest five-year average recorded.

Carbon dioxide can remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years and takes about a decade to reach its maximum warming effect. In other words, even with all the changes we've already seen, we have yet to experience the full impact of the carbon we spewed in 2008 and every year since. Each additional ton we emit going forward only increases the dangers of climate change, multiplying the economic, environmental and human toll.

Worst-case scenarios look increasingly likely

The most alarming projections for global warming this century

also seem to be the most reliable, according to a December study in *Nature* that compared climate models against what's already happening in the atmosphere.

The paper concluded that worldwide temperatures could rise nearly 5°C by the end of the century, 15 percent higher than the previous central estimate under the "business as usual" emissions scenario outlined by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The authors collected more than a decade's worth of "top of atmosphere" satellite observations, measuring factors such as how much infrared radiation is escaping from Earth and how much sunlight clouds and snow reflect away. In turn, they compared that data with the results of earlier climate models to determine which ones most closely forecast what the satellites actually saw. It turned out to be the ones that predicted the most warming.

That suggests the risks of climate change are greater than feared, and that we'll have to cut emissions even deeper to prevent dangerous levels of warming.

Hyperactive hurricanes

Hurricane Harvey crossed the shorelines of southern Texas on August 25, marking the first major hurricane to make landfall in the United States in a dozen years. The storm hovered over the coast for days, dumping more than 60 inches of rain in some areas, killing more than 80 people and displacing thousands.

Irma and Maria added to the toll of destruction, making the hyperactive 2017 Atlantic hurricane season the most expensive ever, racking up more than \$200 billion in damages.

Several recent studies concluded that shifting climate conditions significantly increased the odds of an extreme event such as Harvey. Among other climatic factors, warmer air holds more moisture, and higher sea levels raise the height of storm surges, both of which can increase the destructive power of storms.

A study published in *Environmental Research Letters* in December concluded that global warming made an event like Harvey around three times more likely. Meanwhile, a report in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by Kerry Emanuel, a prominent hurricane researcher and professor of atmospheric science at MIT, found that events of similar magnitude will become far more likely as the climate warms further.

"We see probabilities of Harvey-type rainfalls going up by factors of 10 by the late 20th century and early 21st" under a "business as usual" greenhouse emissions trajectory, he says.

The melting Arctic

In December, NOAA released an unsettling Arctic report card declaring that the North Pole had reached a "new normal," with no sign of returning to a "reliably frozen region." Rising temperatures have locked in a long-term trend of shrinking glaciers, receding sea ice, and warming permafrost.

Between October 2016 and September 2017, the area above the 60th parallel north experienced the second-warmest air temperature anomaly since 1900. In March, satellites recorded the lowest sea-ice winter maximum on record.

Melting glaciers and sea ice are particularly worrisome trends

because they trigger critical secondary effects, notably including increasing rates of sea-level rise.

This development also sets up dangerous climate feedback loops as reflective white snow and ice turn into heat-absorbing dark-blue water. It means the Arctic will send less heat back into space, which leads to more warming, more melting and still more sea-level rise.

“We see a major increase in temperatures in the high latitudes, in the area and coasts around the Arctic Ocean, so it seems like this process has already started,” says Vladimir Romanovsky, a professor of geophysics at the Permafrost Laboratory at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

He says another cause for concern is that permafrost is warming, approaching thawing temperatures in parts of the Alaskan interior. The problem there is that permafrost traps massive amounts of greenhouse gases beneath the surface. As it melts, those gases are released, forming a separate self-reinforcing cycle.

In early December, Lawrence Livermore National Lab researchers highlighted yet another potential effect of declining Arctic sea ice, concluding it may have played a crucial role in California’s extended drought this decade and could exacerbate future ones. Finally, though it seems counter-intuitive, the warming Arctic could also amplify cold spells, much like the winter storm now enveloping the East Coast.

Massive wildfires

The West was engulfed in flames this year, as millions of acres burned across California, Montana, Oregon and elsewhere, adding up to the most

expensive fire season on record.

California alone battled blazes that covered more than a million acres, according to data from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Thomas Fire near Santa Barbara ripped across 280,000 acres, making it the state’s largest wildfire ever. The wine country fires in Northern California were even more destructive, burning down nearly 9,000 structures and killing 44 people.

Climate change doesn’t “cause” wildfires, which can be ignited by campfires, lightning strikes, downed power lines or arson. Other human actions, including decades of fire suppression, have also increased the risk and magnitude of these fires. But global warming does seem to be making the events worse.

Human-influenced climate change has doubled the area affected by forest fires during the last 30 years across the American West, scorching an additional 16,000 square miles, according to a 2016 study in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Higher temperatures suck moisture out of soil, trees and plants, turning forests into tinderboxes. In California, the added heat has been compounded by the prolonged drought from 2012 to 2016, which dried out vast swaths of wilderness and opened the door to a devastating beetle bark infestation. The twin forces have killed some 129 million trees across nearly nine million acres, building up a massive amount of fuel and significantly raising wildfire risks, according to the state fire department.

As both the highest-cost fire year and the highest-cost hurricane year, 2017 was very likely “the most expensive weather year ever,”

according to a convincing case in the Atlantic.

“Both the wildfires and the unprecedented Atlantic hurricane season are similarly profound and troubling,” wrote Michael Mann, director of the Penn State Earth System Science Center, in an e-mail to MIT Technology Review. “I see them as twin climate change–exacerbated weather phenomena.”

The added danger of wildfires is that they can convert forests from sponges to sources of carbon dioxide, forming yet another climate feedback cycle. In fact, California’s forests emitted more carbon than they absorbed between 2001 and 2010, and two-thirds of the loss was attributable to wildfires, according to a 2015 study by researchers at the National Park Service and the University of California, Berkeley.

Reading through this list, it becomes increasingly clear how the links between distant events lock into self-reinforcing loops: rising emissions, higher temperatures, shrinking sea ice, additional warming, extended droughts, bigger wildfires, and still higher emissions. That means it will become increasingly difficult to pull out of this spiral, making it increasingly urgent that we begin serious efforts to do so soon.

Courtesy: MIT Technology Review

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Why Ankit Saxena's Murder Has Been Easily Forgotten

Tani S. Bhargava

A Hindu father appealed to keep the peace in West Delhi, in the wake of the killing of his only child, a 23-year-old son at the hands of the family of his Muslim beloved.

Astonishing that it was made in the heat of the moment, not in the cool of hindsight. Heartening that this sane voice came from the urban sprawl of janata flats in Raghuraj Nagar.

Increasing instances of inter-caste and inter-faith relationships go hand in hand with hardened caste and religious identities. Then what is out of sync? Has anything changed since the runaway marriages of Anees and Sumitra or Jayanti and Javed in the 1960s?

Yash Pal and Kamlesh Saxena's home is a single 12x15 sq ft space with aquamarine walls, barely room enough for a largish double bed covered with a threadbare bedspread of red and white squares. The word love is printed in every white square. A plank on the wall serves as a shelf for some small brown bottles of medicine, two plastic boxes with strips of capsules, a makeshift temple with attendant tinsel and a few decaying marigolds. A ramshackle cooler stands on guard over a tired top-load washing machine leaning, as if for support, on an aging 100 litre fridge.

Yash Pal, a retired water pump technician, of medium built with a kindly demeanour, stood up from the sole chair to welcome us, but his wife Kamlesh looked too weak and distraught to move from the bed or bother with such niceties.

Suffering from a chronic heart condition, Yashpal said that his wife suffered from the after-effects of a recent hysterectomy. "Ankit was a flourishing photographer. He supported our surgeries, even bought an air conditioner for this room. We have lost the sole breadwinner of the family.

"Now we only have the support of our Muslim neighbours. We eat together every evening, often from shared thalis, six to eight people on this bed. For how long? I cannot say. My *zameer* did not allow me to harbour or spread animosity against a community. These are not my *sanskar*."

A 2x3 inch colour photograph of Ankit, with a garland of plastic flowers, smiled down at us, the stud in his ear glinting.

Kamlesh sat vacant-eyed, wooden-faced and immobile throughout our visit, only to break down once when one of us touched her slight frame to ask whether she was unwell or desperately unhappy. She just wiped her tears silently.

"Some of my own people have accused me of smiling even when my only son is gone. I ask them if you will believe my grief only if I weep incessantly?" said Yash Pal as if to appeal to his wife.

Senior leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party and the local BJP MLA came with promises and went away never to be heard of or seen again. Why has the issue died as suddenly as Ankit himself?

Because Yashpal refused to

allow the murder to be politicised?

Because he is too simple-minded?

Because he is too secular? Nobody knows.

Some citizens are running a crowdfunding campaign to support Ankit's parents. A trust committed to communal harmony has pledged a monthly stipend. This is their only hope.

On our way out, Yashpal requested Ankit's childhood buddies, three strapping, silent young men, to escort us to the memorial constructed for their friend. Sukhmeet, Devanshu, and eerily a strange look alike, Ankit, walked us to the corner of the street where their friend was slaughtered. No one knows why the tulsi plant in a modestly tiled planter wilts in the March heat. A few A4 photocopies, flapping in the diffident breeze, demand 'Justice for Ankit'.

A memorial to the tragic end of the love between Ankit and Shehzadi. It's a memorial to an extraordinary son and an exceptional family.

As for me, a journey that began with the merciless killing of Safdar Hashmi by a pack of political hoodlums brings me today, nearly 30 years on, to the cold-blooded murder of Ankit Saxena by a bunch of executioners who could tear apart the social fabric of my city.

A grim reminder of the ugly reality of India. Cry, the beloved country.

Courtesy: dailyO



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Ram Puniyani

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Impeachment: A Serious Matter

Kuldip Nayar

It is sheer arrogance. True, Chief Justice Dipak Mishra denied permission to the Allahabad High Court judge Nayaran Shukla to prosecute the Lucknow-based Prasad Education Trust, which runs a medical college. But this is not such a violation of law which should invite impeachment of the Chief Justice of India.

The Congress Party was divided but since its president Rahul Gandhi decided to move against the Chief Justice, even the balanced Kapil Sibal had to fall in line. Ashwini Kumar, another senior Congressman and an advocate, has made it clear that he was uncomfortable with the move for impeachment. Even people like former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, P. Chidambaram and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, also lawyers, did not sign the motion.

Ghulam Nabi Azad, also a senior Congress leader, was reading the impeachment motion at the behest of Rahul Gandhi in the Rajya Sabha and collected signatures of its members. It is mandatory that such a motion has to be moved in the upper house. The fact that the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) did not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha also came in handy to the Congress and

six other opposition parties.

Despite the required number of signatures, Chairman of the Rajya Sabha M. Venkaiah Naidu, originally from the BJP, rejected the motion outright. Vice President Naidu, in his 10-page note, explained the swiftness of his decision, ascribing it to the seriousness of the charges and unnecessary speculation.

“All facts as stated in the motion don't make out a case which can lead any reasonable mind to conclude that Chief Justice on these facts can be ever held guilty of misbehaviour,” said Naidu. He had apparently consulted legal and constitutional experts and took notice of the media opinion, which has vehemently criticised the impeachment move.

Union Minister Arun Jaitley has, understandably, called the impeachment notice a “revenge petition”, accusing the Congress and its friends of using as a “political tool” the impeachment notice against the Chief Justice, who retires in six months. The Constitution says the Chief Justice of India can be impeached only on grounds of proven misbehaviour or incapacity.

The opposition backed its demand listing five grounds, which, the Congress said, equals

misbehaviour. These included the assigning of sensitive cases to handpicked judges, raised publicly in January by four top judges who accused the Chief Justice of abusing his position as “master of the roster.” Subsequently, the four senior most judges also held a press conference to air their views, the trigger being the Judge B.H. Loya death case. It has since been reassigned.

This was an unprecedented move. Similarly, the impeachment proceedings have never been taken up against a Chief Justice of India. The Chairman forwards such a notice to the Rajya Sabha secretariat to verify two factors—the signatures of the members who signed the petition and whether rules and procedures have been followed. Obviously, Naidu was not convinced.

The debates of the Constituent Assembly indicate that the framers of the Constitution comprising of all political parties were very cautious in laying down the impeachment clause. The members did not want the impeachment to be taken lightly. I am sorry to say that the Congress Party has thrown all caution to the wind, which the party itself was very careful about once upon a time. Rahul Gandhi, by his behavior, has disrespected the wishes of the Congress stalwarts at that time.

But one thing is clear. The Chief Justice has, indeed, compromised his position and the stature of his office. As pointed out by the senior most four judges, he has “abused his exercise of power” in choosing to send sensitive matters to particular benches by “misusing his authority as Master of the Roster with the likely intent to influence the outcome.” In addition, the Chief Justice had acquired land when he was an advocate by giving

a false affidavit. Of course, he did surrender the land in 2012 after he was elevated to the Supreme Court. But then he took so much time to do so despite the allotment having been cancelled years earlier.

Of course, there are a few cases of High Court judges against whom impeachment moves have been made. But before the moves could be made, they themselves resigned. For instance, Justice Soumitra Sen of the Calcutta High Court avoided the ignominy of becoming the first judge to be impeached by Parliament by tendering his resignation. He did so after the Rajya Sabha had passed the motion making him the first judge to have been impeached by the Upper House for misconduct. Justice Sen was found guilty of misappropriating Rs 33.23 lakh under his custody as a court-appointed receiver in the capacity as a lawyer, and misrepresenting facts before a Calcutta court in a 1983 case.

Similarly, Justice P.D. Dinakaran, Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, against whom the Rajya Sabha Chairman had set up a judicial panel to look into allegations of corruption, resigned in July 2011, before impeachment proceedings could be initiated against him. Corruption, land-grab and abuse of judicial office were among the 16 charges framed against Justice Dinakaran.

Justice V. Ramaswami has the dubious distinction of being the first judge against whom impeachment proceedings were initiated. In 1993, the motion to impeach him was moved in the Lok Sabha, but it failed to secure the required two-thirds majority. Justice Ramaswami was caught in a controversy for spending extravagantly on his official

residence during his tenure as Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana in the late 1980s. The Supreme Court Bar Association even passed a resolution calling for his impeachment.

Impeachment is a serious matter. It should never get politicised. Rahul Gandhi has done so. And, to that extent, he has weakened the judiciary. Since he heads an influential all-India party, he should be extra careful about his actions. His mother, Sonia Gandhi, may not be familiar with the intricacies of politics. But then, she should have advised his son to respect the spirit of the constitution.

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*Obituary***Sachar Saheb : A Unique Personality With Socialist Vision****Prem Singh**

He had forbidden us to call him 'Justice Sachar'. So I began to call him Sachar Saheb. Four days after his death, I sit down to write this tribute. The personality of Sachar Saheb was like a masterpiece, epic in its dimensions. A classic personality in this absurd period! In a tribute like this, written for the media, there is little scope to remember him in that ethereal form. It can only be an attempt to understand his thoughts, concerns, anxieties and work in a pragmatic perspective.

Sachar Saheb passed away on 20 April 2018. He would have been 95 years old this 22 December. My friend Ravikiran Jain, president PUCL, used to say with much assurance that Sachar Saheb will live to be a hundred. Considering his strong desire to live, it seemed very likely. Before the last bout of illness, he was capable enough to take care of his health on his own whenever he fell ill. But for the last three months, it seemed that he has made up his mind that it was time for the abandonment of the body. Now he will live among us through memories, thoughts and work.

Tributes to Sachar Saheb have appeared continuously after his demise in newspapers, magazines, portals and condolence meetings. In these tributes he is remembered as a capable and successful lawyer and the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court who made unabated efforts and waged constant struggles in order to protect civil rights, human rights, constitutional and democratic

institutions and the interests of deprived and oppressed sections of the society. Sachar Saheb's name had become more well known during the last 10–12 years due to the Sachar Committee Report and its recommendations. While paying him tributes, most people—friends, colleagues and admirers—do not forget to mention and discuss this unique contribution of Sachar Saheb.

In my knowledge, hardly any written or verbal tribute to Sachar Saheb has discussed his role in contemporary political thought and political activism. (An exception to this trend is the tribute by Tanveer Fazal, published in 'The Wire'). It cannot be said that journalists and scholars are unaware of his political ideology and activism. Then, what could be the reason that associates who profusely praise his work do not mention his political affiliations? Why this omission?

Despite being seriously ill, Sachar Saheb continued to pen his views, and wrote his last article 'India Needs Draupadi and Not Savitri' only a few days before his death, which was published in the English weekly *Janata* on 1 April 2018. Just a few days prior to this article, he wrote 'No Conflict Between Hindi and State Regional Languages' on March 3. The subject matter of these two articles relate significantly to Dr. Lohia's views. Sachar Saheb's writings and work are often perceived to be rooted and inspired by Dr. Lohia's political philosophy and struggle. It would be

pertinent to mention here that in most of his articles and statements, the earlier ones as well as these last two, Sachar Saheb invariably referred to socialist leaders, Dr. Lohia in particular. His deep commitment to the cause of PUCL had its genesis in the fact that JP had established it.

Sachar Saheb became a member of Socialist Party from the time of its formation in 1948. He was also the secretary of the Delhi Pradesh unit. He played an active role in the programs organised by the party. In May 1949, while participating in a demonstration in front of the Nepali Embassy in Delhi, he was arrested along with Dr. Lohia and stayed in jail for one month and a half. In 2008–09, several senior and young socialist leaders/activists from across the country, including Sachar Saheb, held meetings in different cities for the re-establishment of the Socialist Party. Consequently, in May 2011, the Socialist Party was reinstated as Socialist Party (India) in Hyderabad. Since then, Sachar Saheb had worked tirelessly for the expansion of Socialist Party despite his senior position and age.

In sunshine, rains, storm and cold, he used to walk in the streets with the party workers and participate in demonstrations/meetings/conventions organised by the party. He used to call the workers all over the country to get information about party activities. Any party worker could meet him at home at any time without prior information. In the previous assembly elections in Delhi,

the Socialist Party had fielded a candidate from the Okhla legislative constituency. Sachar Saheb's house falls in the same area. He addressed street meetings for the candidate and distributed pamphlets walking through crowded streets. During my candidature from East Delhi, he was active throughout, from filing of nomination to the last day of the election campaign. In politics like life, Sachar Saheb was trustful and a believer. However, many, including socialists, with whom he interacted were not always trustworthy. Like Kishan Patnaik, he also had a naive belief that the NGO people can be a part of transformative politics!

Sachar Saheb had immense faith in socialism, secularism, democracy, civil rights, individual freedom and the non-violent mode of protest against injustice. Behind Sachar Saheb's multi-faceted role was his deep faith in democratic socialism and socialist vision. The report and recommendations of the Sachar Committee should also be understood from this perspective. Without considering this perspective of his life, there is no meaning in praising his personality.

What then is the reason that many journalists and scholars who pay homage to his memory forget to mention the shade of his political inclination? The main reason for this omission appears to be that Sachar Saheb was against the neo-liberal policies being implemented in the country by successive governments for the last nearly three decades now. There is almost a general consensus in the civil society regarding these policies. The Socialist Party (India), of which Sachar Saheb was a founding member, has repeatedly stated through its policy document and resolutions that if the public sector

is destroyed for establishment of the private sector then the constitutional and democratic institutions too will be destroyed. Secularism and democracy cannot be saved by abandoning the value of socialism contained in the Constitution. Blind adherence to neo-liberal policies promotes communalism, superstitions and idiocy on the one hand, whereas on the other hand it promotes blind nationalism. This understanding and analysis of the Socialist Party is inconvenient for most secular intellectuals and leaders. They take leave of their own responsibility by merely placing the blame on the RSS for 'fascism'. In

doing so they free the neo-liberalist/neo-imperialist forces to wreak havoc on the working masses of the country.

First Bhai, and now Sachar Saheb. Within a fortnight, two stalwarts of socialism have passed away. This is not the loss of the Socialist Party only. It is an irreparable loss to the politics of values instilled and nurtured from the freedom movement, the Constitution of India and the socialist movement. 'The struggle will continue!' With this resolution the Socialist Party salutes its revolutionary leader.

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Is just Garlanding of Portraits is Honoring Ambedkar?

Ram Puniyani

This 14th April the 127th birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ambedkar was marked by heightened celebrations of the occasion by most political formations, but more so by BJP. Prime Minister Modi while paying tributes to Babasaheb said that the Congress was against Ambedkar, that his government has given him the honor due to him, and that no government has honored Babasaheb as much as the current regime!

In this game of appropriating Ambedkar, the BJP is operating on multiple grounds. One is the propaganda that the Congress was opposed to him; two is that it is the BJP which is honoring him by introducing an app like BHIM in his name or dining with dalits in

their households. It is true that in posturing to honor Ambedkar, the BJP is dominating the scene, but are BJP's policies really upholding what Babasaheb stood for? What does respect mean—mere posturing or valuing his political and social contributions?

The fact is that Ambedkar's world view and philosophy stood totally against what BJP stands for. BJP can speak with a forked tongue with great amount of expertise. When it says that the Congress was opposed to Ambedkar, nothing can be farther from truth. We know that Ambedkar's struggles for breaking the shackles of the caste system were a major influence on Mahatma Gandhi which led him to launch his anti-untouchability struggles, which

was a real way to honour Ambedkar. Though he was not member of the Congress, Ambedkar was invited to become a member of Nehru's Cabinet with the important portfolio of law. It was Congress which took his concerns seriously and he was made the Chairman of drafting committee of Constituent Assembly. Not only that, social reforms were uppermost in the minds of Nehru-Congress, because of which Nehru asked Ambedkar to draft the Hindu Code bill, which was opposed by BJP's parent organisation to the core.

How do we assess the BJP attitude to Ambedkar? First, we need to recognise that though the BJP was formed only in 1980, its roots lie in its predecessor, the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (1952), and the parent organization of both is the RSS (1925), whose ideology of Hindu nationalism controls its politics. At all crucial occasions, the RSS opposed Ambedkar ideologically. With regard to the Indian Constitution, when the draft of the Constitution was presented to the Constituent Assembly, the RSS mouth piece *Organiser* (November 30, 1949) wrote: "There is no trace of ancient Bharatiya constitutional laws, institutions, nomenclature and phraseology in it . . . there is 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."

The RSS took out its worst aggression against Ambedkar when

he presented the Hindu Code bill. The RSS Chief M.S. Golwalkar came down scathingly on it. In a speech of August 1949, he said that the reforms piloted by Ambedkar "has nothing Bharatiya about it. The questions like those of marriage and divorce cannot be settled on the American or British model in this country. Marriage according to Hindu culture and law is a sanskar which cannot be changed even after death and not a 'contract' which can be broken any time." Golwalkar continued: "Of course some lower castes in Hindu Society in some parts of the country recognise and practice divorce by custom. But their practice cannot be treated as an ideal to be followed by all." (*Organiser*, September 6, 1949).

The BJP came to power in 1998 at the head of a coalition, the NDA. One of its important Cabinet ministers was Arun Shourie, who has written a most scathing criticism denouncing Ambedkar. Even while the current dispensation is garlanding his portraits and photographs, BJP minister Anantkrishna Hegde openly declares that the BJP has come to power to change the Constitution. While Ambedkar was deeply wedded to secularism and equality, the UP Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi declares that secularism is the biggest lie of independent India. The strategy of BJP is to pay lip service to Babasaheb and at the same time to erode his principles regarding caste and gender equality, his principles as made explicit through his burning of Manu Smriti, the book which RSS ideologues have been upholding.

Ambedkar was for annihilation of caste, as he saw this as the major obstacle to social justice. In contrast, RSS ideology talks of

harmony between castes; this also gets manifested in RSS work among dalits through the Samajik Samrasta Manch.

At another level Lord Ram has been the central figure in their political mobilisation. Had BJP family really been respecting Ambedkar, would they have made Lord Ram the central symbol of their politics? The Ram temple issue has been used by BJP to strengthen itself. UP Chief Minister has announced a huge statue of the Lord in Ayodhya. Lately Ram Navami is being promoted all over the country, on the occasion of which armed youth take out processions particularly in Muslim localities. What had Ambedkar to say about Lord Ram? In his book *Riddles of Hinduism*, Ambedkar is critical of Lord Ram, pointing out that the Lord kills Shambuk, a low caste boy who is doing penance, and also kills King Bali from behind his back. Ambedkar's reserves his strongest criticism of the Lord for banishing his pregnant wife Sita and not enquiring about his sons or wife for long years!

Respecting *Ambedkar* is not just garlanding him, respecting him has to begin with upholding his critique of *Manusmriti*, respecting the values of Indian Constitution and dedicatedly working for secularism and social justice, which were his central concerns. BJP's policies have strengthened anti-Dalit biases and violence, which has become more overt during the last few years. In contrast, Gandhi-Nehru-Congress valued Ambedkar's concerns, despite having different political affiliations.

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Fixing Minimum and Maximum Income Bars is Vital for Equitable Society

Shobha Shukla, Bobby Ramakant and Sandeep Pandey

Government doctors (and other employees) demanding salary hike is common news. Succumbing to the temptation of greener pastures, government doctors moving to private hospitals in the country or migrating abroad is also fairly common. But what is turning heads around is the news of Canadian doctors declining a salary hike! Amazing as it may sound, over a thousand doctors protested against a recent decision of the Canadian government to increase their salaries. This story has affirmed the faith of humanity in the concept that medical practitioners, more than other professionals, will give precedence to service over their careers.

Over 850 doctors and 150 junior doctors (who are pursuing post graduation studies or seeking advanced super speciality training) in Quebec province of Canada have declined to accept a salary hike, saying that they cannot, in “good conscience”, accept increase in salary when nurses, other healthcare staff and patients are facing hardships due to cuts in health budget. These doctors believe that only stronger public health systems can deliver health security to all. When public health systems are reeling under resource crunch, how can raising the salaries of doctors be justified? If nurses and other healthcare staff are forced to work in stressful and challenging conditions, and lifesaving healthcare services slip beyond the reach of people,

then how will the tall promises of health security and universal health coverage be delivered? These doctors have appealed that instead of raising their salaries, government should utilise these resources in strengthening the public health system, so that nurses and other healthcare staff can work in better and secure conditions and healthcare services are within the reach of all those in need, especially the most deprived or terminally ill.

Canadian doctors have raised an important issue that plagues not only the health sector but other sectors as well. Why do only salaries of the top echelon remain immune to budget cuts, whereas all other employees and common people suffer when purse strings tighten? In India too we can see this trend where not just the salaries of senior officials keep rising, but their retirement benefits get better too—and that too retrospectively most of the times. On the other hand, those working in lower positions as contractual and daily wage workers are not on the radar of Pay Commissions. Many a times, contractual workers do not even have the guarantee that they will get paid for the work already done by them. On 11 January 2018, the Lucknow District administration bulldozed on-campus-temporary-settlements of sanitation staff, ward-boys, ward-maidens, drivers and attendants, all working as contract labourers for the state government's Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Gomti Nagar. They were 'accused'

of encroaching upon government land, whereas it should have been the responsibility of the government or the contractor to provide housing to staff working for a government hospital.

There are doctors in India too who have been dedicatedly delivering healthcare service. For instance, Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore in Tamil Nadu, which ranks second (first being the All India Institute of Medical Sciences-AIIMS, in Delhi) in the entire country in terms of quality of medical education and hospital services, has very modest salaries for its doctors. Senior doctors, other staff and students routinely use public transport. Despite the summer heat of Tamil Nadu, the office of its Director doesn't have an air conditioner, but all such and other facilities are available for patients. Despite modest remuneration and resources, CMC doctors have accomplished significant achievements over the years, be it organ transplants, diagnosing the first HIV case in the country, responding to people's health challenges such as snake bites and insecticide poisoning, disease mapping, or setting standards for evidence-based healthcare. After AIIMS, maximum outdoor patients seek healthcare services at CMC Vellore. It is also the only medical college and hospital in India that has, since several decades, been compulsorily sending its doctors, faculty and students every year, to serve in rural and remote areas.

Now other health-care institutions are trying to follow its example or pondering over such policies. CMC has been rendering invaluable service to strengthen healthcare in the most remote areas of the country. Contrary to this, there are several medical colleges where salaries of doctors are higher by several times, but medical competence, research and education is often of questionable quality. Hence it is not difficult to conclude that there is no direct relationship between remuneration and innovation, medical competence, research and education.

There are several more examples where doctors at individual levels have served humankind with deepest commitment. Some exemplary mentions include the two sons and daughters-in-law of Baba Amte—Vikas, Prakash, Bharati and Mandakini, son and daughter-in-law of noted Gandhian thinker Thakurdas Bang—Abhay and Rani Bang, and doctors working in the hospital established in Dalli Rajhara, Chhattisgarh by the late trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi. These are few inspiring examples of medical professionals who chose not to settle in big cities to make money and careers, but instead went to villages to serve leprosy patients and tribals and devoted their entire life to this mission of caring for the most disadvantaged.

Why is it so important to fix maximum income cap?

If we truly want a world where no human being is forced to suffer inhuman treatment, then it is critically important to fix both minimum and maximum incomes in a society. Renowned socialist leader Dr Ram Manohar Lohia

had advocated a ratio of 1:10 between the lowest and highest incomes. An unbridled income gap brews inequality, exploitation, imbalance, injustice and unrest in society. A report released by Oxfam, around the time of the recent World Economic Forum, showed that in 2017, 1% richest people owned 82% of the global wealth. This report also showed that in India, 1% richest people owned 58% of the nation's wealth in 2016, and in 2017 this inequality worsened with 1% cornering 73% of the wealth generated that year. How can we expect harmony in society if only a small percentage of our population enjoys the highest quality of healthcare, education, lifestyles, while the vast majority of our population is forced to live with appallingly poor quality of healthcare, education, and is deprived of other most basic amenities. Most people in India have to compromise with their dignity in their lives.

If we are truly patriotic, then at least we should live the core values enshrined in India's Constitution. The word 'socialism' is enshrined in our Constitution's preamble to ensure social and economic equality in society, and it is the solemn duty of our elected governments to stop wealth from accumulating in the hands of a miniscule minority of super rich only and ensure that every person has access to dignified quality of life.

Mahatma Gandhi's wise words assume relevance here that there are enough resources in this world to meet every person's needs, but not enough for even one person's greed.

Politician Varun Gandhi had said in January 2018 that financially well-to-do parliamentarians should not take salary from the government.

We do hope Varun Gandhi himself is following his own sane advice, but the message is clear—every person receiving salary from the government must review if s(he) needs the salary? It is common knowledge that employees in donor funded NGOs and other development agencies often receive salaries more than those in the services sector. People in government and private sectors must not get salaries that falsify ideologies they claim to champion!

A private hospital is recently reported to have reaped a profit of 1700% on consumables. Government of India had acknowledged health sector as fastest growing 'industry' in the draft of National Health Policy 2017. The number of private medical colleges has surpassed the number of government medical colleges. This is indeed alarming because private medical colleges usually charge hefty fees from students. Only those people should come forward to become doctors who are driven by a sense of service to providing healthcare to needy. Those people who eye healthcare service as an industry to reap profits should not have any place in public health system. There are so many doctors who have commercialised healthcare and provide paid services to reduce obesity, grow back receding hairlines or spur sex desire. This is clearly not public health.

Is Government of India's National Health Policy 2017 a mere gimmick?

Government of India had issued a National Health Policy 2017 which contains several promises that are in line with India's commitment at global level towards health and sustainable development.

All countries have pledged to end tuberculosis by 2030. It is commendable that India, despite being home to highest burden of TB globally, has promised to end TB by 2025. But according to the World Health Organization (WHO) reports, TB rates are not declining in India steeply enough so as to end TB by 2025. At the current rate, India might get rid of TB by 2184. Also, it is important to recognise that scientific evidence shows strong linkages between TB and other development indices. The former Head of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Dr Soumya Swaminathan has said that malnutrition is the biggest risk factor for TB. Likewise there are several other health and development indices that cross-connect and justify the argument that equitable development is vital to make this world a better place and people healthy. If we fail to ensure development justice for every single person, especially the most marginalised, then we will also fail to deliver on our tall claims to end TB, hunger, and poverty, or save the environment.

The National Health Policy 2017 of India as well as our country's commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promise reduction of untimely deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% till 2025 and 33% by 2030. But a major chunk of disease burden that impacts the vast majority of our population is of preventable diseases. For example, the biggest cause of death of children under 5 years of age is pneumonia, which is not only preventable but also curable. But still the maximum number of children who die of pneumonia globally are in India. Major NCDs such as cardiovascular

diseases, cancers, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, etc., account for 70% of deaths. Risk of NCDs can be significantly reduced through measures like reducing tobacco and alcohol use, reducing air pollution and encouraging balanced nutritious diets as well as physical activity. While on the one hand, the government allows alcohol and tobacco industries to wreak havoc on our society, on the other hand, the government is blindly chasing a 'development model' where a growing part of our population is finding it difficult to breathe in clean air, include optimal physical activity or exercise in its daily routine, eat nutritious balanced diet, etc. It is ironical that the number of gyms for physical exercises is on a rise for the rich, but this kind of 'development model' is depriving common people of safe spaces to walk, cycle, run or have access to comfortable free public transport or to simply be able to breathe in clean air. It is a matter of shame for the largest democracy on earth that such a large number of its people are forced to live in inhuman conditions.

Canadian doctors have indeed shown a silver lining for those who believe in a strong public health system. Other doctors and people from all sectors should emulate them, be inspired by their conscience and agree to share resources equitably with all.

All those who receive government salaries must be treated in government hospitals

Recently Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Justice Ajeet Kumar of Allahabad High Court in UP have delivered a judgment that all those who receive salaries from government must seek healthcare

from government hospitals only and no special treatment should be provided to senior officials or ministers—they should also get treated like common citizens. If this happens, then the dismal conditions prevailing in government hospitals will radically improve which in turn will benefit the common masses.

India is one among more than 190 countries that have promised in the UN General Assembly to deliver on Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We believe that without establishing a just social order, sustainable development, where no one is left behind, will continue to remain a mirage.

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Letter to the Editor

Respected Kuldip Nayar wrote an article published in your weekly Janata on 25 March 2018 under the heading Rahul in New Avatar? In the third paragraph of his article, he stated that "Rahul Gandhi is not that young. At 48, he is the youngest President of the Congress so far." But I would like to remind him that in 1938, Subhash Chandra Bose was unanimously elected President. Bose was then only 41 years old. Subhash Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897. So it is not Rahul who is the youngest President but Subhash Chandra Bose is perhaps the youngest President of Congress so far.

With Regards,
Dipankar Ghosh

Remembering Justice Sachar

In Justice Sachar's demise, the nation has lost one of the last representatives of the generation that carried forward the socialist vision from the freedom movement for post-independence India. He would be remembered for his uncompromising commitment to building a secular, just, democratic society where civil liberties and democratic rights of all sections of society, particularly the oppressed castes and classes and women and the disabled, are protected as per the Constitutional mandate.

For All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE), Justice Sachar has a special significance since he stood firmly with the vision of Free and Equitable Common Education System from 'KG to PG' and resisted the prevailing policies of privatisation and commercialisation of education. He raised the moral stature of our 'March to Parliament' in February 2010 and led AIFRTE's resistance in December 2015 to WTO-GATS being given a license to convert India's higher education into a tradable commodity in the

global market.

The Justice Sachar Committee Report (GoI, 2006) is probably the only official document that establishes how majority of the Muslims of India have been left behind in socio-economic development. As per the report, this disparate development of the Muslim masses is the primary cause of their unacceptably low representation in legislature, judiciary and executive and also in various services, including administration, police, armed forces and educational institutions. It marked a paradigm shift through the introduction of the concept of 'socio-religious community' ('SRC'), which recognised the heterogeneity within Muslim community as the most important social phenomenon for policy formulation. Thus, in recognising that the vast sections of the Muslims are socio-economically equivalent to the Scheduled Castes and OBCs, the Justice Sachar Committee Report provided an insightful sociological tool to transform the destiny of the Muslim citizens in nation-

building. Further, if implemented, its recommendation that all public institutions should maintain a 'diversity index' of recruitment, admission and participation and that the same should be linked with the funding criteria would have democratised entire public life, not only for Muslims, but for the entire society. His demise has offered a historic opportunity to all of India's citizens having conviction in the Constitutional values to reflect upon the report's far-reaching insights and resolve to raise the consciousness of the people to persuade the ruling dispensation to implement the report in letter and spirit. The All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE) and its 75 member-organisations in 22 states salute Justice Sachar's relentless pursuit for protecting the democratic, just, egalitarian, socialist and plural vision of Indian society.

- All India Forum for Right to
Education (AIFRTE)

Violent Porn and the Debate on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children

Bharat Dogra

In recent times the rapid increase in sexual violence against women and children has become one of the most worrying and shameful trends in India's society. Several factors are important for this trend. One of these is the proliferation of pornography, particularly violent pornography.

Several studies in various parts

of the world have established a close link between pornography and sexual violence against women and children.

'When watching a pornographic video, did you also want to do the same thing?' This was the straightforward question which was put to persons accused of rape

and indecent assault in a nationwide survey in Japan.

The results surprised many people. As many as 33 per cent of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

When the survey results were classified according to age of respondents, it was found that

among juvenile respondents as many as 50 per cent had answered in the affirmative.

This survey had taken place in Japan at a time (in 1997–98) when concern about the correlation between proliferation of pornography and increase in sexual crimes against women and children was already growing on the basis of national crime data.

Until the middle of the 1980s, that is, before the boom in porn videos in this country, all violent crimes including sexual crimes were declining. As the spread of porn videos increased, initially the declining trend of sexual crimes weakened and then, in the 1990s, with the porn spread continuing to rise, sexual crimes started increasing instead of decreasing, even though other violent crimes continued to decrease.

However several men disagree with the results of such studies. They say that they have been comfortable with the consumption of porn for several years, have not felt any inclination for real-life forced sex. What this view ignores is that various persons can be affected in very different ways. In a big city in which about half a million men are exposed to porn, if just 10 per cent are driven towards sexual violence to a lesser or greater extent by this exposure to porn, we have a frightful situation where the susceptibility of fifty thousand males for sexual violence and forced sex is increasing.

Secondly, even those who say that they feel no such instigation at all after regular exposure to porn for years may yet be influenced in other undesirable ways; for example they may have an increasing tendency to look towards women as sexual commodities and this may impact

their social interactions in very harmful ways.

To return to the Japanese study, commenting on its data, Seiya Morita, a teacher at Tokyo Metropolitan College, has written, “ Only the most bigoted person can believe that sexual crimes are unrelated to the spread of pornographic videos which eroticise any and all sexual crimes (rape, gang rape, sexual harassment, molestation, sneak shot, confinement of women, etc.) and make them entertainment for men.”

Writing in a paper titled ‘Pornography, prostitution and women’s human rights in Japan’, he has also pointed towards a lot of anecdotal evidence regarding very violent sexual crimes being related to excessive porn consumption. More specifically he says that the criminals who video-recorded their rape scenes were in most cases strongly influenced by violent pornography; indeed a lot of pornographic videos were seized from their homes.

Such anecdotal reports have been appearing in India’s media also from time to time, but unlike in the case of Japan where this led to a well-organised national survey, no comparable attempt appears to have been made in India to collect more reliable data at a national level.

According to several reports appearing recently, video clips of real life rapes and molestations are being sold in several cities in India. While one such clip may be sold for Rs 100 or so, street children are charged as much as Rs 10 to 30 for just one view. There is a lot of money in this, and some sellers are known to tell buyers on the sly that they may recognise a familiar female face in the video.

This has led to a cycle of violent porn. First, some impressionable

persons are instigated to commit rape and molestation while also making videos of their victims. Then, in the second stage, clips of this are sold in the market, unfortunately creating infamy for the victim rather than for the culprits.

In India, porn dealing with children and with incest has proved the most harmful, judging from the spurt of such reported cases in recent times.

Researcher Susan S. Cole has written, “In spite of hopes to the contrary, pornography and mass culture are working to confuse sexuality with rape, reinforcing the patterns of male dominance and female submissions so that many young people believe this is simply the way sex is. This means that many of the rapists of the future will believe they are behaving within socially accepted norms.”

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India Needs More Personalities Like Justice Sachar

Ashish Joshi

India will miss Justice Rajinder Sachar. He was a person who spoke his mind on issues that were and are still integral to the idea of India.

I came to know about Justice Sachar on December 6, 2006, when I joined the Ministry of Minority Affairs under the Central government. On my joining the ministry, I was handed the report of a high-level committee on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India. My job was to cull out the report's recommendations. The report, since, has popularly come to be known as the 'Sachar report', taking after Justice Sachar, who was the committee's chairperson. This landmark report brought to fore the economic and educational backwardness of the largest minority community in India.

The report bears the well-defined imprint of the thoughts of Justice Sachar and his approach in dealing with the Muslim question. One of the primary concepts defining the report is encapsulated in the following statement: "In any country, the faith and confidence of the minorities in the functioning of the State in an impartial manner is an acid test of its being a just State."

The last time I met Justice Sachar was at a function organised by the Institute of Objective Studies at the Jamia Millia Islamia. It was in the month of January, in 2015. He was at the function to release a research report titled 'Access to Urban Basic Services in the Muslim Localities of Delhi'.

Justice Sachar was not pleased that the committee's recommendation on an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) had still not been implemented. I told him that we, in the ministry, had done our bit and submitted a draft cabinet note in 2008. The need for an EOC has been succinctly summarised in the following ideas:

Equality is a foundational value of our Republic. This is secured by the Constitution through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy and is widely shared in public life. Yet stark inequalities mark our social reality for the present generation and prospects of the future generations. Worse, these inequalities often coincide with boundaries of social groups and communities making inter-group inequalities more visible than before. Hence there is a need to address inequalities and supplement the existing policies of reservations by fine tuning the definition of the beneficiaries, expanding the range of modalities and evolving a forward looking and integral approach to affirmative action.

The Sachar committee's recommendation for setting up an EOC for citizens was truly unique in its effort to address the range of inequalities affecting the lives of Muslims. Justice Sachar stressed that equality of opportunity may or may not lead to equality of outcomes. But the concept in itself suggests the

need for a level playing field and fair competition which some participants will successfully get through, even if some others do not.

Equality of opportunity, in principle, is compatible with inequality of outcomes, in offering an equal chance to be unequal. Lessons from the functioning of the EOC and other similar organisations in other countries demonstrate the utility of having such an institution in place. Especially if such an institution is tailored to the specific socio-economic, judicial and institutional context of the country in which it functions.

During his long and diverse career, Justice Sachar had earned the reputation of being a staunch champion of human rights. He took a stand and spoke out against innumerable cases of human right violations.

Human rights activist and former journalist John Dayal who knew Justice Sachar well had this to say on my request to share his thoughts about the rights activist:

For most of us whose call are in civil society or call ourselves human rights activists, Rajinder Sachar was a mentor, a pathfinder and a technical expert whose grasp of the forensic law and social processes helped bring a grip on developments that put a stress on democracy and secularism. He held both very dear, having seen the Partition at close quarters.

Dayal observed that though

most of India remembers him for the eponymous Sachar report—he must be the most recognisable name in the community after Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru—“Justice Sachar’s forte was challenging the threat to democratic processes. He showed the way in the emergency. As he showed the way often as a leading counsel of the People’s Union for Civil Rights in scores of enquiries, people’s tribunals and field studies.” Dayal said that he had known Sachar since the days of Emergency. “I remember his possibly last act of kindness to me—a set of photocopies he got made from his collection of the works of Vivekananda in which the great sage had denounced narrow mindedness and communalism. I salute the memory of a giant, brave beyond his short, slim sherwani clad persona who shunned the limelight.”

Justice Sachar was worried about the declining standards of public discourse. He believed that political discourse and debate must take place within a framework of basic decorum and decency. There could be banter and competitive digs by rival political parties challenging each other. But the political class must steer clear of the temptation of levelling fake charges at each other. To substantiate his argument, Justice Sachar often mentioned this incident of banter between British politicians William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli. Both politicians of great skills, Disraeli once said of his rival, “If Gladstone fell in the Thames, that would be a misfortune. But if someone fished him out again, that would be a calamity.”

Justice Sachar would also cite examples of the uneven relationship between Nehru and Ram Manohar

Lohia. It’s well known that after coming back from Germany, Lohia worked in the central Congress office alongside Nehru, who was then president of the Congress party. Lohia was Nehru’s most bitter opponent at the time the Socialist Party quit Congress in 1946. But their personal relations never changed. When Lohia was arrested in 1949 for being part of a protest, Nehru sent him a basket of mangoes in jail. The gesture so annoyed Sardar Patel that he wrote to Nehru that while the government had arrested Lohia, Nehru was sending him mangoes. Nehru politely reminded Patel that politicians should not mix personal relations with politics.

Prominent among the judges who were critical of the Emergency, Justice Sachar called the dictatorial censorship a “permanent scar on the soul of India,” adding that “the highest judiciary’s role in the perpetuation of the emergency remains a blot”. As punishment for his defiance, he was transferred from Sikkim to Rajasthan.

Justice Sachar was clear about the role of judiciary in a democracy. In one of his articles, he wrote:

Wherever there is a written Constitution, the Supreme law is the law of the Constitution and for even the Parliament to accept that its powers are limited by the written Constitution is not in any manner to derogate from its sovereignty but only to accept that its sovereignty like the sovereignty of the executive and the judiciary is limited by the written Constitution. In India we have had the established principle that King, though an absolute sovereign must yet

function within Dharma, which is another way of proclaiming the principle of the supremacy of law.

A firm adherent of the principles that he believed in, Justice Sachar was acutely aware that it is only at our own peril that we abandon the core constitutional values of liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, rule of law and justice. The very embodiment of what we imagine the rule of law to be, Justice Sachar was the perfect combination of intellect, integrity, humanity and humility.

India needs more personalities like Justice Sachar.

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Asifa's Just Killers!

Prem Singh

The cry seeking justice for Asifa is becoming stronger and deeper. From Delhi to the United Nations, from social and civil rights organisations to civil society citizens, more and more people are out on the streets shouting slogans and demanding justice for Asifa. The social media is parading her pictures, right from happier times to the horrifying end; protesters unfurl their respective banners and flags, and suggest varying degrees of punishment. From Kathua to Delhi, and in many other cities in the country, protest marches and candle light vigils are being carried out for Asifa. Children are also joining and participating in the protests in large numbers. A woman officer in Delhi government has gone on a hunger strike on the issue of women's security. She says that if Modi can carry out demonetisation in one day, why can't he show similar promptness in ensuring women's safety? Beside the furore in the social media which is deluged with messages for justice for Asifa, newspaper columnists and intellectuals too are writing angry letters and articles demanding justice for Asifa. The gruesome news has shocked the international media too. The anger against the rape in Unnao had not yet subsided when this incident of kidnapping, rape and murder in Jammu and Kashmir shook every conscience.

Asifa, whose innocent life was snuffed out by this act of barbarianism, did not know that there exists a real judicial system in the country, where great law-givers

and judges and lawyers dispense justice on the basis of witnesses and evidences. She did not know about the United Nations Organisation (UNO), which also works to ensure justice for the citizens of the world. Asifa did not know that governments mete out justice equivalent to specific sums of money handed out to the parents of young girls like herself who are killed with such gruesome violence. Asifa did not even know that fascism has arrived in the country, and that concerned people will later rue the fact that her fate was the result of that fascism, and that true justice for her means defeating those fascist forces. She perhaps wouldn't have even dreamt that she was being administered 'Hindu justice' in that temple. Asifa might have been ignorant about the tricolor that was hoisted by those nationalists who, in support of the accused, marched from the courts to the streets, brandishing their love for their country.

God knows how well Asifa registered the simple fact that she was a Muslim. But she certainly did discover in her eight-year old life that hell is not a place in another world, it is right here, on this earth—on a territory touted internationally as a paradise on earth. Before leaving the world, she also learnt that Satan is not just the adversary of God, he also mauls tender limbed children. What more justice will she hope for God to give her on the day of judgment?

If there is such a thing as soul or spirit, Asifa must surely be wondering now, in absolute amazement, as to why only after

her tortured end have so many people and so many organisations suddenly become active and jumped to her defense. Talib Hussain, the lone lawyer from her native village who protested against the horrific act when her kidnapping and death first came to light, may not appear so alone to her now. As a part of the infinite soul, Asifa would marvel at how huge this country and the entire world is, how much full of debates and arguments, beset with beliefs and questions, riddled with attacks and counterattacks.

She would completely understand why this world will not give her justice. Whatever justice is there in this system—social justice, economic justice, civil justice, human justice and child/juvenile justice—she has been kept away from them all. Which is why it was so easy for her entire being to be thus trampled and crushed. She would understand that this passionate furore over justice for her would soon get cold. Another furore will swell and ebb with the next incident. She would understand, like other souls, that this swelling and ebbing is an everlasting process.

Asifa must be wondering why do these people pretend so much? What compels them to do so? But perhaps, it may be that they are genuinely disturbed. They are truly concerned. They want to usurp the entire share of Asifas and appear 'just' themselves. They want to tell themselves and the world that they are not party to this savage mindset. They want to demonstrate that none of this is happening in their names.

Souls perhaps have no hatred for anyone. So Asifa would smile and say “Just killers”!

Just three suggestions, if you deem them fit, towards the fight for justice for Asifa. One, the national flag should not be used to support just any purpose. It should be used only for national programs. The 2014 decision of the Supreme Court, which allowed anyone, at any time and for any reason, the right to hoist the national flag, should be revoked. Two, we learn to quiet down, and have more introspective, inner conversations with ourselves. Perhaps then we might understand that we all are complicit and responsible in various ways for this situation. Three, the RSS should understand that the Pandora's box of ‘Hindutva’ that they've opened has no use for society, nation, civilisation or human race—none at all. The nation's politics, economy, education, culture—all have been taken over by corporations. Any organisation feeding on corporate powers can rise to power. But as long as human civilisation survives, social and human ostracisation, such as the kind that the RSS advocates, will continue to find stiff opposition.

Asifa's soul might find solace in this hope, and her parents and siblings might find the strength to bear the trauma. And for the rest of the country's citizens, the government and juridical system will do something, to calm down the agitation. They have to justify their existence. Two resignations of BJP ministers have been tendered in the Jammu and Kashmir government. Some court procedure or the other too will happen in time.

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The Sachar Saheb I Knew

Tanweer Fazal

Justice Rajindar Sachar passed away on Friday. He was 94, so one could say that it was a life well lived, and that everything is eventually perishable in this world. What could be better than to be able to live by your ideals, and when you die, to have a ring of admirers to remember you. These words of consolation, of solace, do provide succour to the bereaved. Yet, there is a void that Sachar saheb leaves. This sense of emptiness is compounded by the times we live in, when the values of trust and conviction are plummeting, both in public and in private spheres. Sachar saheb in his small frame was far more towering when it came to living by the principles he cherished. And yet, he would rarely impose them on others.

Obituaries are difficult to write, especially of those who have moved you, influenced you, perhaps which is why you try to run away from attributing mortality to them. Obituaries are also a closure, an acceptance that ultimately the swan has flown away, alone. I have attempted to write tributes earlier, too, when one of the tallest communist leaders of the Naxalite movement passed away; when our leader at Jawaharlal Nehru University was killed by Shahabuddin's (an RJD leader) gunmen in Siwan in Bihar; when a friend much younger than me died of heart failure. Never could I proceed beyond a few sentences. Similarly, it is difficult to write about Sachar saheb too. But, perhaps I have matured now.

My close association with

Sachar saheb began in the Prime Minister's High Level Committee (set up in 2005 to prepare a report on the social, economic, and educational conditions of the Muslim community of India), where I was a researcher, and he, the chairperson. Whether it was the politics that we shared or his interest in the subject that I was researching for the committee or a combination of both, I was summoned far more frequently than my colleagues to his chamber. He would seek my opinion on the interpretation of tables that were furnished to him by the research team, but more than that, our discussion would be about a range of issues: history, the horrors of Partition, state of politics and also religion. As it turned out, most often I chose to be an avid listener, given the depth of his knowledge on these subjects. Those concerns were so close to his heart, and he spoke with such passion that he would often lapse into Punjabi, forgetting that a Bihari was sitting in front of him.

The committee toured the length and breadth of the country, and on his direction, closed door meetings with bureaucrats, police officers, ministers and chief ministers would invariably be complemented with public hearings. People travelled from remote towns and districts to share their grievances with the committee. There were special sessions with women representatives, NGO workers and community leaders. These were learning occasions for all of us, when official truths, carefully calibrated data and

the ‘glories’ of governments would be confronted by the reality and its perception on the ground. Sachar saheb ensured that the dignity of the ordinary person never diminished in the meetings in which high officials of the government were also present.

For me, there was a lesson to be learnt as to how one should conduct oneself while holding a responsible position and a high public office. Despite the insistence of the host governments, Sachar saheb never agreed to have a red beacon on his vehicle, a status pronouncement that very few would decline. A standing instruction from the committee was that the chairperson would stay only in state guest houses, no matter how shabby they were in comparison to seven-star hotels. This was the code of ethics that he had set for himself—never were these forced on others, the members, the researchers or the subordinate staff.

He was perhaps conscious that the report was being awaited by the people, and the task at hand had to be completed in time. Usually in government-appointed committees and commissions, given the perks, status and importance that come attached to it, there is a tendency to prolong its tenure. This very often suits both the governments of the day as well as those in these bodies. If truth is uncomfortable, better leave it buried. But Sachar saheb, from the very beginning, had made it clear that no extension would be sought. Ultimately, the committee completed the mammoth exercise in record time, with only one four-month extension to incorporate the information from the 2004–05 round of National Sample Survey.

Though not a specialist, Sachar saheb brought immense wisdom, a

sense of uprightness and fortitude to the exercise. This helped the committee stay together and focused even in difficult times. The committee was accused of communalising the armed forces by seeking religiously disaggregated data of employment. The huge controversy that followed helped the chief opposition, the BJP, go hammer and tongs against it, but Sachar saheb remained undaunted. He defended the decision to seek the headcount of the defence forces on grounds that as it drew from public exchequer, it was accountable.

It was not that indignities were not thrown at him. For accepting to head a government-appointed committee, many thought that he had fallen for sarkari lure. During a meeting, one chief minister (no prizes for guessing who), on being probed over the skewed figures of minority development from his state, chose to give it back to Sachar saheb: ‘Agli baar phir jab kisi committee mein aapka number lag jayega, phir aayiega’. (Come next time, when you are once again made a head of another committee). The bureaucrats laughed with their chief minister, adding insult to injury. For a person who was himself the son of a governor and chief minister, who had been the chief justice of a high court, served on national and international tribunals and panels, and one who had chosen not to run after positions, to be mocked at like this was hitting a little too low. It angered the committee, but Sachar saheb kept his calm—he simply repeated the question, conveying to the CM that nothing would deter him. A couple of years later, when the central government conferred on him the Padma Vibhushan, the country’s second-highest civilian

award, he politely declined.

Sachar saheb’s optimism knew no bounds. In politics, he had immense confidence. He looked with dismay as the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement swayed his colleagues of the socialist stream, one after the other. As one of them announced the coming of ‘new politics’ and predicted the end of ideology, Sachar saheb could foresee the onset of fascism. In spite of his advancing age, he founded the Socialist Party, and devotedly campaigned for it. Like a young party enthusiast, he was constantly on the lookout to rope in new people. I have a feeling, he had set his eyes on me as well. He would personally call me to ensure participation in the party programmes. His politics was however, not inanimate and mechanical but fashioned out of humane and life-affirming values. Every Eid and Baqr Eid, he would make it a point to greet all of us, a practice that he continued till his end. Farewell Sachar saheb. This Eid, you will be missed.

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on Mend**

Kuldip Nayar

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Is it Against Interests
of Hindus?**

Ram Puniyani

**The CPM's 22nd Party
Congress**

Mrinal Biswas

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Friend or Enemy of Dalits?

Sandeep Pandey

Dr. Ambedkar Mahasabha honoured the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with Dalit Mitra or Friend of the Dalit award on the birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on 14 April 2018 in Lucknow.

This is the same government which had arrested Chandrashekhar Azad Ravan, the founder of Bhim Army which runs over 300 education centres for Dalit children in Saharanpur. On 2 November 2017 High Court described the four cases against Ravan and colleague Kamal Walia as politically motivated and gave them bail. As soon as Ravan was released National Security Act was imposed to arrest him again. This exhibits lack of faith of UP government in Dalits in general.

During the nationwide protests organised on 2 April 2018 against the perceived weakening of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, by the Supreme Court, the Yogi Government was involved in brutal suppression of the movement. In Meerut one dalit youth was killed in police firing, while cases were registered against 9,000 people, of whom about 500 were arrested. Locally manufactured pistols were

planted on some youth before their arrest so that Arms Act could be used against them. In Muzaffarnagar too a dalit youth was killed in police firing and cases registered against 7,000 people, of whom around 250–300 were arrested. In Saharanpur, cases were registered against 900 Bhim Army activists. In Allahabad, cases were registered against 27 students who participated in this movement. In the above mentioned cases, sections related to rioting, causing damage to public property, obstructing public servant from performing his/her duty, attempt to murder and Arms Act were used. In Meerut a former Member of Legislative Assembly Yogesh Verma, who is also the husband of Mayor Sunita Verma who belongs to the Bahujan Samaj Party, was first called to assist in controlling the law and order situation, but was later humiliated and arrested from the spot. Will such a government be considered a Dalit friendly government? According to retired Inspector General of Police in Uttar Pradesh, S.R. Daprapuri, cases against SC/STs have gone up in Bhartiya Janata Party ruled states.

In February 2018, in a village in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh, a Dalit girl Moni was riding a

bicycle to the market when some people poured petrol over her and set her on fire. She tried to run to save her life but collapsed and died. Earlier in January, in Rasra town of Ballia district, two Dalit youth were caught by members of Hindu Yuva Vahini on the charge of cow theft. Their heads were shaved and they were taken around the village with placards hanging from their necks saying 'We are cow thieves.' In March, in Jajauli village of Ballia district, Sonu and Siddhu Singh burnt alive a Dalit woman, Reshma Devi. She had taken a loan of Rs 20,000, and even though she had repayed it, they continued to pressurise her to pay interest on the loan. When she did not acquiesce, petrol was poured over her and she was set on fire.

Many such incidents of atrocities against Dalits can be recounted during the Yogi Government. Two events which specially stand out are where Dalits were not allowed to install statues of Gautam Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar on Ambedkar Jayanti day in Barabanki and Sitapur this year.

In the police station Deva of district Barabanki, there is a village Sarsaundi in which 0.202 hectares of land numbered 312 in the Gram Sabha documents has been earmarked for Ambedkar Park. The villagers wanted to install a Ambedkar statue on the birthday of Dr. Ambedkar. Permission for the event was sought and obtained from the police and Member of Parliament, Priyanka Singh Rawat. But just before the event, Kamlesh Sharma, a village level Revenue department official (Lekhpal), filed a false report that the land in question is disputed and a case was pending with the Land Consolidation Officer.

Complainant Kanhaiyya Lal is owner of a nearby brick kiln but not a citizen of the Gram Sabha. Two residents of the village, Kabir Ahmed and Pramid Chauhan, have been shown as witnesses in the report; both now regret having signed the document. When an enquiry was made with the Land Consolidation office, no case was found to be pending there. Quite clearly the Lekhpal is affected by an anti-Dalit mentality.

The story of village Gumai falling in GS Ranipur Godwa and PS Thangaon of district Sitapur is even more interesting. A resident of the village, Gulshan s/o Banwari, wants to install statues of Gautam Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar on his personal land. On the adjacent piece of land four walls of an unfinished temple stand. The structure doesn't have a ceiling and there are no deities installed inside. This land belongs to Jagrani whose late husband Medilal was earlier the Gram Pradhan and she also agrees with the idea of installation of the statues of Buddha and Ambedkar. In fact, the two statues have already been procured and are kept in her house, which is the only permanent residential structure in the village. Some upper caste people under the patronage of BJP MLA Gyan Tiwari have opposed the idea of installation of these statues. None of them are residents of the GS Ranipur Godwa and in that sense are outsiders. Under their pressure, the police has filed a report that a dispute could erupt if Ambedkar's statue is installed next to the temple of a goddess. This, despite the fact that Jagrani, the owner of the land on which four walls of the incomplete temple stand, and Gulshan, on whose land statues are to be installed, have no dispute between them.

A situation has been created in these two villages that now the villagers seeking the installation of statues of Ambedkar and Buddha will have to seek the permission of the State government through their respective District Magistrates. In both cases the issue has been made a victim of unnecessary bureaucratic entanglement, in which an immediate solution may not emerge. The people may have to approach the court of law, which will be a costly affair. The anti-Dalit mindset of people in the party, government and administration of a 'Dalit friendly' CM are at naked play in both cases.

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India–China Relations on Mend

Kuldip Nayar

It appears Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted China–dictated China–India border. The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) can argue that it has accepted what was de jure. What is hailed as a historic moment is actually an abject surrender to Beijing. It is practically a defeat. Had the Congress Party done so, it would have been paraded as a force which had sold out India.

Modi, with his flowery speeches in Hindi, may go down well with people who cannot understand the intricacies of the border problem. But surprisingly, the party has the support from the Nagpur headquarters from where the RSS high command operates.

China and India have seldom agreed on where the actual border line is. The India-China border was demarcated by the British during the colonial period, and is known as the MacMahon Line. China does not accept this border line. Nehru asked the Indian army to oust the infiltrators and clear its territory. Since then the relations between the two have been more or less hostile.

The McMahon Line demarcates Arunachal Pradesh to be a part of India; China refuses to acknowledge this and considers the region to be disputed. Any activity that takes place in this area is viewed by China skeptically. In April last year, when the Dalai Lama visited Arunachal Pradesh, China called his visit a “provocation.” It had warned India that the Dalai Lama’s visit would affect the normal relations between the two countries. The Chinese also

protested Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s visit to Arunachal in November 2017. Beijing has also been issuing stapled visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh visiting China. China wants to indicate that it is a ‘separate territory’ and not part of India.

The relations between the two countries further reached their lowest point in recent years during the standoff over Doklam in June–August 2017. India stood its ground, and ultimately China had to withdraw its forces behind the present border.

Prime Minister Modi’s trip to China last September soon after the Doklam standoff for BRICS did reduce tensions between the two countries. The positive side of Modi’s trip then was the reiteration by the two countries to fight against terrorists, even though it is also true that the friendship between China and Pakistan continues to increase.

Now it seems that Beijing is trying to revive the India–China Bhai Bhai scenario. Soon after PM Modi’s recent April visit to China, a statement issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that both sides possessed the “maturity and wisdom” to handle their differences through peaceful discussion and by respecting each other’s “concerns and aspirations.”

They also agreed to use the Special Representatives’ Meeting on the boundary question to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement. The two militaries will strengthen confidence-building measures and enhance

communication and cooperation to uphold border peace and tranquility, said the statement.

China and India have agreed to build a high-level cultural and people-to-people exchange mechanism between the two nations. The informal summit meeting between Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping also stressed on the need to strengthen the China–India Closer Developmental Partnership so that the relationship between the two will always keep to the right direction.

On the last leg of his two-day visit, the Indian Prime Minister and Chinese President walked along a sidewalk on the shores of the Wuhan’s East Lake and later sailed in the same boat for “peace, prosperity and development” in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. This augurs well.

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Spectre of Fascism

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Is Congress a Muslim Party, Is it Against Interests of Hindus?

Ram Puniyani

Currently there is propaganda from the BJP combine that the Congress is an anti-Hindu party. On every conceivable occasion, it states that Congress is insulting Hinduism. In the wake of the verdict of Mecca Masjid blast cases, as the accused got released, BJP spokespersons went hammer and tongs saying that Rahul Gandhi and Congress have defamed Hindu religion, they should apologise for that. In the ongoing campaign for Karnataka elections (2018), the BJP has taken out a Yatra against the so called 'anti-Hindu policies' of the Congress. The propaganda has gone to such an extent that even Sonia Gandhi, the ex-Congress President, had to say that Congress is perceived as a party for Muslims!

How should we understand the policies of a party for any religious community? BJP is propagating that it is a party which is taking care of Hindu interests. Is it true? It has taken up issues like Ram Temple, holy cow, article 370, love jihad, etc. Have Hindus at large benefitted from these issues? The claim that these emotive issues are for the benefit of Hindus is a pure make believe propaganda which has led to polarisation, increased hate and increase in acts of violence. The major victim of these policies are not just Muslims, but Hindus too in large numbers. At the same time, we also see an economic slide in the conditions of farmers and workers; atrocities against Dalits and Hindu women are on the rise.

What about Congress being anti-Hindu, being against Hinduism? Let's take the case of Mecca Masjid blast. The major part of the investigation was initially done by Hemant Karkare, who was killed in the 26/11 act of terror on Mumbai. Swami Aseemanand, the accused, himself had confessed to his crime in front of a magistrate, which was not under duress, and his confession was legally valid. Most of the investigations pointed fingers towards Aseemanand, Sadhvi Pragya, Lt. Col. Purohit and others. During the last four years of BJP rule, the case has been so badly presented by the investigative agencies that they have all been exonerated and the blame has been put on Maharashtra ATS for wrong investigation. When Karkare was proceeding with the investigations, Modi and Thackeray had called him anti-Hindu. Karkare felt so much pressured by these intimidations that he sought the advice of his distinguished elder, Julio Reibero, who advised him to carry on with his honest work, ignoring the pressures.

While the anti-Hindu image of Congress has been constructed around such issues, its pro-Muslim image has been constructed in the last few decades, more so after the reversal on the Shah Bano issue by the then Congress government, which was a flawed decision. The Congress had then yielded to retrograde elements within the Muslim community; the Muslim community as a whole did not benefit

from it. Dr. Manmohan Singh's statement that 'Muslims have a first claim on national resources' is yet another statement flouted to assert that Congress is pro-Muslim. What is hidden from public view is that this statement came in the wake of the Sachar Committee Report. This report had debunked the claim that Muslims have been appeased, it concluded that the economic condition of Muslims is worse than that of Dalits, they are also victims of communal violence, and that the only place they are over-represented is the jails!

Any attempt to walk down the path of secularism in our country, which has suffered the impact of 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British, is not easy. During the freedom struggle, with the rising Indian nationalism, the people from all religions joined the Indian National Congress. The Congress had Presidents from all religions. Badruddin Tybaji presided over the Congress session in 1887; the Congress also had Presidents who were from Parsi and Christian communities. The primary focus of Congress was Indian nationalism and it practised secularism, even though there were some slips here and there. During those days, the Congress faced criticism from Muslim communalists (like Sir Syed) of being a Hindu Party, while Hindu communalists (like Lala Lal Chand) criticised it for appeasing Muslims at the cost of Hindu interests. All through the

freedom struggle, the Congress had to face criticism from both these elements.

The criticism of Muslim communalists led by the Muslim League culminated in the formation of Pakistan. The Hindu communalist, especially Hindu Mahasabha and RSS, criticism was that Gandhi is appeasing Muslims; it is due to Gandhi that Muslims have raised their head, due to which Pakistan was formed. The sharpest articulation of this came in the actions of Nathuram Godse, who was a trained RSS Pracharak and also became the Secretary of Pune Branch of Hindu Mahasabha in 1936. In his statement in the Court ('May it please your honor'), he says that Gandhi is responsible for formation of Pakistan, he has

compromised the Hindu interests and been pro-Muslim!

The present criticism of Congress that it is a Muslim party and is against Hindu interests seems to be a continuation of the above arguments. This criticism, which began with Hindu communalists in 1880s, and then increased with the articulations of the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS, has become intensified during last couple of decades. The reality is that the condition of Muslims has worsened during the last several decades, and during last four years, gone into a tailspin. Despite that, those who are indulging in anti-Congress propaganda and accusing it of appeasing Muslims are having a field day, raising all kinds of emotive issues in which Hindus are as much losers as other sections of society.

Walking the secular talk is becoming more difficult by the day. Gandhi was killed for this and his disciple Nehru is subject of much vilification and calumny for the same. The Muslim communalists rejoiced the formation of Pakistan, where development and amity is missing. With Congress–Gandhi–Nehru, we could make a small beginning towards fraternity and progress. The criticism of Congress as being Muslim party, as being against Hindus, reflects more the sectarian agenda of those propagating this rather than the nature of Congress, which despite several flaws has on the whole been trying to protect secular values!

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Supreme Court Should Decide Ayodhya Case — No Scope for Mutual Settlement

Justice Rajindar Sachar

The Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar has suggested that he can act as a mediator in the pending Babri Masjid demolition case. The expression of concern is a little odd as it comes at the instance of an "inter-meddlor", and without the parties being present in Court. No wonder the suggestion on negotiations towards a mutual settlement has caused a flutter in the political roost. In my opinion, the Babri Masjid demolition case is not a matter that can be settled through a compromise. This case has constitutional implications. The Constitution states clearly that India is a secular republic.

I was in Geneva attending the UN Human Rights Commission meeting when I was informed that the Babri Masjid had been demolished. On television, I watched the gory spectacle of BJP stormtroopers climbing up the walls of the Masjid and breaking it down. The BJP Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh's assurance to the Supreme Court that he would take steps to prevent the demolition was belied. The Supreme Court by a majority just accepted his apology instead of sending him to jail for contempt of court. But this was a relatively minor issue compared to the ominous conspiracy of the Congress Prime Minister,

Narasimha Rao, who suddenly became inaccessible to senior journalists, his Home Secretary and even his colleagues.

I feel ashamed to admit the complicity of the judiciary, which despite the injunction since 1949 to bar people from entering the area, did not proceed against the public. Even the higher judiciary did not intervene; rather, it seemed to ignore the trespass.

The magnitude of the danger should have been grasped by all parties. The battle for secularism should have been reflected in the determination to nip the canker of communalism in the bud. As it

turned out, nothing was done.

At that point of time, I had made a public statement, saying that the government should have announced December 6 as a 'National Repentance Day' when people will fast and pray for the unity and welfare of all communities. But the non-BJP parties analysed the situation as merely a law and order problem and thus acquiesced in this dastardly action.

Whatever the history of the controversy, all parties let the matter be referred to the Allahabad High Court. Both sides were aggrieved with its decision. The BJP is insisting that it will build a temple on the site where the Masjid undoubtedly stood for over 500 years. The Muslims cannot obviously agree to a shameful compromise on the sanctity of the Masjid. The matter is before the Supreme Court; it cannot avoid a decision which may not make everyone happy. It is its constitutional duty and it has no other option.

Going by precedents, the case in favour of Muslims is invincible. I say this on the precedence of the Shahidganj Masjid case in Lahore. It was decided by the Privy Council in 1940. The Supreme Court need not decide on the merits of the argument whether Babri Masjid stood where the Ram Temple once existed. This is of no consequence as it is not relevant to the judiciary's ultimate decision.

It is obvious to the meanest intelligence that it is impossible to prove that the birthplace of Lord Ram was beneath the Masjid. It may be a matter of faith, genuine or contrived, but that is no proof. Nor for that matter can it ever be cited as a legal ground to take away the land from the mosque.

If the finding is that the mosque was not built on Ram's birthplace, then the Muslims can get the land back. They will be free to use it in any way, including the construction of the mosque.

Alternatively even if it is assumed that there was a temple on the land of Babri Masjid, the suit filed by the VHP/RSS has to be dismissed. Admittedly, Babri Masjid existed for over 500 years, till it was demolished by the activists of the VHP/RSS on 6 December 1992. From the legal perspective, the Sangh Parivar would have no right even if a temple had been demolished to build the Babri Masjid. I say this in view of the precedent of the case of Shahidganj Masjid. There was a mosque dating back to 1722. But by 1762, the shrine came under Sikh rule and was used as a gurdwara. It was only in 1935 that a suit was filed claiming the building was a mosque and should be returned to the Muslims.

The Privy Council observed that "their Lordships have every sympathy with a religious sentiment which would ascribe sanctity and inviolability to a place of worship. However, they cannot under the Limitation Act accept the contention that such a building cannot be possessed adversely. The property now in question, having been possessed by Sikhs, was adversely given to the waqf and to all interests thereunder for more than 12 years. The right of the mutawali (caretaker) to take possession for the purposes of the waqf came to an end under the Limitation Act".

On a parity of reasoning, even if a temple existed prior to the construction of the Masjid 500 years ago, the suit by the Hindu outfits like Nirmal Akhara VHP / BJP etc

lacks basis.

There is another reason why in such a situation, the suit will fail because in common law, even a rightful heir, if he kills his ancestor, forfeits his right of inheritance. In the Masjid case too there was a "murder most foul", and hence the killer cannot be allowed to take the benefit of his own dastardly deeds, whatever the factual position may be.

Of course, it is the privilege of the Chief Justice of India to constitute the Bench. With respect, I submit that it might be more reassuring if a Bench of seven or nine judges hears the appeal.

Courtesy : Mainstream, April 8, 2017

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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The CPM's 22nd Party Congress

Mrinal Biswas

At the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the party's highest policy making body broke the embedded practice of echoing and approving anything coming from the top leaders sitting in Politburo or Central Committee, and forced an alteration in the draft political resolution of the Central Committee.

The official resolution moved by the Central Committee, while stating the need to fight the menace of the Bharatiya Janata Party said, "However, this has to be done without having an understanding with the Congress party." Hardliners led by Prakash Karat saw to it that CPI(M) avoided the touch of the Grand Old Party to keep away any impurities from invading their party. But Karat's successor and the present party general secretary Sitaram Yechury wanted to keep CPI(M) afloat in the country's political mainstream, and by dint of his wider support among the rank and file, threw down the gauntlet against the hardliners successfully. The broader forum, the Party Congress, modified the Central Committee's resolution, and removed the words "without having an understanding with the Congress Party" and replaced them by "without having a political alliance with the Congress Party". The Yechury line opened up the possibility of an "understanding" with the Congress party and with any coalition the Congress party may forge in the 2019 general election for the Lok Sabha.

There were interesting fallouts

of this pathbreaking political line within the CPI(M) itself. Prakash Karat's wife and influential politburo member Brinda Karat refused to accept defeat and said that any repetition of an understating with the Congress party that had happened during the 2016 West Bengal Assembly polls was "not permissible". Actually, the resolution adopted by the CPI(M) says just the opposite.

The most emphatic statement for the Yechury line came from nonagenarian party founder member V.S. Achuthanandan, who was formerly Kerala Chief Minister. "We will reach an understanding with all secular opposition parties, including the Congress in Parliament on agreed issues. Outside the Parliament . . . we shall work for a broad mobilisation of people against communalism. This has to be done without a political alliance with the Congress."

V.S. has elucidated further the meanings and implications of the alteration of the CPI(M) Central Committee's draft resolution in the context of compulsion of the party in combating fascism. The Third International of the Communist parties, he said, gave the world the concept of a united front against fascism. This has helped India and other countries fight imperialism on the one hand and fascism on the other. The RSS was born along with the Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Its leadership and cadre have had decades long experience of fomenting communal extremism in India. And so V.S. stated that

the need of the hour is not to waste time focussing on neo-liberalism as followed by the Congress but to form a broader front with Congress and others to fight the communal-fascist threat. Incidentally, this founding member of the CPI(M) has long been thrown out of the Politburo and Central Committee as well as the Kerala State Committee by hardliners in the CPI(M).

V.S., even though sidelined in important bodies of his own party, sensed correctly the wishes of his comrades assembled in the Party Congress to have some kind of an alliance with the Grand Old Party, contrary to the dictates of the ruling coterie. This significantly tilted the balance in favour of the Yechury line. The unprecedented demand for secret voting on the draft political resolution was itself an expression of disapproval of the hardliners' much advertised anti-Congress views and showed weakening support for the Karat leadership which had held CPI(M) under leash for so many years.

The CPI(M) under a stronger Yechury leadership will no doubt find a more meaningful place in the mainstream of Indian politics. It has to be seen how Yechury plays his cards and how far he can tame the strongly entrenched Karat majority in the Politburo.

Kerala will pose the toughest task. Political understanding with the Congress party remains out of question; there is only a remote possibility of electoral seat adjustments between the two parties

as they are the only adversaries in the poll battle. The recently lost battle in Tripura has only hardened the local CPI(M) which would not like to share the anti-BJP space with the Congress. West Bengal is the best place where the local leaderships of both Congress and CPI(M) are eager for joint efforts to fight the dominance of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress which threatens to make them irrelevant. Of course,

the Congress high command's attitude is the big question. Even then, the CPI(M) can keep hope for some gains in the all-India electoral battle if a broad front emerges with Congress at the top—that will open up the possibility of the CPI(M) making some dent in the three States of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura.

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Obituary: Justice Rajinder Sachar

Pannalal Surana

Son of a great freedom fighter and first Chief Minister of the undivided State of Punjab, Bhimsen Sachar, Rajinder Sachar had imbibed the values of our national freedom struggle. He was deeply impressed by the thoughts of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia.

While he was practicing at the bar, he also participated in organisational and agitational activities of the Socialist Party.

Being impressed by his great legal acumen, Rajinder Sachar was invited to serve as a judge of the High Court. His long career as judge and later as Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court was marked by many path breaking judgements.

On retirement, Sachar again plunged into social work. He joined the People's Union of Civil Liberties founded by the late Jayaprakash Narayan. He took up many issues. Most noteworthy among them is that of the arrest and harassment of Dr Vinayak Sen, a medical doctor with a brilliant academic career, who had gone to the rural areas of Chhattisgarh State to render medical aid to the Adivasis. The

police arrested him and booked him under draconian laws so that he was not able to get bail. Sacharji and his PUCL colleagues fought many legal battles right up to the Supreme Court and finally won his release as a free man. At the instance of Sacharji, PUCL had extended legal aid to those who were alleged to be involved in Naxalite activities. Sacharji personally and PUCL as an organisation are committed to peaceful methods of public activities. They wanted to help those innocent men and women who were falsely implicated and must be given credit for securing liberty of so many honest social workers.

Another field of Sacharji's special interest was Electoral Reforms. He succeeded in securing 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option for voters who find that none of the contesting candidates appear to qualify for their vote.

It was found that some MPs and MLAs continued to enjoy all their rights and privileges even after getting convicted by the Courts. On a move initiated by the PUCL, the Supreme Court ruled that if MPs and

MLAs are convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years, they would lose their membership of the legislative body. Further, such persons are debarred from contesting elections for the next six years.

Sacharji had been campaigning against the provision in the Companies Act which permit the corporate houses to donate huge amounts to political parties of their choice. He also advocated that a system of Proportional Representation (PR) be adopted in place of the 'first past the post' system. Sacharji had participated in the day-long Dharna at Jantar Mantar by Socialist Party (India) on 10th August 2016.

Sacharji had extended support to many popular movements like NAPM and programs to popularise Panchayati Raj.

Justice Rajender Sachar will be remembered for long for his sterling services to strengthening Indian democracy.

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*Press Release***Placing the Red Fort on Mortgage is a National Crime**

The Socialist Party considers the BJP government's recent decision to place the Red Fort on mortgage with Dalmiya business house to be a crime against the nation. The party opposes this decision of the government and, in this regard, would like to place four points before the citizens of the country for their kind consideration:

1. If the priceless resources—water, forest, land—of the country including education, health, defense, railways, etc. are to be sold into private hands, then what is the need and role of governments in the country? Are the governments in power only to contest elections with the help of uncountable amount of money collected by corrupt methods and, after winning elections, to enjoy luxurious life during and after their tenure at the cost of peoples' hard earned money?
2. Is there no opposition in the country which would raise a decisive voice against the sale of the national heritage? Is there an inherent consensus in favour of privatisation and corporate houses among the ruling and the aspiring political parties? Otherwise, why do they just issue hollow statements on the harm caused by selling off national assets and heritage to corporate houses?
3. Today, on the occasion of the Labour Day, the Socialist Party would like to state that the huge amount of money in the hands of a few corporate houses has been accumulated through the

exploitation and the loot of working classes and through corruption done in connivance with the politicians / bureaucrats.

4. The Socialist Party, which does not believe in ensnaring voters with baits of false promises and communal–caste agendas, cannot hope to be too popular during election times. Therefore, it has no political power to oppose such moves of the

government in a incisive manner.

The party has decided to hold a symbolic dharna at Gandhi Samadhi Rajghat on 3 May 2018, at 5 pm. All Indian citizens who are proud of country's national heritage and are against the government's decision are cordially invited to take part in the sit-in.

Dr. Prem Singh,
Socialist Party (India)

Letter to the Editor

In his article in Janata dated April 1, 2018, Kuldeep Nayar ji has said “In all probability, as things stand today, Modi looks good enough to returning to power.”

In my opinion, the prevailing conditions in the country do not warrant that kind of conclusion.

In the first place the farmers in almost all States are suffering due to Modi Government’s acts of commission like demonetisation, connecting Aadhar to bank accounts, ration cards etc., and acts of omission like not putting in place mechanisms to ensure implementation of guaranteeing MSP to farmers for most crops.

Student community is being put to many hardship by incessant flow of GRs by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and failures of agencies that are charged with conducting examinations and declaring results in good time.

Backward class students are not getting their stipend money for months together. The conditions that forced Rohit Vemula to commit suicide still prevail in almost all universities and schools.

The Modi Government has effected a number of amendments to labour laws, because of which labourers are being thrown out of jobs and/or being deprived of humane services conditions.

Instances of gory atrocities on women and the Dalits are hitting the headlines almost daily.

Increase in fuel prices is making things difficult for the labour and lower middle classes.

Then who would vote for Modi?

If he is banking solely on money-pots, that can also prove illusory.

Yours Sincerely,
Pannalal Surana

Is May 1968 About to Happen Again, or Be Surpassed?

Gabriel Rockhill

In anticipation of the 50th anniversary of May 1968, the Macron government had been making plans to commemorate this historic uprising by celebrating how it had purportedly contributed to the liberal “modernisation of French society”. Allied with the mass media and the ownership class, what better way for the relatively young neoliberal government to lay claim to the future than by taking over the past, using the ritualised burial rites of state-honored commemoration to spin a teleological tale according to which the legacy of ’68 was alive and well in contemporary ‘liberalisation’? According to a spokesperson for the French President, this was of course to be done “without dogmas or prejudice”, in order to show that “’68 was the time of utopias and disillusion, and we no longer truly have utopias.”

Apparently, many French students and workers disagree with this peremptory judgment. Massive uprisings have pre-empted Macron’s plans, and they continue to build momentum by directly challenging a government that projected to rule over the past as well as the future. Halting in its well-trodden tracks the politics of commemoration—which would sever ‘68 from the deep history of anti-capitalist struggles and the broad internationalism of anti-imperialism in order to put it in the service of the current world order—a radical politics of rejuvenation has risen up to challenge Macron’s ‘non-dogmatic’ anti-utopianism. Although the

international press is still largely ignoring these developments (as it did with the Nuit Debout movement in 2016), and the French mass media regularly mischaracterise them, a vast uprising is underway that is consistently growing, and there are already clear signs of a convergence of struggles.

Like other major social movements, it is impossible to identify a single beginning point. However, the student protests and occupations began early in 2018 against the Macron government’s proposed changes to the baccalauréat (the French high school diploma) and its restrictions on access to the university. To address the problem of the growing number of university students and the simultaneous reduction in the number of teaching positions, the government has chosen to exclude more students instead of investing in more education. More specifically, rather than providing more resources for a university system that is—at least in principle—open to all who complete the baccalauréat, the current administration has opted for a system of exclusion and selection that provides preferential opportunities for those from privileged backgrounds and areas. In so doing, the university would thus be made to further conform to the reigning dictates of a competitive system of social triage and vocational training.

The State’s response to student resistance has not been unlike that of Charles de Gaulle’s administration

in 1968: the way to deal with non-violent protesters and student occupiers organising peaceful general assemblies is to brutally attack them with billy clubs. Every day that goes by there are more cases of students being beaten by the French riot police and malevolently provoked to react in self-defense. On March 22, which was the same date on which the ruthless police crackdown on students occupying the University of Nanterre garnered more media attention for the ’68 movement, armed academic black shirts were unleashed on students in Montpellier under the watchful and protective eye of the French police (who assured the fascist band, which included professors, safe escort out of the building). The bloody footage and the complicity between the administration, the security staff, right-wing students and the police led to an increase in mobilisation. Meanwhile, the inquiry opened by the State has not led to the prosecution of some of the professors identified by students, and the police have been recorded harassing witnesses to encourage false testimony.

According to an interactive map published by Libération, there are now 25 cities in France where there have been university occupations, general assemblies and/or protests. Beginning in the Southwest with Toulouse, Bordeaux and Poitiers, the movement spread to Nantes, Lille, Paris, Montpellier, Grenoble and beyond. Far from simply blocking a significant percentage of France’s

73 universities, the movement has insisted on opening them, meaning seizing the means of intellectual production to hold public seminars, debates, film projections and general assemblies with thousands of people, some of which have had to move outside in order to accommodate the large crowds. In taking universities away from their neoliberal administrators, students have organised critical discussions of the Macron government, capitalism, fascism and the military assault on the 'ZAD' (see below), as well as alternative courses on political strategy, struggles in the banlieues, revolutionary history and grassroots organising. Although the violent incursions of the riot police and their fascist allies persist, forcing the students to regroup and sometimes change locations, the struggle continues unabated and is spreading. Three new attempted occupations occurred in Paris just this week (Paris 3-Censier, EHESS, Paris Nanterre), which is in addition to ongoing occupations at Paris 1 (Tolbiac and Saint-Charles), Paris 8 and Paris 4 Clignancourt. High school students have joined the movement, and more than 400 professors have denounced the government's plans as absurd and full of misleading propaganda.

In addition to the students seizing the means of intellectual production, French rail workers have announced three months of rolling strikes to protest Macron's pro-business privatisation campaign against the public sector. The latter proposes to cut worker's employment rights so that new hires would not have the same job security or retirement provisions, and he aims to transform the public railway

system (the SNCF) into a publicly listed company in what is seen as the first step toward privatisation. Participation in the strikes has been very high among train conductors (75%) and controllers (71%), and the Macron government has been constantly shifting and changing its 'reform' project, creating obscurity and dissension in the Parliament. In 1995, the former Prime Minister Alain Juppé was forced to abandon his project of changing rail staff's benefits due to strikes that paralysed France for weeks.

Striking rail workers have been collaborating with students, and their actions have been accompanied by other strikes in the public and private sectors, including garbage collectors demanding a national public service for trash collection, Air France pilots, and electrical and gas workers. There are numerous calls for coordinated actions in the near future, and a number of dates have been chosen for convergent struggles. The General Confederation of Labor (CGT), one of France's largest confederations of trade unions, has called for a general strike on April 19 in order to bring together public sector workers and many others affected by the Macron government's liberalisation projects (to which one could add his draconian immigration policy and the hardline policing powers ushered in as 'anti-terror' measures). Moreover, there is an increased mobilisation around the ongoing military-style expulsion and attempted destruction of the ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes. This autonomous 'Zone to Defend' or ZAD is a collectively run region that not only succeeded in throwing off the yoke of the French state, and its project of seizing land to build

an airport, but also established a collectively self-managed society. If the elected representatives of France are bent on a top-down war against the autonomy of the ZAD, many are asking, is it not time for a bottom-up insurrection and a ZADification of France to clear out those who seek to govern the people by eliminating governing people?

Every historical conjuncture has its own specificity, and there are, of course, plenty of important differences between France in 2018 and in 1968. With students and workers rising up across the country, however, there is a combined and growing struggle against the relentless privatisation of the world, and this raises urgent questions for the future, as well as for the past that it will have remade. The events that are currently unfolding could lead to a politics of placation in which the government stalls and then makes minor concessions in the hopes that the activists, tired out from weeks of occupation and assaults, will accept them as a symbol of success. Their stalling will also bring us closer to the dormant summer months, with the anticipation that movements often fizzle out in France around the vacation period in July and August.

There could be no better time, then, for intensifying current struggles, developing new strategies and pre-empting setbacks that have regularly occurred in the past. If the movement ends up being primarily focused on minor changes to the educational system and the public sector, or if it simply concentrates on Macron and electoral politics, the bar will certainly be set too low. If anything changes, it will only be a matter of time before similar measures return, perhaps in

a slightly different form. If, however, the project of mobilisation is one of building alternative communities of critical public education, free and ecological public transportation, as well as other collectively run social services, political organisations and autonomous councils, then we could have the beginning of a future unmoored from the stagnation of the past. By having struggles converge not only around the particular content given to the general form of capitalism in contemporary France, but around the general form itself, whose content is always shifting, it is possible to construct—as many are already doing—a new social order in which reactive resistance to particular initiatives is transformed into proactive collectivist organising

and the building of anti-capitalist communes that will persist and grow in the coming years. Mobilising all of the organisations and associations already in place—while drawing on historical experiences such as Nuit Debout, the protests against neoliberal French labor laws, the organised support of the *sans-papiers*—such a movement could also further cross-pollinate with movements abroad, developing an internationalised front of coordinated anti-capitalist communities.

It is unclear what has become of Macron's anti-utopian plans to recuperate the spirit of '68 for the purposes of liberal modernisation. Whatever becomes of them, they have already been powerfully pre-empted by a politics of rejuvenation

and transformation that many hope will outstrip '68. Much remains to be seen and done, however, and the past political education of all of those involved will now confront the immediacy of a situation in which it is forced to be actualised. The past is only truly alive in the future, after all, meaning in the future perfect that it will have become. The best way to commemorate May 1968 would not only be to rejuvenate it, bringing it back from the dead as it were, but to surpass it. Tearing it out of the mausoleum of consecration by making it into a living transformation, May will only be what it will have become in its future perfect after 2018.

Courtesy : Counterpunch

Kasganj Fact Finding Report

The dominant discourse on nationalism in the country today has narrowed down to superficial parameters and litmus test of chanting of slogans like Vande Mataram and organising aggressive bike rallies by Hindu supremacists in Muslim majority areas as a show of strength and assertion of their supremacy. This recently took place in Bhagalpur on the occasion of Ram Navami and was followed by communal violence. This is not the first and the only time such provocation was made. This is also largely the story of the violence that unfolded in Kasganj on 26 January 2018. The youth from Sankalp Foundation in Kasganj organised a bike rally on 26th January 2018 without the necessary permission and insisted on passage through a Muslim dominated area where the Muslim residents had organised a

flag hoisting event on the occasion of Republic day. In the violence that ensued, a youth called Chandan Gupta was shot and succumbed to his injury. One Naushad too was shot in his leg. Violence was orchestrated on 26, 27 and 28 January by Hindu supremacists in which shops belonging predominantly to Muslim owners were burnt down.

A fact finding team visited violence-hit Kasganj near Etah in Uttar Pradesh on 2 February 2018 and released its report to the media on 5 February. The fact finding team consisted of Irfan Engineer, Director of Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS), author and social activist, Neha Dabhade, Dy. Director of CSSS and Akram Akhtar Chowdhary, social activist, Afkar India Foundation. The team spoke to the family of Chandan Gupta, the family of Salim, shop owners in the

area where the shops were attacked and vandalised, journalists, residents in Badu Nagar, the police (SP), the Congress chief from Kasganj, Shashilata Chauhan, BSP leader Rajeev Sharma, and a businessman Anupam Sharma.

The findings of the committee very clearly point towards the communal politics that is encouraged and brewing in Uttar Pradesh and which seeks to render the Muslim community as second-class citizens. Uttar Pradesh, once known for its *ganga jamuna tehzeeb*, has today become infamous for communal violence. It has an interesting chequered political history of mobilisation and counter mobilisation around the Ram Jannabhoomi movement. The issue has been manipulated to polarise communities and project a single consolidated 'Hindu' identity,

taking in its fold Dalits and other oppressed castes by invisibilising their exploitation, for electoral benefits. There is a steady but unfortunate shift from the politics of social and economic justice to politics of communalism. The Aligarh, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar riots are some of the recent riots that took place on very large scale. Post-2014, no riots have taken place on such large scale, but there has been continuous, sub radar, low intensity violence. The issues of cow slaughter and inter religious marriages are being exploited to spread hatred and violence in different forms, including lynching. This has made the State volatile and the marginalised sections in the State like Dalits, Muslims and women very vulnerable.

Different narratives in Kasganj

There are two narratives that emerged from the interactions of the team with the different individuals. The first narrative is that of Sushil Gupta, father of the deceased Chandan Gupta. According to Sushil Gupta, Sankalp Foundation was an organisation of youth which engaged in charity activities like distribution of food, clothes and blankets to the poor. Chandan Gupta was very active in serving the poor, particularly through blood donation. He donated blood thrice and all three times to Muslim recipients, as claimed by his father. He fixed the blame for the violence in Kasganj squarely on the Muslim residents of Badu Nagar. He explained the happenings on the fateful day with the help of a video shot on that day.

He narrated that Sankalp Foundation planned a bike rally to be taken out on 26 January. He claimed that the youth were carrying Indian

flags. The rally went to Badu Nagar and there were chairs organised there at the Veer Abdul Hamid Chauraha. The youth insisted that the chairs be removed and they be given passage through the Chauraha. According to Sushil Gupta, there was no flag hoisting taking place there, since no flag hoisting takes place so late at 10 am. Pointing to one man in the video, whose name he wasn't ready to disclose, he accused him for the violence. He said there was stone pelting by the residents on the unarmed and helpless youth which forced them to abandon their vehicles and flee from the area.

In the video shown to them by Sushil Kumar, the fact finding team noticed that the youth in the rally were very aggressive and were carrying saffron flags. They were aggressively shouting slogans. There were very few Muslim residents waiting at the Veer Abdul Hamid Chauraha, and none of them had arms. The video doesn't show any attack by the Muslim residents. While Sushil Gupta refrained from blaming the whole Muslim community for the violence, he believed that some 'bad elements' from the community were responsible for the violence.

The Congress leader in Kasganj, Shashilata Chauhan attributed this violence to personal enmity between the youth from both the communities. And this fight was given a communal hue. She rued that innocent youth from both Hindu and Muslim communities had been arrested by the police. But she strongly pointed out to the speech of the BJP MP, Rajveer Singh on the evening of 26 January after the death of Chandan Gupta and how it deteriorated the atmosphere and fanned violence. Rajveer Singh said, "I myself with the force have come

amongst you. The incidence which has happened cannot be forgotten in any case. I haven't seen such kind of anger in Kasganj before this. In this incident, there's no mistake of 'our people'. This fight has happened in a preplanned fashion in which 'one of us' has died. I have gathered the information that Chandan Gupta, 'one of us', has died in this fight. The investigation of this matter would be done without in any delay."

Narrative by Muslim residents

The second narrative is that of the residents of Badu Nagar. Dr. Asif Hussain has a house at the Abdul Hamid Chauraha in Badu Nagar and the rally that day passed outside his house. He said that this was the first time a flag hoisting program was organised at the chauraha. Every year, the Muslims organise flag hoisting in schools. But this year the community wanted to demonstrate to the government and people that Muslims too hoist flags and are patriotic, in contrast to the popular stereotypes that Muslims are disloyal to India. In the past, the RSS wanted the madrasas in the State to provide video documentation to prove that they hoisted the Indian flag on Republic Day. And so, elaborate preparations were made, and one Mufti Kubeb was invited to hoist the flag at 9.30 am. School children were also invited. Chairs were arranged at the small chauraha for the audience to sit.

He also furnished several videos for the fact finding team which were essentially footage of the CCTV. It can be seen in the video that approximately at 10 am on 26 January, 60 to 70 bikes in the rally came to the chauraha and started demanding aggressively that the chairs be removed and the

rally be allowed to pass through. The organisers of the flag hoisting program requested the youth to attend the flag hoisting and assured them that after the flag hoisting, the chairs will be removed for the rally to pass. The youth in the rally were carrying saffron flags, and were aggressively shouting slogans like “Hindustan mein rehna hoga to Vande Mataram kahana hoga” and “Radhe Radhe”. The residents refused to chant these slogans and instead raised their own slogans of “Godse murdabad”. One of the youth from the bike rally pulled a stick and attacked one of the residents. The residents then threw chairs on the youth. More residents also came out in the chauraha. The youth got intimidated and fled the chauraha to regroup at Tehsil Road.

The residents noted down the registration numbers of all the bikes left behind and called the police and handed over to them the list of the bikes left behind. The police came to the chauraha after the youth had fled and removed the bikes.

Meanwhile, the youth regrouped at Tehsil Road. They were armed with pistols and sticks. They started attacking the Muslims on the road and vandalised their shops. In the ensuing violence, Chandan Gupta received bullet shots and one Naushad was shot in the leg.

When the team visited Veer Abdul Hamid Chauraha, it saw how small the chauraha is. The roads in Badu Nagar leading to and in and around Veer Abdul Hamid Chauraha are narrow lanes, not broader than 8 feet. These lanes are flanked with open sewages on both the sides and have small shops and houses on either side with their stairs and platforms jutting out on to the street. The lanes are so narrow that

it's impossible for two motorcycles to cross each other from opposite directions. One single bike can pass at any given point of time after great manoeuvring with the pedestrians and other obstacles. In the best of times, the bikes can navigate at a speed of less than 10 kmph with frequent breaks to negotiate with the people walking on the lane. With chairs arranged for the flag hoisting, the lanes were temporarily blocked. Any prudent citizen wouldn't want to ride on bikes through these lanes in a rally even without the chairs temporarily kept there. The only purpose behind demanding passage on bikes through these narrow lanes can be to create mischief or to provoke the Muslim residents. The other probable reason can be the arrogance that the Muslim residents of the area mean nothing and the Hindu youth can ride rough shod over them, to demonstrate that they wield superior strength / power as it is their government which is in power.

Role of the Police

The role of the police has been shameful. The police action was biased and served the political agenda of the ruling regime in UP. The SP of Kasganj made an irresponsible statement saying that it was not possible to control the riot since there are never as many police personnel as rioters! And thus he shirked away the responsibility of the security forces to contain the violence. The police also dismissed the communal angle to this violence by blaming anti-social elements for the violence, and in this way protecting the wrong doers. The police complicity in the riots is on many accounts.

Firstly the police, in spite of

having prior information about the rally, didn't take any steps to stop it. Police conceded that Sankalp Foundation didn't have the permission to take out this rally. The shops and other property belonging to Muslim owners, a mosque and hawker stalls were attacked for three days in different places in Kasganj. The police could have taken strict action against the youth since they didn't have the necessary permission and their bikes were seized. The registration numbers of the bikes could have easily led the police to the perpetrators of the violence. But the police released the property used in the crime (bikes) without pressing any charges!

A reading of the FIRs filed show deliberate lapses on the part of the police which will deny justice to the victims. In the FIRs filed by the Hindus against Muslims, names of the accused are mentioned. However, no names have been mentioned in the FIRs where Muslims are victims. In fact, the names of the Muslim owners or the names of the shops which were attacked are not named in the FIR, making it very vague for any proper investigation and prosecution.

Most of the arrested are innocent Muslims who were arbitrarily arrested by the police. Those arrested are innocent and happened to be on the road when the police were making arrests—some had come out to shut their shops after the violence or some were buying daily supplies like milk. One of the arrested is a Muslim youth with 70 percent disability. One is a senior citizen whose wife passed away while he was incarcerated. The sections slapped against them are stringent like murder, rioting, etc., while there are very few Hindus

named and all the other accused are “unknown”. However, the arrested Hindus are also innocent and mere scapegoats, perhaps under political pressure to save the real culprits. The real culprits who were in the rally are absconding; they have been neither named nor arrested. The police refused to take the FIRs of the Muslim residents and thus they are compelled to send their complaints in forms of application to the courts.

Salim who is the main accused in the case of Chandan Gupta’s death has a strong alibi. His brother Shamim showed the fact finding team a video which shows that Salim who is reputed businessman in Kasganj was in a flag hoisting programme in a school at around 10 am on 26 January. The other shopkeepers vouch for his good character. It is important to note that Sushil Gupta filed the FIR about his son’s death after more than 13 hours of his death, naming 20 Muslim residents including Salim, without even being present there! This indicates that there is a strong possibility that he was tutored by persons having vested interests and the death is being used as a political tool to implicate innocent citizens. Instead of taking Chandan Gupta to the hospital after being shot, which would have been the natural reaction to save him, he was taken to the police station first. Yet the FIR was not filed at that time.

Conclusions / Findings

There are many lessons to take from this incident of communal violence. The incident is reflective of the dominant discourse in the country where Hindu supremacists, due to the political patronage they enjoy, are openly displaying their arrogance and power. The bike rally

through a majority Muslim area was a demonstration and reminder that the Hindu supremacists and their ideology have legitimacy with the coming to power of the BJP. The aim is to render the Muslims as second class citizens and make them submit to the BJP political ideology of exclusion, inequality and hatred. The State is criminalising the victims and protecting the perpetrators and thus encouraging this violence and hatred. The fact finding team recommends that investigation be made into the role of the speech made by Rajveer Singh in this

violence. Compensation should be given to the victims in adherence to international standards. And lastly, that civil society organisations collectively create platforms for dialogue and better understanding between communities. The team was relieved to see that this violence hasn’t deepened the communal divide and polarisation. The Hindu community in Kasganj had sympathy for the Muslims and their losses and condemned the violence. All is not lost in Kasganj!

– Centre for Study of Society
and Secularism

Invitation

Convention to Celebrate Foundation Day of Congress Socialist Party and Release of Draft Socialist Manifesto for 2019

Mavlankar Hall, New Delhi • May 17, 2018 • 10 am to 5 pm

Organised by:

We the Socialist Institutions (Hum Samajwadi Sansthaeyin)
and Socialist Manifesto Group

Dear All,

As a part of the National Campaign launched by We the Socialist Institutions on 'Save the Constitution, Save the Nation', a meeting of socialist thinkers and leaders was held at HMS office on April 20, 2018, under the Chairpersonship of Harbhajan Singh Sidhu.

At this meeting, it was decided to organise a Convention in New Delhi to celebrate the Foundation Day of Congress Socialist Party on May 17, 2018. It was decided that on this occasion, a draft SOCIALIST MANIFESTO would be released. Various socialist thinkers and experts from across the country are being consulted for drafting this manifesto.

The Convention would be organised under the banner of We the Socialist Institutions and Socialist Manifesto Group.

We, on behalf of 'We the Socialist Institutions', invite you to attend this Convention being organised in Delhi. The detailed programme would be sent out in due course. This is just to inform you in advance so that you can book your dates and make your travel plans to attend the Convention.

Invitation issued on behalf of:

We the Socialist Institutions and Socialist Manifesto Group
Dr. G.G. Parikh, Prof. Rajkumar Jain, Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, Vijay Pratap, Arun Srivastava, Dr. Prem Singh, Qurban Ali, Manjoo Mohan, Dr. Anil Thakur, Amar Singh Amar, Rakesh Kumar, Dr. Sunilam, Subhash Ware, Neeraj Jain and Guddi.

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**City Montessori School
Example Of Everything
That Is Wrong With
Private Schools**
Sandeep Pandey

**Golden Jubilee of
Bohra Reform Movement
in Udaipur**
Irfan Engineer

Colouring the Rape Cases
Pannalal Surana

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Relevance of Jinnah

Kuldip Nayar

The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is not just a place of learning. It was in the forefront of a movement for the demand of Pakistan and still leans towards what is considered beneficial to the millat. A photo of Mohammad Ali Jinnah on the wall of Kenney Hall, the most prestigious place in AMU campus, is no surprise. It was there even before partition and it continues to be there all these years. But what amazes me is its disappearance on May 1 and reappearance on May 3!

True, it was the handiwork of a fanatic BJP member. But he should retract his steps within two days and put back the photo where it had hung since the time before partition looks extraordinary. Perhaps the person concerned was admonished by the BJP high command which is trying its best to woo Muslim voters at the Karnataka state election.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also kept the polls in mind when he addresses different rallies in the country. Once in a while he tends to make remarks like there should be electricity at cremation grounds as is the case at burial grounds. But this is to assure the Hindu audience that the

BJP has not strayed from the party's philosophy of Hindu Rashtra.

No doubt, the majority of Hindus—they are 80 percent in India—tilt towards what is known as Hindutva. But I do not think that this is something long lasting. Hindus and Muslims have lived together for centuries. They would continue to do so despite the hot winds of Hindutva blowing at present. By temperament, India is a pluralistic society. It would stay that way although at times it looks like going the Hindu way; there always a spoil-play group which opposes everything worthwhile for the sake of opposition.

Take the case of India-Pakistan relations. There are elements which are bent on negating every effort towards conciliation and rebuff steps that help promote good relations between the two countries. Some years ago, the Pakistanis themselves took the initiative to rename the Shadman Chowk in Lahore and the gesture was very much appreciated in India. In fact, the renaming of the chowk gave birth to the idea of honouring heroes of the pre-partition days.

I recall that after celebrating Bhagat Singh's birthday in March some years ago, a delegation of Pakistanis participated in a gathering at Amritsar in April to recall the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy which had Hindus and Muslims as martyrs. So much enthusiasm was created that preparations were afoot to hail the sacrifices of those who were part of the Indian National Army and the naval uprising in 1946. The two challenges to the British, even when the Hindus and Muslims were divided, indicated that when it came to a third party, both sides were willing to join hands to thwart it.

This is more or less what Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, had said when he came to the Law College at Lahore in 1945 when I was a student. To my question as to what would be the stand of Pakistan if a third power attacked India, he said straightaway that the Pakistani soldiers would fight by the side of Indian soldiers to defeat the enemy. It is another matter that military dictator General Mohammad Ayub Khan did not send any help to India when it was attacked by China in 1962.

Bhagat Singh was only 23 when he went to the gallows fighting against the British rulers. He had no politics other than the politics of sacrificing one's life and freeing India from bondage. I was surprised to know that there were as many as 14 applications against renaming the Shadman Chowk. This was the same roundabout where a scaffold was erected to hang Bhagat Singh and his two colleagues, Rajguru and Sukhdev.

Jinnah's name is associated with partition. Was he alone to blame? When I talked to Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, at his place in

London in the early 90s, he said that then Prime Minister Clement Richard Atlee was keen that India and Pakistan should have something in common. Mountbatten tried for that but Jinnah said that he did not trust the Indian leaders. He had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan which envisaged a weak centre. But India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said that all would depend on the decision of the Constituent Assembly which was already meeting in New Delhi.

Differences between the two sides only accentuated with the passage of time. In the 1940s, when the Muslim League had adopted a resolution for the establishment of Pakistan, partition looked inevitable. Both sides were not facing facts on the ground when they rejected the idea of transfer of population. People themselves did it, Hindus and Sikhs coming to this side and Muslims going to the other side. The rest is history.

That was in 1947. Today, the Muslims in India, approximately 17 crore, do not matter in the affairs

of India. True, they have the voting rights and the country is ruled by the Constitution which gives one vote to one person. But they have lost their say in decision making. What Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had said before partition has come true. He warned the Muslims that they may feel insecure in the country because their number was small but they can proudly say that India belonged as much to them as it did to the Hindus. Once Pakistan was established, the Hindus would be able to tell the Muslims that they have got their share and should go to Pakistan.

Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel were able to keep India pluralistic after partition. But the line drawn on the basis of religion is what haunts everybody today. The growing importance of BJP is because pluralism has weakened. Secularism needs to be strengthened so that every community and every part of the country feels that it is equal in the affairs of the country.

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When I look back at my life and the people who have influenced my mental make up- Sudhakar Prabhudesai comes up as one who subconsciously shaped my non conformist-idealist frame of mind. His uncompromising commitment to socialist ideology and total detachment to worldly possessions was one admirable quality that I found fascinating since childhood. He had an appearance of an ascetic, intellect of a rationalist and nature of a kind hearted person. I could never be as authentic as him but I always admired his astute intellect. He was not swayed by short term opportunistic political actions and always was available for a scathing critic of his own colleagues. In Sudhakar Prabhudesai's passing I have lost another link to the idealism I grew up with. My sincere condolences to his wife Smita Gandhi and to his colleagues at the Janata Weekly.

—Uday Dandvate

*Obituary***My Conscience Keeper Sudhakar**

The end came, not suddenly, but creeping, giving enough warning to the family and friends that it was near. A few days ago, he lost control over his bladder, developed Parkinsonism like symptoms and his response to stimuli got blurred. It was a warning, but the doctor hopefully suggested that it could be due to electrolyte imbalance and he was taken to the nearby hospital. The theory proved wrong and his doctor, alarmed, ordered MRI and it became clear that the cancer had spread all over, including his brain, and it was the latter that was responsible for the loss of consciousness. When it was realised that nothing will help, he was brought home, virtually to die. He did not live even for 24 hours at home. The end came at 2.15 a.m. in the morning of Tuesday, May 8. Though most wanted to but did not say that he was relieved, the fact that he was beyond pain did not matter. He had no pain, actually the family and his friends were in pain. Yes, the end was a sort of relief.

He wanted his body to be donated to a medical college and the family readily agreed to his wishes and donated the body. And that brought to an end the two year long struggle against cancer, a disease which is all too well known for a one way ticket to death. With his consent, his wife decided to give the best treatment that the medical science could offer, knowing full well that it may not help. A search for a good oncologist led him to one of the best in Mumbai and the latter took up the case. The treatment appeared to help, at least

initially, and he got some relief. And to prove that he was a bit better, he went off and on to the Mouj printing press to personally supervise the production of Janata. He would spend hours in the press, whether needed or not. This acted as a sort of balm to his soul which needed some reason to live. But soon he found that his body would not take the strain and he gave up. His friends and the family did their best to make him comfortable, keep him cheerful, needed and occupied. His eyes had already been compromised because of his indiscretions, but the painful knees due to osteoarthritis, were replaced and he had felt younger, better, confident. But this relief was short lived as it was discovered immediately after that he had cancer and a new journey in his life began which ended on May 8.

Sudhakar was a product of those socialist days when youngsters would drop in at the socialist offices and offer their services, often for nothing. This is how he came to Janata decades ago. He was not a trained journalist but he painstakingly picked up the ropes and did justice to his work. He was not alone. Earlier, a young journalist, trained in Paris, no less, came to Janata, and joined it at the paltry sum of Rs. 50/-. And he worked till he died and never asked for more money than offered. In the pre-independence days and also in the post-independence socialist heydays, Rs. 50/-, were given to the full timers. And there was yet another. A retired police clerk offered

his voluntary services to Janata. He would not take travelling expenses even when forced to do so and his humility was so touching that even with painful knees, he would get up whenever anyone approached him. That he was senior to all in the office did not matter to him. And there was a senior journalist who helped Janata and trained others in his after office hours. Getting volunteers for the socialist movement was not difficult in those days; you did not have to look for them. They came calling, they came uninvited. This was the attraction of socialism in those days.

Sudhakar was a perfectionist and though he brought out Janata week after week, he was not happy with his product and became so dissatisfied after some years that he would not have his name printed anywhere in it. And yet he brought it out diligently. He would of course say off and on that it should be closed, made a fortnightly or a monthly. The argument that the socialist movement will revive someday and the paper, launched by socialist stalwarts, would come handy when that happened, did not appeal to him. It is only when the Janata became the instrument to unite socialists three years ago that he conceded, though grudgingly, that it should be kept going. He was a stickler for rules and will not tolerate even the slightest of irregularity and would chide his colleagues, sometimes brutally for small infringements. He easily became my conscience keeper, perhaps of others too.

At the meetings of the Trust,

his carping criticism of Janata often hurt, but it was easy to realize that what he said arose out of his belief that the weekly should be an elitist one. There were always people who suggested that it should be for ordinary socialist workers, but that did not appeal to him. At the last meeting of the trust which he attended at Tara, he once again insisted that his resignation should be accepted. He was a non-person, he said. He had no Aadhar card or anything that gave him an identity. His name in official documents and what he chose to write when necessary were different. The trustees did not agree to accept his resignation.

Though he did not accept Janata as his product, he spent many hours in the office, even slept there but that was when the office was in Fort, in Mumbai and the building – National House - had not collapsed. Janata was his karmabhoomi as also his alternate home.

Sudhakar was fortunate. His wife, a professor in Mumbai University, took care of him so well and with such commitment that the pain due to the disease became bearable. To many it appeared that for her he had become the very purpose of living. Despite the knowledge that it was an incurable disease, she kept hoping, not for a miracle, but for that singular chance which a rare cancer patient gets. It did not happen is another matter. And he was also fortunate in his friends. They visited him, kept him informed about what was happening in the country as elsewhere and gave him the intellectual company he needed. Despite his failing eyesight, his table was full of books, both in Marathi as well as in English and

he scanned through them avidly. A youngster who had come to Janata to serve the socialist cause became, over a period of time, the centre of a group of intellectuals who stood by him till the end.

Ever since he was diagnosed as suffering from cancer, his home in Navi Mumbai, a row house, became a place of pilgrimage for me. I went to meet him and his wife, week after week, not to discuss his ailment, but to inform him of the new initiatives, I and some other socialists were taking. Since May '14, fighting the RSS had become an obsession with me and my fevered mind started throwing up one after another new ideas, but the focus was always the unity of socialists at the grass root level. Meetings of socialists followed in terms of attendance, participation and enthusiasm. It

should be admitted, however, that some socialist colleagues were not amused. His endorsement for such activities to me was an emotional necessity. Our bond was such that I got it, though not without critical comments. He did not question the need, he was not sure of my capacity or the capacity of those with me. I could not tell him that the socialists in post '46 days had planned every move in a long term perspective and achieved much of what they wanted to, for fear of the retort that they were giants. The main task of socialists today is to unite to take on communalism, creeping undeclared Emergency and neo-liberalism. This work will go on and I hope it will succeed, but he will not be there to see. A sad thought.

- GGP

City Montessori School Example Of Everything That Is Wrong With Private Schools

Sandeep Pandey

The City Montessori School of Lucknow figures in the Guinness Book of World Records for largest enrollment of 55,000 in a school, although it is not one school but has 18 different branches spread throughout the city. Its founder Jagdish Gandhi has won the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for promoting the universal values of education for peace and tolerance. He also preaches on TV channels. The school organises many national and international level events including an assembly of mostly retired judges from across

the world to promote the idea of World Government. Its academic performance is good in classes X and XII Board examinations as it weeds out the weaker students at Class VIII stage and shifts them to other schools. CMS is an example of possibly every kind of violation of norms that are required to be fulfilled for running private schools.

By not admitting 18, 55 and 296 children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 respectively under section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act 2009

for free education from classes I to VIII, Jagdish Gandhi has betrayed his anti-poor or anti-humanitarian character.

The Indira Nagar branch of CMS doesn't have the required No Objection Certificate from Education Department and Certificate of Land from Revenue Department to obtain affiliation with the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations but has still somehow managed to obtain the ICSE affiliation. Legal notice has been served on CISCE.

This branch has been built without approval of design of building, without permission on a residential land, a demolition order against which is pending for the last 21 years. One of the three plots on which the school is run belongs to R.B. Pathak, a retired IAS officer, whose house was demolished to build a four storey school building without his permission. The school claimed 600 as its student strength while obtaining the Fire Department NOC, claims 1,100 students on its website, and 1,731 in the court of law when obtaining stay against demolition.

Only a few of its 18 branches have NOC from the Fire Department, a mandatory requirement; the remaining functioning without it.

The Gomti Nagar Extension branch of CMS, its latest, also has a case against illegal construction pending in Lucknow Development Authority.

The Jopling Road branch runs from a property belonging to the Bisen family. In 1982, late VNS Singh Bisen gave the building on a monthly rent to CMS. Before his demise in 1992, he had already initiated a legal case for eviction of CMS after serving a notice to it

terminating the rental agreement. The eldest son of the family Dr. Sunil Bisen, a neurosurgeon, is still fighting the legal battle in the District Court. In 2015, the High Court issued a directive for early disposal of the case within a year and half. It is more than a year since that period expired. A court appointed official has declared the building unsafe but District Magistrate's office gave permission to Jagdish Gandhi last year to carry out repairs without informing Dr. Bisen. In 1982 monthly fees at school was Rs 50. Today it has increased by a hundred times. In the same time period, the rent has increased from Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,200, which is deposited in court now. The Bisen family is deprived of its property as well as an appropriate rent for over three decades now. It is unclear on what kind of land certificate the Basic Education Officer has accorded recognition to this branch?

The most outrageous revelation is from the Chowk branch of CMS. Its Principal for close to 35 years, Sadhna Choodamani, who adopted her husband's surname Bedi after marriage, has issued receipts on the letterhead of CMS of large amounts against loans from parents and former students, taken by school on interest rates upward of 12%. Ritesh Agarwal says his father had been giving loan to the school since 1992-93 when he studied in class II at this branch. Total deposits of his family to date are Rs 61 lakh. Rajesh Agarwal's family has given loans totalling to Rs 25 lakh, Vibhor Baijal's family Rs 9 lakh and N.C. Rastogi Rs 7 lakh. Including the teachers who can't speak out for fear of losing their jobs, the total amount collected by the school is estimated to be in the range of

Rs 25-40 crore. Sadhna Bedi was expelled from the school on June 29, 2017 on charges of financial bungling, and now Jagdish Gandhi says that since Bedi took away all the money, people should file a case against her. The school submitted a complaint to Director General of Police but never registered a FIR against Sadhna Bedi for misuse of its letterhead. People who are familiar with the functioning of CMS know that even small decisions like giving concession in fees to a student or deciding which caterer will serve tea or meals in any programme is taken by Jagdish Gandhi himself. How is it possible that receipts of lakhs of rupees were being issued by the Principal on official letterhead without his knowledge? Jagdish Gandhi is probably part of the scam but has schemed to make Sadhna Bedi a scapegoat. He has most likely struck a deal with Sadhna and her husband Amarjot Singh Bedi, Principal of prestigious Colvin Taluqdars' College of Lucknow, that in exchange for Sadhna accepting the blame he'll provide legal help to her. But according to the Contract Act Law, Jagdish Gandhi bears all the responsibility for the entire money involved in this scam, and CMS will have to repay all the lenders.

CMS was running a bank from its Chowk branch premises without any permission from the RBI. It'll also attract charge of income tax violation.

It appears that Jagdish Gandhi has mastered the art of encroaching upon land belonging to others, building illegally without permission or various NOCs, obtaining dubious recognition/affiliation and running schools with a mercenary objective. It is only a matter of conjecture as to what kind of values children would

be imbibing from this school?

The tragedy is that if and when action is finally taken against the illegal operations of CMS, which is of course extremely difficult as

Jagdish Gandhi is known to extend favours to influential people—officials, people’s representatives, judges and journalists—by offering concession in fees to their children

or hiring ladies in their families as teachers, and the school if forced to shut down, it would jeopardise the future of thousands of students.

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Golden Jubilee of Bohra Reform Movement in Udaipur

Irfan Engineer

Islam in popular perception is a very orthodox, conservative and even fundamentalist religion which brooks no change. Sections of Muslim community are not entirely free from the blame for this perception. They resist reasonable changes in accordance with changing times. However, the fact is that there have been many reform movements within the Muslim community in India and other countries. Struggle to understand the Quranic message has always been an ongoing process and the challenge has been taken up by every generation. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who established the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College which now is Aligarh Muslim University, Maulana Shibli Numani who was a contemporary of Sir Syed, Maulana Mumtaz Ali who wrote extensively on rights of women in Islam, the great poet philosopher Iqbal and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad are some names that come to mind.

Bohra Reform Movement in Udaipur

The Bohra Reform movement in Udaipur will be completing its Golden Jubilee in 2020. The reform movement under the aegis of Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community, has commenced the Golden Jubilee celebrations and the

inaugural function was on 29 April 2018.

Dawoodi Bohras are a sub-sect of Shias and follow the High Priest whose office is known as Dai ul-Mutlaq or one who summons to faith. Dawoodi Bohras are made to believe that the Dai is owner of their mind, body, soul and property. Every Bohra is administered an oath of allegiance to the Dai, which is called as misaq. The oath administered is worse than a charter of slavery. The Nathwani Commission Report has translated the oath of allegiance. One of its clauses states that the follower would accept the order of the Dai in all things. The follower would love those whom Dai loves and be enemy of those with whom Dai is hostile and there will be no contact with him/her openly or secretly in any form whatsoever. The oath further enjoins the follower to spend her/his life and property in the cause of the Dai who is the master of life. If a person breaks the oath, all his possessions, including movables, cash, house, utensils, jewels, ornaments, carriages, horses, cattle, milch cows, she buffaloes, slaves and all worldly materials become unlawful to her/him and are liable to be looted.

Bohras of Udaipur wanted to encourage modern education

in English language for their advancement. Members of the community registered Bohra Youth Association to give scholarships to encourage members of the community to undertake modern education. This triggered off confrontation between the members of the community and the Pontiff who was deeply suspicious of the effects of modern education. He thought that would weaken his following. The Pontiff asked office bearers of the Bohra Youth Association to wind up the organisation as the same was without his permission. Bohra community is populated in four Municipal wards of Udaipur. In the Municipal elections in the year 1970, the local Bohra priest recommended four persons for nomination by the Congress as their official candidates. However, these candidates were unpopular among the Bohras. Four youth leaders who worked for the community and were very popular contested elections as independents against the candidates recommended by the local priest and they inflicted a crushing defeat on the local priest’s candidates.

The Bohras of Udaipur have taken two more steps for the welfare of the community. First, they established a Cooperative Bank—The Udaipur Urban Cooperative

Bank—to meet the financial needs of the community. The Bank was well managed and was popular among the community. The second step was electing a committee for management of community affairs, including community properties and funds. The Pontiff did not like his followers running the institutions democratically. He was used to nominating his henchmen to run the affairs of the community in the manner he pleased and to maximise financial gains for himself and his large extended family. The henchmen would have their own personal interests in the community property and would whisper into the ears of the Pontiff's minions accordingly. The Pontiff would grant audience to henchmen as they would facilitate the Pontiff's visits to Udaipur and ensure that he would collect maximum funds from the followers. Thus Pontiff and his henchmen would ensure they took care of each other's interests and in the process ensured that the followers were duly submissive.

The Pontiff issued firmans dissolving the elected committee to manage the affairs of the community halls and property (called jamaat) and nominated a committee with his own henchmen. He further called upon the leaders of the Bohra Youth Association (BYA)—Ghulam Hussain Manager and Abid Ali Adeeb—to dissolve the Bank as well as the BYA on the grounds that prior permission was not sought from the Pontiff to establish these institutions. The leaders of the reform movement refused. Their plea was that no permission of the priest was required in secular affairs of the followers. When the popular leaders of the reform movement refused to comply with the Pontiff's firmans, the Pontiff

and his henchmen attacked the members of the community inside one of the most revered shrines of the community in Galiakot, about 75 kms from Udaipur. Large number of Bohra women were also attacked and molested inside the shrine. When the women appealed to the Pontiff, believing that the attacks on them were without his knowledge, the Pontiff looked the other way. That day the women became strong supporters of the reform movement. The Pontiff resorted to social boycott of the reformists and barred any Bohra from maintaining any contact directly or indirectly with the reformists. He refused to solemnise marriages of reformist Bohras, and barred their entry into any mosque, community hall or shrine of the community. Despite all the atrocities and oppression of the Pontiff, who often also invoked his political influence and used his influence with the local State machinery to harass them, the reformists have stayed their course and remain strong.

Achievements of the Reform movement in 50 years

Fifty years is a long time for any movement to have sustained. In itself this is an incredible achievement. During the struggle to resist oppression of the Bohra Pontiff, the reformists succeeded in retaining the Jamat Khana, three mosques and right to pray in half portion of a fourth mosque, though the responsibility to maintain the fourth mosque also falls on the reformists. The mosques are maintained by the Jamaat democratically. Regular elections are held and well contested. Campaigning for Jamaat elections are not only on the basis of credibility of the candidates as to their honesty and dedication to

public service, but also along lines of religious perspectives. Debates on religious perspectives ensures that religious doctrines are not imposed from the top but the learned from the community are involved in debates and in evolving understanding of Dawoodi Bohra religious doctrines. The understanding of the religion and religious tenets among the reformists is therefore more as compared to the blind followers of the Pontiff. Most followers of the Pontiff merely follow his orders without understanding. This culture of blindly following has been consciously and systematically inculcated by the Pontiff. This enables the Pontiff to arbitrarily enforce behaviour to ensure that his establishment (also called as kothar) rakes in moolah and no one is supposed to ask any questions.

The arbitrary firman issued and enforced by the kothar include compulsory subscription of tiffin boxes by all Bohra houses. The food is so bad that all Bohras have resisted receiving the tiffin boxes. Kothar enforces burqas for women and saayo (typical long white dress) for men along with beard and cap. These days the kothar is entering every home to inspect toilets and enforce that Indian toilet pots are installed in place of western ones. Much before Aadhar cards were issued by the Government of India, kothar issued smart cards which records how often one has attended mosques to listen to sermons which are more about praises and narrations of the greatness and magical powers of the Pontiff and have very little about Allah and his messenger and one of the most revered religious imams, Imam Hussain.

While the kothar coercively collects religious taxes from the

followers, the Bohra reformists in Udaipur depend on voluntary contributions of the members of the community. However the voluntary contribution is enough to maintain the mosques, jamaat khana, two schools, one sports training institution and a well equipped medical centre with various equipments. The Udaipur Urban Coop. Bank is one of best managed cooperative banks in the country and has received awards for its performances.

During the recent inauguration of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the reform movement, when I asked women what difference the reform movement made in their lives, and whether they were willing to give an oath of allegiance to the Pontiff, they assertively said no. They said they were very happy with their freedom and pitied their counterparts in kothar who were coerced in so many ways to follow the numerous diktats of the Pontiff and kothar. They could wear the clothes they liked, educate themselves, take up jobs and livelihoods, participate in management of the community affairs, etc.

Challenges

However, there are many challenges ahead for the reformists. The foremost challenge is nurturing new leadership to carry the baton of reforms. Reform is not a one time event but an ongoing process as frontiers of knowledge develop. Of course reforms are within the limits set by Allah, namely, treating all human beings as equal, loving all creations of Allah and dealing with everyone justly. To establish a just society and struggle for justice is one of the duties cast on all faithful. Pursuit of knowledge and truth is another duty enjoined on them.

The old leadership which fought for their freedom 50 years ago has to educate the younger generation about the history of the reform movement, which is sadly wanting. The younger generation has taken advantage of and breathed in free air but are unaware of the sacrifices made by the older generation. Lack of awareness may mean losing the gains of the reform movement out of carelessness. Kothar is trying its best to break the movement, luring reformists with all kinds of deceptive sops. The movement has to produce new visionaries like Asghar Ali Engineer.

Women have been a strong backbone of the movement. I have rarely seen social movements in which women continue to participate in equal numbers. There is no reformist function in which women's participation is less than men. However, the leaders of the movement haven't given them due importance, such as including women in the leadership and in decision making. As a result, women's issues aren't the focus of the reform movement as much as they should be. Though one sees women's participation in the programmes organised by the reformists, they continue to be relegated to traditional roles within their families and suffer discrimination and exclusion. Triple talaq in one sitting is neither practiced nor is it accepted as irreversible divorce within Dawoodi Bohras. Polygamy too is not practiced and is discouraged. However, practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely prevalent and the reformists have not yet officially taken up the issue decisively. The manner in which iddat (period of 4 months and 10 days after death of husband or three months after divorce, when a

woman is not supposed to remarry) is practiced makes life of a woman in iddat worse than hell. She is virtually isolated and not supposed to see the face of or talk to any male who is not within the prohibited degree of matrimonial relations, including a child. She cannot see television or peep out of the window or look at the sky. Reformist need to include women in their leadership and address these gender issues. It will increase the backing of women for the reform movement and will strengthen the movement.

The reformists need to set up religious institutions where Islamic studies and research are undertaken in order to understand the Quranic message in the present context.

The reformists also need to maintain the existing institutions—the mosques, jamaat khana, medical centre, cooperative bank, schools—and continuously modernise them, making them world class. It is easier said than done, particularly because of limited resources. However, if we have the vision, we should reach there some day.

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Colouring the Rape Cases

Pannalal Surana

At the press conference on 13th April 2018, Meenakshi Lakhi, national spokesperson of BJP, said, "One Zakir Hussain aged 19, and two boys of 13 had gang-raped a minor girl in Nagaon in Assam, but none of the secularist parties or any of the candle-march experts had uttered a word of protest about that. But there were loud protests about Unnao and Kathua incidents because the suspects therein are Hindus."

What kind of logic or concern about human rights compelled her to look at heinous rape cases in such partisan manner is best known to the lady or her party brethren.

It is very saddening to note that somehow there is a spurt in cases of atrocities against women in the past few months. Some of them are published in local or regional press while some of them might not see the light of the day. All normal human beings feel ashamed of such instances. Human rights activists do try to follow those cases and help in one way or another the victims and their families. About the incident referred to by Smt Lakhi, proper notice was taken by the regional press. What is noteworthy is that after the matter came to the notice of the parents of the victim, her father lodged an FIR with the police who took prompt action in rushing the girl to the medical college hospital at Guwahati. But unfortunately the girl could not be saved because the burn injuries were far too severe. The police also arrested the three suspects within a couple of days and all the neighbours, both Muslims and Hindus, extended support to

the family.

Why the incidents at Unnao and Kathua attracted wide publicity?

At Unnao, one Surendra Singh, a BJP MLA, had raped a woman 260 days before the matter attracted attention of the national press. The woman was residing just behind the house of the MLA. She belonged to a poor family, was married and had two children but was of age below 18. Her father had gone to the police station to lodge a complaint. The police did not record it. Instead, he was severely beaten by the supporters of the MLA who had rushed to the PS. The person died a few days later. Thereafter the victim woman declared that she would immolate herself in front of CM's residence. That became headlines in the media. Instead of allowing the law to take its course, another BJP MLA said that all the entire story was politically motivated to damage the image of Surendra Singh. In defence of his brother MLA, he advanced an argument saying that no man would rape a mother of two children. Surendra Singh himself said that as the lady belonged to a lowly caste, how could he touch her? That invited loud protests. So Surendra Singh staged a melodrama. Accompanied by 40-50 supporters, he visited the residence of the SP at about 11 o'clock at night and told the media there that since some are calling him a bhagoda, he had visited the SP's place on his own, but as the police was not arresting him, he was going back home. But public pressure snowballed, as a result

of which the CM handed over the matter to CBI who arrested Surendra Singh.

What has happened at Kathua is much more horrible. While a Bakarwal girl of 8 was looking after the sheep that were grazing in a lonely place, a retired government servant abetted by two policemen forcibly took her away. All the three raped her and then killed her and threw her body in the nearby jungle. The body was recovered a few days later and an FIR was lodged. Many BJP activists, including two ministers in the Mehbooba Mufti's government started saying that respectable Hindus were being wrongfully framed and so they should not be arrested. The Bar Council of Jammu even passed a resolution asking the police not to take action against the named suspects. That was too much. Apart from public protests, the Supreme Court of India took suo moto action and asked the police to proceed with its investigation and arrests. But the BJP cohorts continued to say that Hindus of Jammu are unnecessarily being defamed. The President of Madhya Pradesh BJP went so far as to say that it was all a part of a Pakistani conspiracy to defame not only Jammu's Hindus but the whole Indian nation.

Unnao and Kathua got so much of public glare because the BJP, instead of treating the incidents as crimes cognizable under the IPC, gave such vicious twists to these unfortunate incidents of human rights failures. How can religion or caste of a victim and of the offenders

matter in such cases. They should be treated as offences and be dealt with severely.

Meenakshi Lekhi would do well to introspect a little and persuade her party colleagues not to be so frivolous.

When the matter became too hot, the Modi Government rushed an ordinance prescribing death penalty

in a case where the rape victim is a minor. Many knowledgeable persons, including the Delhi High Court, have questioned the wisdom of that action. As per the records of the National Crimes Bureau, rate of conviction in such matters is only 3%. It is observed that in cases where minors are raped, generally the offenders are family members

or close acquaintances. Obviously, there will not be any witnesses who will come forward to give evidence in such cases.

All of us should realise that such cases cannot be treated in a routine matter. What needs to be done is to change the mindset of the males towards women.

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Fight Against Treason Call of Hindu Rashtra by BJP

Justice Rajindar Sachar

The results of the UP State Assembly elections have come as a shock to all parties including the pollsters. The appointment of Yogi Adityanath as the Chief Minister of UP is the worst outcome. I feel that it requires all political parties, the secular parties and the Leftists (I am using these words loosely because unfortunately the meanings of the terms have become quite barren), to come close to each other.

I am mentioning some items which all of us could take up, as these have no party monopoly. Of course, my suggestions are very tentative and can be finalised at a separate meeting of all parties, of the Leftist parties, trade unions. This is necessary because the BJP Government is determined to dismantle the public sector, the sheet-anchor for a socialist society.

- A. Minimum of 30 per cent Income Tax on those with higher incomes, including the Corporate Sector.
- B. Introduction of Inheritance Tax to reduce gross inequality in society; even the conservative

Governor of the Reserve Bank is suggesting it.

- C. Disclose in public the names of big defaulters of public sector banks, the total amount being Rs 8 lakh crores. Why should they be shielded, when they are endangering public interest and the economy?
- D. Prohibit any election funding by the corporate sector even in the guise of separate electoral trusts formed by the corporate sector.

I am also suggesting some other items that can be taken up in the programme for action immediately:

- Revival of women's reservation in State Legislatures and Parliament.
- Fight against the government's misuse of perverting the Lok Sabha Speaker's power to certify certain legislations as Money Bill in order to avoid defeat in the Rajya Sabha.

There is a gross misuse of the majority in the Lok Sabha by the BJP Government. The BJP's Central Government has already started working unconstitutionally,

as is clear from its misuse of Article 110 of the Constitution regarding the Finance Bill. This is done obviously because it could not modify the Income Tax Law or the Companies Act for making such vital changes against the established rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution as it has no majority in the Rajya Sabha.

The BJP's Central Government is tearing all established conventions, including amendments on the Companies Act, which is most mischievous. At present under the Companies Act, there is a ceiling for donation. The Central Government's amendment will result in what an American commentator said after the Citizens case in the USA, "that the nation" will have corporate democracy and not people's democracy.

I believe one could go to court against the provisions incorporated in the Income Tax Act and Companies Act on the ground of violation of Article 14, and the irrelevance of these legislations behind the passing of the Finance Bill.

I know political funding is a touchy subject for the Congress but then larger public interest requires it to be challenged. The misuse of Aadhar to make each one of the provisions of secrecy of the Income Tax Act and the banking law a nullity is a further assault on the individual rights of citizens.

Speaking personally, we must refuse to file Income Tax Returns or open bank accounts by getting Aadhar, which I believe is a serious inroad into the privacy of the individual except in the case of those programmes like subsidies schemes to avoid the possibility of wrong persons getting the benefit. I know the Congress Government brought in Aadhar. But its misuse by the Modi Government requires action by the Congress. I would suggest that the Congress and the entire Opposition should bring a legislation in the Rajya Sabha opposing the changes made in the Companies Act and Income Tax by the BJP as incorporated in the Finance Bill (where it will be passed because it has a majority in the Rajya Sabha). This will create a constitutional crisis and bring the matter strongly to the notice of the public on these issues.

The extreme danger of the BJP choosing Yogi Adityanath and his open declaration that India is a *Hindu Rashtra* has shown the deep viciousness of the RSS and BJP. For this purpose other parties will have to make serious mutual adjustments—of course subject to the ruling parties in other States also playing fair. I would provisionally suggest that the distribution of seats in respective States should be done by non-BJP parties in such a manner that there is a single candidate opposing the BJP

candidate. Of course the Opposition-ruled States like Mamata in Bengal, Patnaik in Odisha and the Congress in Punjab and Karnataka will have to make equitable adjustments, but the other parties must also go for deep adjustment. Only in this way can the evil of the BJP headed by the Yogi in UP, with its obvious call for Hindu Rashtra (a treasonable slogan by the ruling party at the Centre), can be successfully met to prevent fascism in our country.


Let all parties sit together and work out concrete specific programmes and policies to meet this menace. If the parties will not show this adjustment, the public in India will never forgive the Opposition parties for failing to show that foresight, self-abnegation before the attack on secularism, the basic feature of our Constitution. We should start an open debate and launch public meetings to point out the danger to our democracy. This will require approaching all political parties to draw up a common programme. In this, certain ground rules will have to be worked out. Both the political parties, which are in power in respective States, and the non-BJP Opposition parties will have to work out a joint strategy for mutual benefit of each other.

In order to meet the 2019 parliamentary electoral challenge, I feel that all non-BJP parties should work on a commonly agreed programme. Loose general talks separately will not work. I feel we need to develop Dr Lohia's election strategy of 1967 where we had non-Congress Opposition-ruled governments in nine States. We only have to work for similar non-BJP Opposition ruled States—this alone will create an atmosphere which may

result in non-BJP parties forming the government at the Centre in Delhi.

Courtesy: Mainstram, April 15, 2017

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How Karl Marx Predicted Our World Today

Howard Zinn

In the September 2000 issue of 'In These Times', Howard Zinn wrote this review of a book about the life of Karl Marx by Francis Wheen. On the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth, we present Zinn's review in full, in which he discusses how "Marx predicted the world of today, with ever increasing concentrations of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, with capitalism roaming the globe in search of profits, with a deepening contradiction between the colossal growth of production and the failure to distribute its fruits justly."

It takes some courage to write still another biography of Karl Marx, especially if the writer has dared to go through the 40 volumes of his writings and his correspondence. Francis Wheen seems to have done that research scrupulously, open to both colorful stories and thunderous ideas.

The time is right for a new appraisal of Marx because ignoramuses and shiteheads (the spellcheck on my computer rejected this, suggesting instead "hotheads, catheads, whiteheads, skinheads") on all parts of the ideological spectrum have distorted his ideas in ridiculous ways. Forgive me, but I want to give you the flavor of Marx's personality, which included frequent insults directed at those, whether bourgeois or left intellectuals, who drove him to distraction by disagreeing with him—not, I agree, an admirable trait, but we must be honest about people we otherwise admire.

Marx has been stupidly (there, I've caught the virus of virulence

again) linked with Stalin, by both Stalinists and apologists for capitalism. So this is a good time to set the record straight. The reviewer of Wheen's book in the *New York Times Book Review* seemed to think that the lack of Marxists in departments of economics, history and philosophy is somehow proof of the inadequacy of Marx's theories and, absurdly, wonders "why the rest of us should bother with Marx's ideas now that the Berlin Wall has fallen."

Wheen lets you know immediately where he stands on this matter: "Only a fool could hold Marx responsible for the Gulag; but there is, alas, a ready supply of fools." Marx "would have been appalled by the crimes committed in his name." He has been "calamitously misinterpreted." And the misinterpretation has been bipartisan, as "all these bloody blemishes on the history of the 20th century were justified in the name of Marxism or anti-Marxism."

This is a worthy enterprise, to distinguish Marx himself from the actions of the so-called Marxists (who led an exasperated Marx at one time to say: "I am not a Marxist"), as well as to keep alive his still-accurate critique of capitalism.

Wheen provides a colorful romp through Marx's life. Marx grew up in a middle-class German family, with rabbi ancestors on both sides, but his father converted to Christianity for practical reasons. (Karl in fact was baptized at the age of six.) At 18 he was engaged to the beautiful Jenny

von Westphalen, whose aristocratic family admired the young Karl for his remarkable intellect, and whose father took long walks with him, reciting Homer and Shakespeare.

Marx studied first at the University of Bonn and then the University of Berlin, as a rather wild and fun-loving student even while seriously pursuing the teachings of Hegel and writing a doctoral dissertation on Greek philosophy. His thesis, comparing the ideas of Democritus and Epicurus, is a ringing declaration of freedom from false authority, insisting that the true purpose of philosophy was to deny "all gods of heaven and earth who do not recognise man's self-consciousness was the highest divinity."

Hegel also saw the historical development of man's self-consciousness as the human march toward freedom. But Marx was soon to go beyond that, to turn Hegel "on his head," to see freedom as requiring, not simply a change in consciousness, but a revolutionary change in the material conditions of life. Early on, Marx's extraordinary intellectual power was evident. His friend Moses Hess said that Marx "combines the deepest philosophical seriousness with the most biting wit. Imagine Rousseau, Voltaire, Holbach, Lessing, Heine and Hegel fused into one man, and you have Dr. Marx."

Marx was 24 when he moved to Cologne, as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. He soon began challenging the sacred laws of private property,

denouncing the arrest of peasants who were using firewood from private forests, and writing editorials against the Prussian censors. What can be more infuriating to censors than to rail against censorship? They castigated the *Zeitung* for “impudent and disrespectful criticism of the existing government institutions.” And proved it right by shutting it down.

Whean enjoys showing the inanity of Marx's detractors, as when they reduce his complex view of religion to unconditional hostility, quoting repeatedly his statement that religion is “the opium of the people.” The full quotation, from his 1843 essay, *Toward a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, shows a more nuanced and sympathetic understanding of the social role of religion: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions, it is the opium of the people.”

Driven from Germany, Marx went to Paris, where he and Jenny found a little flat on the Left Bank, and where their first child, Jennichen, was born in 1844. It was in the cafes of Paris that Marx met an extraordinary group of other young radicals: Proudhon (“property is theft”); Heine, the brilliant poet; Bakunin, the wild man of anarchism and spontaneous revolution; Stirner, the supreme individualist; and, most important of all, Frederick Engels.

Engels was two years younger than Marx, but already more aware of class oppression and class struggle, having witnessed a general strike in Manchester, England, where his father owned textile mills. In 1845, at 25, Engels would write eloquently and powerfully of working-class

lives in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. He described one Manchester slum as follows: “Masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth lie among standing pools in all directions; the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these, and laden and darkened by the smoke of a dozen tall factory chimneys. A horde of ragged women and children swarm about here.”

Marx and Engels, meeting for the first time in August of 1844 in the Cafe de la Regence (Voltaire, Diderot and Benjamin Franklin were among its famous patrons), hit it off from the start, intellectually and personally. Engels then visited Marx's flat, and there followed 10 days of intense and wide-ranging discussion, which Whean, seeing this as the beginning of an extraordinary relationship, with immense historical significance, calls “ten days that shook the world.”

It was in Paris, at the age of 26, that Marx wrote his famous *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which remained unpublished until the 1930s, but which contain some of his most profound ideas. The central concept was alienation, but Marx saw the source of this alienation not as a problem of consciousness, as Hegel put it, but in the material conditions of capitalist society. Under capitalism, human beings led a nonhuman existence, being alienated from their work, from the product of their labor, from one another, from nature, from their own true selves. The solution was not in the realm of ideas, but in action to overturn these conditions.

Driven from Paris, Marx met Engels again in Brussels, and, commissioned by the Communist

League of London, they (mostly Marx, it seems) fashioned one of the most influential documents of modern history, *The Communist Manifesto*. It appeared in French just before the 1848 revolution. The first English edition, in 1850, started with the sentence: “A frightful hobgoblin stalks through Europe.” In the 1888 translation that became: “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism.”

The *Manifesto* demolished the idea that capitalism was a natural and eternal condition. It was a stage in history, which came out of feudalism and would give way to a more humane society. Capitalism brought about an enormous development in technology and production: “The bourgeoisie has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.” But workers were now nothing more than commodities, their lives subject to the domination of the market. And as capitalism becomes more and more obviously inadequate to control its own enormous growth, the working class will become the instrument for its replacement.

As workers become “a ruling class,” representing the vast majority of the nation, they will sweep away the conditions for the existence of all classes, “and will therefore have abolished its own supremacy as a class.” The climactic sentence of the first part of the *Manifesto* is profoundly important, repudiating any notion of a police state, and insisting on the ultimate goal of individual freedom: “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the

condition for the free development of all.”

Expelled from the continent and finding refuge finally in London, Marx labored for years in the library of the British Museum on his epic work, *Capital*. All this, while living with Jenny in the miserable conditions of Soho, and grieving as three of their children, two boys and a girl, died in the first years of life. Two girls, their first-born Jennichen and Laura, had survived, and a third, Eleanor, was born in London. (Eleanor was a remarkable child, politically precocious at the age of 8; Yvonne Kapp's two-volume biography of Eleanor Marx is a wonderful description of the life of the Marx family in London.)

When is unsparing in his depiction of Marx's nastiness, directed against Ferdinand Lassalle (including anti-Semitic barbs, although anti-Semitism was not part of Marx's philosophy or political behavior), Proudhon and other intellectuals of the left. He was unmoved by Proudhon's plea that they should not become “the leaders of a new intolerance” and responded caustically to Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty* with his own diatribe, *The Poverty of Philosophy*. He referred to another refugee from the 1848 revolution in Germany, one August Willich, as “an uneducated, four times-cuckolded jackass.” Willich challenged him to a duel, which he wisely declined.

Yet When also recognizes that Marx was a loving husband and deeply affectionate father who, despite being unable to pay bills and depending on Engels for financial support, bought a piano for his daughters and sent them to the seashore to get them away from the rancid air of Soho. He read

Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes to Eleanor, whose love and devotion to him were expressed throughout her life. His enemies may have seen him differently, but her father, Eleanor said, was “the cheeriest, gayest soul that ever breathed, a man brimming over with humor.”

It is to When's credit that, despite his sometimes obsessive attention to the comic elements in Marx's life, he treats the man's ideas with great respect. He doesn't insist that Marx's analysis in *Capital* is flawless, but sees it as “a work of the imagination,” its purpose “an ironic one, juxtaposed with grim, well-documented portraits of the misery and filth which capitalist laws create in practice.”

He points out how Marx predicted the world of today, with ever increasing concentrations of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, with capitalism roaming the globe in search of profits, with a deepening contradiction between the colossal growth of production and the failure to distribute its fruits justly. When says that “the more I studied Marx, the more astoundingly topical he seemed to be.”

Those who would doubt Marx's commitment to a truly democratic society should study his eloquent (second in literary brilliance only to his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) description of the 1871 Paris Commune. The Commune abolished rents and debts, equalised wages, hailed culture and education, made leaders subject to immediate recall by the people, destroyed the guillotine. Women played a crucial role in all of its activities (see Gay Gullickson, *The Unruly Women of Paris*). It was, Marx said, “the most glorious achievement of our time.”

Spectre of Fascism

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Dangerous Trend in Himachal Pradesh: Diverting Tea Leaves and Highly Nutritious Fruits For Liquor Production

Bharat Dogra

Very worrying trends have been reported recently from Himachal Pradesh that highly nutritious fruits are being diverted from direct consumption to the production of wine on a large scale. Such trends if left unchecked can easily spread to other parts of the country.

First a leading newspaper *Dainik Jagran* reported that apples as well as other highly nutritious fruits in the state will be diverted on a large scale for production of wine, and the existing processing facilities of a public sector unit will be made available to a private company for taking this new wine to different parts of the country. Then on May 1, another news appeared in another leading newspaper *Navbharat Times* that along with fruits, special Kangra Tea Leaves will be used to prepare tea wine with alcohol content of 12 percent (much higher than beer). A government science lab is being used to prepare this, and a private company has been contracted to sell this as tea wine on a large scale. The government will also be earning from this deal.

It is very worrying that even such a staple drink as tea which is consumed by an overwhelming majority of people in the country is being imitated to prepare

an alcoholic drink based on tea leaves with a high alcohol content, and at the same time fruits are being diverted for the production of this wine, at a time when children from poor families in this apple-producing state find it very difficult to eat apples.

It is likely that soon there will be a drive by unlicensed shops to sell these new forms of liquor. The first signs of this can already be seen as some general merchants and fruit juice shops are seen selling fruit wine. What is even worse is that high alcohol content drink or liquor is being promoted for health benefits.

This fraud has already been exposed in the context of red wine for its falsehood and deceit. This

mis-propaganda was done under pressure from the liquor lobby. It is now well known that the completely false promotion of red wine as a healthy drink led to massive damage to health and a huge increase in liver disease as well as other serious health problems. The same tragedy will be repeated in India on an even larger scale when fruit wine and tea wine are promoted for their false health benefits while covering up the conspiracy of the liquor lobby in taking liquor to more and more people.

Hence this dangerous trend and the distorted thinking behind it should be checked as early as possible.

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May 20, 2018

Culture Of Protest

Sandeep Pandey,
Shobha Shukla and
Bobby Ramakant

Sudhakar, My Friend

Mrinal Biswas

**'Save National Heritage
March'**

**Journalists Remain in
the Cross Hairs**

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Hamid Ansari, Jinnah's Portrait and Turmoil in AMU

Ram Puniyani

Recently (May 2018) Hamid Ansari, the ex-Vice President of India, was invited to Aligarh Muslim University to be honoured with life membership of AMU Students Union (AMUSU). He had due security with him, yet Hindu Yuva Vahini-ABVP activists managed to come close to his place of stay. The armed protesters alleged that a portrait of Jinnah had been put up to please Ansari, and that they will not allow Jinnah's portrait in AMU. The usual violence followed, a few Vahini volunteers were arrested, and most were later let off. This was followed by series of statements from Yogi Adityanath, who incidentally is also the founder of this Hindutva group, saying that portrait will not be allowed. Subramaniam Swami asked who will teach a lesson to AMU! The students of AMU are protesting the violence unleashed by Vahini and ABVP, and demanding that those responsible for the attack be arrested.

Many questions arise. First of all, how did the armed volunteers of Vahini and ABVP come near the place where Hamid Ansari was put up? One recalls the several attempts that have been made to humiliate this

distinguished scholar and diplomat who held the high office of the Vice President of India. His photo of not saluting the Republic day parade was made viral to create the impression that he is showing disrespect, an issue that died down only when it was realised that he was following the rule book as only the President takes the salute and no one else. When he was given farewell, Modi attempted to humiliate him by hinting at his being a Muslim and being attached to issues related to Muslims. Given this background, his being targeted in AMU is just the continuation of what the BJP-RSS combine has been attempting to do to Ansari in the past.

How did it come to happen that someone recalled that Jinnah's portrait is there on the AMU campus and on that pretext the armed volunteers sneaked into AMU campus? Has the portrait been put up yesterday? The portrait has been there since 1938, as AMU Students Union had conferred a rare honor on him by giving him life membership of AMUSU. The Hindutva activists issued the statement that Jinnah divided the country, so how could he be celebrated? The role played by

Jinnah in the freedom movement is not a linear one and is not uniform. He began as a part of the movement and was part of it in the beginning. He is credited with being the Chairman of the Reception Committee which welcomed Gandhi on his return from South Africa. He was the one who fought the case in which Bal Gangadhar Tilak was given the death sentence and it is due to his legal brilliance that he could save the life of Tilak. He was also the lawyer for the young revolutionary, Sardar Bhagat Singh and to cap it all he entered into a Hindu-Muslim unity pact with Tilak (Lucknow, 1916). India's nightingale Sarojini Naidu called Jinnah the 'ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity'.

There is another side to the story also. He dissociated from the national movement once Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement in 1920, in which for the first time the common people of the country participated in large numbers. This movement laid the foundation for the biggest ever mass movement in the history of the world. Jinnah was a constitutionalist and he felt that involving the common people in the struggle against the British is unwarranted. For the same reason, he opposed Gandhi's role in the Khilafat movement. He gradually dissociated from active involvement in the freedom struggle and left for London to practice law. It was only after this that he began associating with the Muslim League and gradually become a leader of it. Muslim League was given the status of being the representative of Muslims by the British. This was basically a motivated exercise by the British as the Muslim League was founded by Muslim Nawabs and Landlords, and had feudal

values inherent in it down to the core. His role as a leader of Muslim League and his Lahore resolution demanding a separate country for the Muslims—Pakistan—is what transformed him from a secular person into a communal leader.

To blame Jinnah alone for the partition of the country is a distorted presentation of the history of modern India. The roots of partition lie in the policies of the British who pursued the policy of 'divide and rule'. They were aided in this by communalists from both Hindus and Muslims. Savarkar was the first one to articulate that there are two nations in the country, the Hindu and the Muslim. As per this understanding, the country belongs to the Hindus, so the Muslim nation will have to remain subordinate to the Hindus. This is where Jinnah falls into the communal trap. The logic he puts forward is, if there are two nations in the country, why there cannot be two countries? So why not Pakistan?

Jinnah has been the subject of various biographies and interpretations. His August 11, 1947 speech in Pakistan Constituent Assembly wherein he stated that people are free to follow their own religion and that the State will not interfere in that, elaborates his secular values. Advani, quite late in his life, after having launched the biggest attack on secular values in the country by demolishing the Babri Mosque, realised that Jinnah was secular. He called Jinnah secular and paid with his career, as the RSS combine has built its entire ideology around the slogan of 'Hate Jinnah', it has presented Jinnah as a symbol of Indian Muslims and as a symbol of India's enemy, Pakistan!

With this AMU episode, Hindu

nationalist politics is looking to kill many birds with a single stone. First is to once again target Hamid Ansari, whom they can't approve of as his credentials are thoroughly secular. Second is to create yet another divisive issue in the form of the portrait of Jinnah on the AMU campus, thus adding one more emotive issue to the several they have manufactured so far. And third is to intimidate the AMU campus on lines of what they have attempted to do with JNU and Hyderabad Central University.

One can say that the Ghost of Jinnah, who can be called a 'Secular Soul in a Communal body', will keep visiting us again and again, what with the RSS combine seeking to keep popping up divisive issues one after the other!

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Culture Of Protest

Sandeep Pandey, Shobha Shukla and Bobby Ramakant

In an amazing display of goodwill, bus drivers of Ryobi group in Okayama, Japan have staged a protest not by striking work but by continuing to drive without charging fares from passengers. The Ryobi group is facing tough competition from another group Megurin, which is offering reduced fares to passengers. The intended message is that the Ryobi drivers value the interest of passengers more than their own. This mode of protest is winning accolades from people.

Protests, even if they are not violent, are usually associated with at least some form of aggression. It is the common belief of social-political organisations that only militant action can yield quick and decisive results. Pacifism is considered a sign of weakness. But time and again, peaceful actions have proved to be effective. Mahatma Gandhi, who is often criticised for his philosophy and strategy of non-violence by the right wing Hindutva groups in India, successfully built the most effective group among all groups which were trying to win independence for India from the British rule. The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the parent organisation of right wing groups, did not even participate in the freedom struggle. In fact, its Deputy Chief Minister in Bengal, Shyama Prasad Mukherji, suggested to the British that the Quit India Movement of 1942 should be crushed lest it would create disturbances in the country.

Recently about 35–40,000 farmers belonging to All India Kisan Sabha associated with the

Communist Party of India (Marxist) organised a peaceful 180 km long march, demanding complete waiver of loans and electricity bills, implementation of Swaminathan Commission report and Forest Rights Act. The march started on 5 March 2018 from Nasik and ended at Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha in Mumbai on 12 March. After reaching Mumbai on March 11 and resting for the night, when they began the last leg of their march to the Vidhan Sabha on the final day, in a rare gesture the farmers began their march in the early hours of the morning, at 1 am, so that the morning office goes and children going to appear for the Board examinations would not face any commuting problem or harassment. This was in stark contrast to the usual mindset guiding even small marches that hold the traffic to ransom. A march is considered to be successful only if it can cause disruption of traffic. The AIKS march will be remembered for a long time for its display of civility and thoughtfulness.

In countries like India, corruption and negligence of duty is not only a norm but considered the ‘smart’ thing to do. The honest and diligent are ridiculed and/or not allowed to work and obstacles are created in their path. People in influential positions practice rampant nepotism, casteism and communalism. While merit takes a back seat, money power earns respect. It is interesting that most people in positions of power in our country today are still from upper caste background. While they oppose the policy of

caste based reservation on the pretext that it dilutes merit, it is this same set of people who promote mediocrity and corruption in public life. Their brains are put to work to camouflage corruption and to block genuine work at the behest of their political masters. It is not uncommon for a complainant to attract a false case if s(he) doesn't have political backing and for a resourceful and well connected criminal to go scot free. Laws and rules are bent to suit the interests of the influential and rich people. Political groups try to take advantage of the administrative-legal system to serve their vested interests. This is the model of governance that exists in India today.

Since merit is in general no longer a criterion, and political patronage is essential to become a part of the coveted system, even the education system has become thoroughly corrupted. Teaching is a work accorded the least priority in educational institutions and methods have been perfected by administrators, teachers and students-parents, under a willing political patronage, to beat the system. The whole emphasis is on getting high marks through foul means, if not fair, with scant regard for gaining knowledge.

Hence actions like those of AIKS come as a fresh air in the backdrop of a gloomy and depressing scenario. If we're to evolve into a mature and humane society then we'll not only have to value such actions but also to replicate them. The destructive mind must be replaced by a constructive

one. Selfish attitude must be replaced by a Samaritan one. Integrity and honesty must prevail over all kinds of corrupt practices. Love must replace hatred. A culture of respect for diversity must prevail over all kinds of caste, class, religious, gender, ethnic differences and biases. Every human being must be treated as being an equal member of society. Interest of self should be linked to higher level interests of society and nature.

There are many dedicated and committed individuals who, regardless of the discouraging environment around them, continue to give their best to society. But such collective actions are few and far between. People come together more easily for disruptive rather than charitable causes. It is a common belief that it is easier to mobilise people on sensational issues rather than on some society building agenda. This is the dominant political culture in India today. A society which otherwise considers itself to be peaceful and humanitarian has given in to sectarian and fundamentalist thinking. Controversy is news and genuine actions commonplace.

The recent actions of bus drivers in Japan and farmers in Maharashtra, India, hold some hope for a better future. They are proof that seeds of idea for a reformed society are alive and wait for an opportunity to germinate. The objective of all human activity, especially under adverse conditions when humans are likely to lose sanity, should be to create a supportive atmosphere so that the flower of humanity blooms.

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Sudhakar, My Friend

Mrinal Biswas

The icy hand of death has been laid on Sudhakar Prabhudesai. It was a cruel joke that he could not leave this world peacefully. I was told excruciating sufferings awaited him before he breathed his last. Sudhakar did not deserve that. I knew him for decades, he never caused pain to anybody, not even to anyone in the other animate world. It struck me odd that anybody coming east to Kolkata (then Calcutta) and seeing handpulled rickshaws fell terribly upset by seeing the plight of the hired men weaving through city streets with their carriages occupied by any of his kindred spirits. Man-pulled rickshaws were long back imitation vehicles of Japan and hardly affected our Calcuttans' sensibilities. Sudhakar felt repulsed. But this same friend of mine enlivened spirits of me Calcuttan when, in one of the heydays of loadsheddings (power-offs), he sat with me to take food in the evening under the light of candles. He smiled widely and said it was indeed a candle-lit dinner. We the host couple were relieved.

I met him in the late 60s of the last century at Ranchi at a meeting of the country's young socialists. My other Calcutta colleague was Biswanth Halder. Sudhakar came with Vijaya Pingle to represent Bombay (now Mumbai). Two Bombaiwallas and me Calcuttan became friends. This friendship expanded with others becoming part of the group in the course of time. Moreover, my link with *Janata* weekly solidified because Sudhakar was an important editorial

board member. Despite the long distance, this group of people kept in touch and even visits took place both ways. During the emergency, I met Sudhakar in a Bombay jail and my last meeting was while I on a reporter's journey halted at Bombay in the late 1980s. He grew long hairs and looked further emaciated.

Sudhakar Prabhudesai had a scintillating mind, was well versed, a good conversationalist and a good friend. His passing away means a part of myself is gone. I know his family members will find it difficult to a life without him. I also know that there are many others who share their deep sense of loss.

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Press Release**'Save National Heritage March' held from Meerut to Delhi**

Socialist Party (India) and Khudai Khidmatgar took out the 'Save National Heritage March' from martyrs' memorial, Meerut to Lal Qila, Delhi on May 10, 2018, in memory of the martyrs of 1857. Citizens of Meerut and Delhi participated enthusiastically in the March. In the morning on 10 May, tributes were paid to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev by garlanding their statues established in the campus of Chaudhary Charan Singh University. Tributes were also paid to Dhan Singh Kotwal, a prominent local leader of the 1857 revolt, whose statue is also established in the city. After that, people reached the martyrs' memorial and offered salute and tributes to the martyrs of 1857.

A seminar was organised on the topic 'Why the Revolution of 1857 Should be Remembered'

in the famous 'Freedom Fighter Mohammed Miyan House' of Meerut city. Speaking in the seminar as the key speaker, senior journalist Arun Tripathi said that the Revolution of 1857 should be remembered for its two basic goals—Hindu–Muslim unity and anti-imperialism. A discussion was also held at the Sheikh-ul-Hindu Academy, in which many speakers highlighted the importance of the revolutionaries of 1857 and national heritage.

In the evening, the marches proceeded to Delhi, distributing pamphlets and addressing meetings on the way. Prominent citizens from all walks of life joined the march in Delhi. They marched from the Khooni Darwaza to Lal Qila raising slogans and distributing pamphlets. The 'Save National Heritage March' concluded at Lal Qila's main gate in the evening.

General public gathered in a large number at the venue. Dr. Prem Singh, President, Socialist Party (India), said that the Socialist Party, in a memorandum to the President of India, has demanded that the mortal remains of Bahadur Shah Zafar be brought to Delhi from Rangoon and a huge memorial in memory of the martyrs of 1857 be built. He further said that the Socialist Party will launch a nationwide campaign against the government's decision of selling the national heritage to corporate houses. He also informed the audience that the Socialist Party will hold a rally on the occasion of the Quit India Movement Day, 9 August, against the government.

**Dr. Prem Singh,
Socialist Party (India)**

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Dear India and Pakistan, Disarm NOW!**[Sign Citizens' Appeal on 20 Years of Nuclear Tests]**

We, the citizens of South Asia and beyond, urge India and Pakistan in the 20th year of the 1998 nuclear tests to put an immediate end to the arms race and competitive belligerence, and negotiate nuclear disarmament at the earliest. Far from providing any security, these 20 years have only witnessed an exacerbation of tensions and heightened warmongering, lending a disconcerting instability to the entire region.

While military expenses and weapons have increased exponentially—making both India

and Pakistan among the largest importers of weapons globally—armed conflicts and violence by both state and non-state actors have reached savage heights. The irony couldn't be more glaring that on the other hand, both countries have consistently slipped on most human development indices, including hunger, poverty, education, health, safety of women and children, minority rights and social and legal justice.

As highlighted by several experts, any nuclear exchange by India or Pakistan will annihilate the

entire region and impact the climate irreversibly, and will also have catastrophic global consequences. Millions of people in other countries of South Asia, having no say in the inhuman escalation, will face the impacts of a potential nuclear confrontation. South Asia, the world's most populous region, is the only region which has two nuclear-armed neighbours with a history of active conflicts, unending border skirmishes and wars.

In the past few years, the emergence of religious extremism and war-loving populist nationalism,

particularly during election seasons, in both countries, has made the situation more dangerous than ever. It was in the wake of such dangerous rhetoric and abiding conflicts that South Asia appeared in the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin Atomic Scientists that has now inched closest ever to midnight. Amid such rising tensions, India and Pakistan chose to remain outside the ambit of the historic Nuclear Ban

Treaty, adopted by the UN last year.

We urge leaders of both countries to negotiate disarmament and peace in all seriousness, sign the International Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and introduce immediate risk-reduction measures, including dialogues, both at the level of government and civil society. For even a semblance of peace in the region, it is imperative that jingoism and hate-mongering within politics

and mainstream media be stopped with immediate effect. 20 years is long enough to learn from the futile nuclear insanity and bluster that both countries have hitherto engaged in!

For those you interested in signing this appeal, please go to the website: <https://www.dianuke.org/dear-india-and-pakistan-disarm-now-sign-citizens-appeal-on-20-years-of-nuclear-tests/>

Letter to Editor

Anguish at Lack of *Shaleenta* in Public Life

Chandrabhaal Tripathi

Two events in April 2018 saddened me. The first occurred on April 13, 2018 at Gandhi Peace Foundation where my good friend, Prof. Anand Kumar, retired Professor of Sociology at JNU, prominent student leader at BHU, JNU and Chicago, twice President of FEDCUTA, socialist thinker and writer, was felicitated by his friends and admirers and four books of his in Hindi were released. I told him that I would attend the function. True to his *samskaras*, he wrote to me that in the present state of my health I should not take the trouble of going to GPF and that he would visit me soon and present me the above books. I reminded him that it would give me much pleasure in meeting him and some old friends at the function and that I had known his family since before his birth. I may mention that his grandfather, Sri Vishwanath Sharma, was a freedom fighter, a student of Acharya Narendra Deva and other stalwarts of Kashi Vidyapeeth, of which he was the Registrar for a long time. His father was two years older than me. His two uncles, Ranganath Sharma and Prof. Krishnanath, were my good close friends. We had elected Ranganath ji as the General Secretary of the All India Samajwadi Yuvak Sabha at its Foundation Conference at Kashi Vidyapeeth in 1953. Prof. Krishnanath, younger to me, was a well-known economist, socialist worker, follower of Buddhism and Dalai Lama and later President of the J. Krishnamurthy Foundation at Bengaluru.

The meeting on April 13 at GPF was chaired by the eminent lawyer Sri Shanti Bhushan. Several friends spoke in praise of Anand Kumar. I was shocked that the Chair of the meeting, Sri Shanti Bhushan, made some highly improper and irrelevant observations. He made the most unjudicious and irrelevant remarks about girl friends of two eminent socialist leaders. The whole affair left a bad taste in the mouth of many. The platform of GPF was the last venue to publicly discuss the love affairs of leaders. I was reminded of the great stress laid on *shaaleenata* in public life by my mentor, Acharya Narendra Deva.

The other occasion I wish to refer to was the cremation of my old and senior friend, Justice (Retd.) Rajendar Sachar, on April 20 at the Lodhi Road Electric Crematorium. It was attended by many prominent personalities from various walks of life. A retired professor of Hindi from Delhi University, an old socialist leader, repeatedly raised the slogan 'Socialist leader Rajendar Sachar amar rahen'. To me it was not appropriate to refer to the departed soul's political ideology on this occasion. I had known Sri Rajendar Sachar since 1963 as a Lohiaite and Secretary of Chandigarh Unit of Samyukta Socialist Party while I was posted there by the Government of India as Assistant Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Sri Sachar's subsequent life and rich contributions are varied and his personality cannot be restricted to the role of a socialist leader. However, this was still tolerable. But I was totally unprepared for the repeated slogans 'Gandhi-Lohia-Jayaprakash zindabad, zindabad' raised by the same friend. I wonder how this slogan befitted the solemn and poignant occasion. Mercifully, he did not raise the slogan at the cremation ground 'Socialist Party zindabad.' I found several senior Gandhian leaders like Sri Ramchandra Rahi and Sri Kumar Prashant among the mourners. I have no idea how they felt. But I reiterate that it only betrayed lack of *shaaleenata* in public life.

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Journalists Remain in the Cross Hairs

Geeta Seshu

As protests raged over the rape of minors and violence against marginalized communities, dalits, students, the climate for free speech reflected both a menacing intolerance for dissenting viewpoints and a crackdown on civil rights. Apart from the dangerous attacks on journalists, others were harassed and their personal details shared online, they were threatened and became victims of fake news as hate messages attributed to them went viral.

The judiciary, hitherto a reassuring protector of free speech, sent mixed signals as different courts ordered gags on media coverage, fined and penalized media houses for violating the law on disclosure of the identity of minor victims of sexual assault and took up petitions alleging contempt of court.

In February, in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home Hansraj Ahir said that in 2017, there were 15 attacks on journalists in which 26 people were arrested. Between 2015-17, there were 90 attacks on journalists and 108 people were arrested, the minister said, referring to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the last three years.

The figures are at complete variance with The Hoot’s own research as the *The India Freedom Report: Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression in 2017* recorded a verified number of 46 attacks on journalists. While the minister said that the Home Ministry has no information on whether any

organisation or organisations were responsible for the attacks on media persons, the findings of *The Hoot* show that the perpetrators are only too well known.

Media freedom has continued to deteriorate in the first four months of 2018 in India.

The Hoot’s 2017 report had documented the murder of three journalists which could be clearly linked to their journalism. In the first four months of 2018 as well, three journalists were killed in connection with their reporting, judging by what initial investigations show.

For 2017 we had documented 46 attacks on journalists and media workers. Between January and April 2018, there have been already 14 attacks all across the country.

Table: Types of Attacks on Journalists, Jan–March 2018

Category	No. of instances
Murders	03
Attacks	14
Arrests/Detention	03
Threats	05
Sedition	01
Defamation	07
Censorship	50
Govt policy (State & Centre)	08
Judicial orders	02
Privacy related	06
Contempt cases	02

Apart from these killings and attacks, the first four months of 2018 has also seen defamation

cases filed against journalists, a sedition case against a journalist and a clear push by both State and Central government and the judiciary, through regulatory policy as well as judicial orders, to curb free speech. There were also around 50 instances of censorship, and more than 20 instances of suspension of internet services, as well as the take down of online content. A Hoot investigation of the state of media freedom from January 1 to April 30, 2018 reveals that a range of actors, from politicians, businesspersons, members of Hindu right wing organisations, the police and paramilitary forces, government agencies like the Film Certification Board, the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry, different state governments, lawyers and even media organisations, have acted to undermine freedom of expression.

Killings

In two separate incidents, three journalists were killed when they were mowed down by vehicles. On March 26, two *Dainik Bhaskar* journalists, Navin Nishchal and Vijay Singh, were killed when their bike was hit by an SUV in Bhojpur, near Patna, Bihar. Police said the vehicle was driven by a villager leader Mohammad Harsu. He was arrested. Initial reports said that a heated argument between Harsu, husband of a former panchayat mukhia, and the reporters over a news report had preceded the accident. However, the investigation is not complete.

A day later, a television reporter

Sandeep Sharma was mowed down by a truck in Bhind, Madhya Pradesh. Sharma, who had done a sting operation on a sand mining mafia in Bhind, had told police that he had received threats to his life. The driver, Ranvir Singh, was arrested.

Attacks

There were 14 attacks on journalists in the first quarter of the year. In five of these instances, there were targeted attacks against journalists investigating or writing about an issue. In at least ten instances, the perpetrators were either members of Hindu right wing organisations or the police. An unidentified assailant hurled a petrol bomb at the residence of *Shillong Times* Editor, Patricia Mukhim. The latter said that she was targeted for a range of writings about issues that troubled society. Her most recent articles criticised rampant and illegal mining in Meghalaya.

Perpetrators of other targeted attacks included the timber mafia. Mob violence was sponsored by party workers of both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress, Hindu extremists and the police. In one instance, the Delhi police molested a woman journalist covering a student protest. They later apologised, stating that they mistook her for a student!

- January 1, 2018, Mumbai, Maharashtra: Protesters snatch *Republic TV* reporter Shравan Sen's camera.
- January 7, 2018, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: A Facebook post by Damayantee Dhar who reports for *The Wire* records an attack on herself and another reporter from the *Ahmedabad Mirror* on January 7 by a "mob of 15-20 Dalit men" headed by Keval

Rathod.

- January 23, 2018, Athiabari, Meghalaya: Timber mafia attack journalist Biplab Dey.
- January 31, 2018, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: Journalist assaulted by mob of Hindu Yuva Vahini activists.
- February 14, 2018, Kolkata, West Bengal: Senior journalist Navalkant Sinha assaulted by Hindu Samhati Workers in Kolkata;
- February 22, 2018, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh: Following a fight between a student and management of a private hostel over dues, when a news channel goes to cover the incident, the hostel management attacks the journalists.
- March 10, 2018, Assam–Mizoram border: Assam police thrashes Mizo journalists. Emmy Lawbei, journalist with a television channel, was mercilessly beaten up by the police though she showed her identity card to them.
- March 24, 2018, New Delhi: Delhi Police Officer molests female journalist; police said they mistook her to be a student.
- March 25, 2018, Malappuram, Kerala: Journalist N.C. Shareef was mercilessly beaten up and locked up by the Areekode police. Police claimed they didn't know he was a reporter.
- April 1, 2018, Khowai District: Tripura TV journalist Anup Debbarma severely assaulted by a BJP worker.
- April 8, 2018, Kavinagar, Ghaziabad: TV journalist Anuj Chawdhary shot outside his home by sharpshooters allegedly working for Shekhar Chaudhary, a former local councillor charged

with the murder of BJP leader Brijpal Teotia.

- April 9, 2018, Alipore, West Bengal: Photojournalist Diplab Mondal covering Bengal Panchayat Poll Violence alleges assault by TMC goons.
- April 17, 2018, Umpling, Meghalaya: Petrol bomb attack on residence of Shillong Times editor Patricia Mukhim.
- April 20, 2018, Siliguri, West Bengal: TMC workers assault journalists when they go to Chayanpara in Siliguri to cover a scuffle between workers from TMC and the BJP.

Table: The Attackers

Delhi police	01
Hindu right wing orgns.	02
TMC workers	02
Unidentified assailants	02
Owners of private hostel	01
Assam Police	01
Kerala police	01
BJP workers	01
Dalit lawyer, activists	01
Timber gang	01
Sharpshooters of Former Councillor	01
Total	14

Threats and Harassment

Journalists were at the receiving end of threats from those identified as members of Hindu right wing organisations in three out of five instances. In another, a television journalist received death threats from unidentified persons following the channel's coverage of the Kasganj violence. In one instance, personnel of the CRPF accosted a tribal journalist in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh.

In four serious cases of online harassment, intimidation and death threats, journalists were trolled and their personal details shared on social media. A woman journalist found that her Twitter account was compromised by fake messages and morphed pictures were circulated. Journalists filed police complaints but no arrests have been made.

Table: Threats and harassment

CRPF	01
Unidentified persons	02
Temple trust office-bearers	01
RSS workers	01
Hindu right wing	01
BJP leader	01
Lawyer	01
BJP supporters	01
Total	09

Arrests and detentions

While journalists in the field were subjected to mob attacks, others were picked up by police when they went to cover protests, as in the case of two journalists from Kerala reporting on a 'caste' wall in a village. While restrictions on foreign media continued with the denial of visas to Australian journalists who had earlier done a story related to Gautam Adani, two foreign journalists were detained by Kerala police for covering a Valentine's Day celebration in a college. Other instances of arrests and detentions were for social media posts that satirized or were critical of politicians and political leaders. In Chennai the Central Crime Branch (CCB) on April 27 arrested a person who allegedly posted derogatory statement on Facebook against Electricity Minister P. Thangamani.

Sedition

On April 30, journalist Kamal Shukla was charged with sedition by the Katwali police station in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district for sharing a cartoon on social media on the rape of a minor girl in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, allegedly lampooning the country's judiciary and government on Facebook.

Shukla, editor of *Bhumkaal Samachar* and active in highlighting fake encounters in the area, is also head of the Patrakar Suraksha Kanon Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti which has campaigned for a law to protect journalists. He was booked for sedition on the basis of a complaint filed by a Rajasthan resident.

Defamation

Proceedings continued in five cases of defamation even as gags on the publication of the news reports were lifted in two cases—that of Jay Amit Shah against *The Wire* and that of Arindam Chaudhari against Caravan magazine. In the case of *Rising Kashmir* editor Shujaat Bukhari against *Manushi* editor and commentator *Madhu Kishwar*, the case went to trial.

A defamation case was filed by Fatima Nafees, mother of Jawaharlal Nehru University student Najeeb Ahmed, who has been missing since October 2016, against certain media houses for labelling her son an "ISIS sympathiser".

In another case, Congress leader Jagdish Tytler threatened to file a criminal defamation case against the creators of a sting video that purportedly linked him to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Tytler, who said his images were morphed, submitted a memorandum to the Home Ministry stating that he has registered a police

complaint.

Policy curbs and censorship

Amidst these attacks, the Union and State governments announced policies that would curb media freedom

The most active censoring agency was clearly the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), which announced several policy measures (and rolled back only one) to monitor the content of print, broadcast and online media.

In January, it announced that it has widened the ambit of district monitoring committees to cover the monitoring of content of private FM channels and Community Radio Stations (CRS) in addition to TV channels.

In April, the I&B Ministry announced fresh guidelines for penal action against accredited journalists who spread fake news but this sparked a furore and was withdrawn within 24 hours. However, it was followed up with the setting up of a committee comprising bureaucrats and members of the Press Council of India and the News Broadcasters Standards Authority to regulate online content.

Reports that the Ministry planned to radio-tag journalists who visited government offices were denied by the Ministry, but the news website which reported this stood by its report.

Censorship

Censorship of news, broadcast, online media and film continued unabated. There were 16 instances of news being censored, including curbs on news-gathering itself by various State governments and the Centre. These included restrictions on the movement of

journalists in government offices and the legislative assemblies, threats of penal action for news that allegedly contained ‘harsh words’ and even ostensible guidelines from the National Investigation Authority on the duties of a journalist!

<i>Censorship</i>	
Censorship – Film	26
Censorship – News	16
Censorship – Music	06
Censorship- Online media	03
Censorship –Broadcast	02
Censorship-Art	01

More than 20 films ran into trouble with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Both feature films and documentaries continued to languish between the CBFC, the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) and the courts.

Even court orders certifying films for commercial release and a name change did not ensure safe passage, as in the case of Padmavat, where members of the Rajput Karni Sena managed to get the governments of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat to ban the film in these states. The producer of the film Unfreedom chose to exhibit his film on an online video streaming platform to circumvent the censorship when his film was denied a certificate by the CBFC.

Who censored films

CBFC	22
Rajput KarniSena	02
MIB	01
Telangana government	01
Lawyers	01
MIFF	01
BJP Minister	01
SGPC	01
Total	29

Who censored news

MIB	01
Telangana government	01
Delhi High Court	01
District Magistrate, UP	01
NIA	01
Goa police	01
Former judge	01
MLA and Dalit activist/ journalists (Chennai)	01
Total	09

Who censored broadcasts

MIB	01
Total	01

Who censored online media

Media House	01
*Congress-I	01
*Reliance Industries	01
Total	03

Who censored music

Punjab government	01
Chennai police	01
Hindu Right wing religious groups	01
Muslim social organization	01
Lawyers	01
Total	05

Singer Sona Mohapatra filed a written application at Santacruz police station late on April 30, stating that she received a threat allegedly from Madariya Sufi Foundation, asking her to remove a new music video from all communication mediums for being “vulgar, hurting and insulting Islamic religious sentiments.”

Other censorships included the take down of content allegedly satirising the speech of the son of Reliance Industries Chairperson Mukesh Ambani from online news

sites, the takedown of videos of Congress-I President Rahul Gandhi and the termination of the services of a journalist for tweeting about fake news spread by the media house.

However, an order by the NBSA to Zee Television to apologise for, and take down, a video of a programme calling scientist and poet Gauhar Raza anti-national has not been complied with, marking yet another setback to media freedom.

Internet shutdowns

The Internet continued to be at the mercy of local district administrations and state governments, as internet services were suspended for varying periods due to protests or the outbreak of violence in 25 instances, seven of which were in Jammu and Kashmir. Internet shutdowns continued to be imposed through Section 144 as a law and order measure.

The most absurd of the shutdowns was in Srinagar when the authorities suspended internet services over rumours that Pakistani cricketer Shahid Afridi would address a gathering at the Jama Masjid.

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with four instances each, recorded internet shutdowns as district administrations suspended internet services during the nationwide bandh called by Dalit organisations against the Supreme Court's ruling on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. In West Bengal, internet services were suspended following violence during the Ram Navami celebrations.

Internet related censorship	
Internet shutdowns	22
Internet takedowns	02
Internet related arrests	05
Total	29

Apart from fears of regulation of online content, a Citizen Lab-Indian Express study revealed that websites of a range of groups, including human rights groups, NGOs, feminist groups and LGBT groups had been blocked with Netsweeper software.

The firm filtered content for ISPs in ten countries and at least 12 ISPs in India utilised its services. “A testing period between August 2017 and April 2018 saw ‘the highest number of blocked unique URLs’—1,158 out of 2,464—in India,” the report said.

Privacy, Aadhar, Surveillance

In a blatant move to curb any further investigations into the misuse of Aadhar, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) filed an FIR against the reporter and editor of The Tribune newspaper for their reports on the Aadhaar data leak reports. In the midst of concerns over Cambridge Analytica and Facebook’s breach of data,

the Indian Government issued two notices to the two companies and given them time till May 10 to furnish a reply.

However, the government’s own surveillance of citizens is still a matter of concern. In March, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry wrote to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to get all Direct To Home (DTH) operators to install a chip in new set-top boxes, which can give data about channels watched by the viewers and their duration.

Judicial orders

While the Bombay High Court lifted the gag on media coverage of the Sohrabuddin killing trial, the Delhi High Court imposed a ban on media coverage of the bribery case of former district judge I.M. Qudussi. The Delhi High Court also took up suo moto notice of the disclosure of the identity of child victims of sexual assault by media houses, imposed a Rs 1 lakh penalty

on 13 prominent media houses, and issued notices to other websites.

In the wake of the Loya judgement, though not expressly stated as such, the Supreme Court allowed a writ seeking contempt of court proceedings against comments or opinions expressed in the media allegedly critical of its judgements.

In favour of media freedom

Despite the ominous number and range of attacks on media freedom, the ongoing struggle to resist these curbs does yield results. In April, an injunction on the publication of a book on yoga guru and businessperson Baba Ramdev by Priyanka Pathak-Narain and published by Juggernaut Books was lifted by a district court in Delhi.

In January, the Bombay High Court lifted a gag order on media coverage of the Sohrabuddin trial following a petition filed by nine journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists.

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Trump’s Recycling Program

Rebecca Gordon

A barely noticed anniversary slid by on March 20th. It’s been 15 years since the United States committed the greatest war crime of the twenty-first century: the unprovoked, aggressive invasion of Iraq. The *New York Times*, which didn’t exactly cover itself in glory in the run-up to that invasion, recently ran an op-ed by an Iraqi novelist living in the United States entitled “Fifteen Years Ago, America Destroyed My Country,” but that was about it. The *Washington Post*,

another publication that (despite the recent portrayal of its Vietnam-era heroism in the movie *The Post*) repeatedly editorialised in favor of the invasion, marked the anniversary with a story about the war’s “murky” body count. Its piece concluded that at least 600,000 people died in the decade and a half of war, civil war, and chaos that followed—roughly the population of Washington, D.C.

These days, there’s a significant consensus here that the Iraq invasion was a “terrible mistake,” a “tragic

error,” or even the “single worst foreign policy decision in American history.” Fewer voices are saying what it really was: a war crime. In fact, that invasion fell into the very category that led the list of crimes at the Nuremberg tribunal, where high Nazi officials were tried for their actions during World War II. During the negotiations establishing that tribunal and its rules, it was (ironically, in view of later events) the United States that insisted on including the crime of “waging a war

of aggression” and on placing it at the head of the list. The US position was that all the rest of Germany’s war crimes sprang from this first “crime against peace.”

Similarly, the many war crimes of Dick Cheney and George W. Bush—the extraordinary renditions; the acts of torture at Guantánamo, Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and CIA black sites all over the world; the nightmare of abuse at Abu Ghraib, a US military prison in Iraq; the siege and firebombing (with white phosphorus) of the Iraqi city of Fallujah; the massacre of civilians in Haditha, another Iraqi city—all of these arose from the Bush administration’s determination to invade Iraq.

It was to secure “evidence” of a (nonexistent) connection between Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaeda attackers of 9/11 that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld upped the ante at Guantánamo in his infamous memo approving torture there. The search for proof of the same connection motivated the torture of Abu Zubaydah at a CIA black site in Thailand. If not for that long-planned invasion of Iraq, the “war on terror” might have ended years ago.

But Wasn’t That Then?

Fifteen years is an eternity in what Gore Vidal once called “the United States of Amnesia.” So why resurrect the ancient history of George W. Bush in the brave new age of Donald Trump? The answer is simple enough: because the Trump administration is already happily recycling some of those Bush-era war crimes along with some of the criminals who committed them. And its top officials, military and civilian, are already threatening to generate new ones of their own.

Last July, the State Department closed the office that, since the Clinton administration, has assisted war crimes victims seeking justice in other countries. Apparently, the Trump administration sees no reason to do anything to limit the impunity of war criminals, whoever they might be. Reporting on the closure, Newsweek quoted Major Todd Pierce, who worked at Guantánamo as a judge advocate general (JAG) defense attorney, this way:

It just makes official what has been US policy since 9/11, which is that there will be no notice taken of war crimes because so many of them were being committed by our own allies, our military and intelligence officers, and our elected officials. The war crime of conspiring and waging aggressive war still exists, as torture, denial of fair trial rights, and indefinite detention are war crimes. But how embarrassing and revealing of hypocrisy would it be to charge a foreign official with war crimes such as these?

Guantánamo JAG attorneys like Pierce are among the real, if unsung, heroes of this sorry period. They continue to advocate for their indefinitely detained, still untried clients, most of whom will probably never leave that prison. Despite the executive order President Obama signed on his first day in office to close GITMO, it remains open to this day and Donald Trump has promised to “load it up with some bad dudes,” Geneva Conventions be damned.

Indeed, Secretary of Defense James (“Mad Dog”) Mattis has said that the president has the right to lock up anyone identified as a “combatant” in our forever wars, well, forever. In 2016, he assured the

Senate Armed Services Committee that any detainee who “has signed up with this enemy”—no matter where “the president, the commander-in-chief, sends us” to fight—should know that he will be a “prisoner until the war is over.” In other words, since the war on terror will never end, anyone the US captures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Niger, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, or elsewhere will face the possibility of spending the rest of his life in Guantánamo.

Recycling War Criminals

Speaking of Mattis and war crimes, there’s already plenty of blood on his hands. He earned that “Mad Dog” sobriquet while commanding the US Marines who twice in 2004 laid siege to Fallujah. During those sieges, American forces sealed that Iraqi city off so no one could leave, attacked marked ambulances and aid workers, shot women, children, and an ambulance driver, killed almost 6,000 civilians outright, displaced 200,000 more, and destroyed 75% of the city with bombs and other munitions. The civilian toll was vastly disproportionate to any possible military objective—itsself the definition of a war crime.

One of the uglier aspects of that battle was the use of white phosphorus, an incendiary munition. Phosphorus ignites spontaneously when exposed to air. If bits of that substance attach to human beings, as long as there’s oxygen to combine with the phosphorus, skin and flesh burn away, sometimes right into the bone. Use of white phosphorus as an anti-personnel weapon is forbidden under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which the US has signed.

In Iraq, Mattis also saw to it that

charges would be dropped against soldiers responsible for murdering civilians in the city of Haditha. In a well-documented 2005 massacre—a reprisal for a roadside bomb—American soldiers shot 24 unarmed men, women, and children at close range. As the convening authority for the subsequent judicial hearing, Mattis dismissed the murder charges against all the soldiers accused of that atrocity.

Mattis is hardly the only slightly used war criminal in the Trump administration. As most people know, the president has just nominated Deputy CIA Director Gina Haspel to head the Agency. There are times when women might want to celebrate the shattering of a glass ceiling, but this shouldn't be one of them. Haspel was responsible for running a CIA black site in Thailand, during a period in the Bush years when the Agency's torture program was operating at full throttle. She was in charge, for instance, when the CIA tortured Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who was waterboarded at least three times and, according to the executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee's Torture report, "interrogated using the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques." (The report provided no further details.)

Haspel was also part of the chain of command that ordered the destruction of videotapes of the torture of Abu Zubaydah (waterboarded a staggering 83 times). According to the PBS show *Frontline*, she drafted the cable that CIA counterterrorism chief José Rodríguez sent out to make sure those tapes disappeared. In many countries, covering up war crimes would itself merit prosecution; in Washington, it earns a promotion.

More on Trump and Torture

Many people remember that Trump campaigned on a promise to bring back waterboarding "and a whole lot worse." On the campaign trail, he repeatedly insisted that torture "works" and that even "if it doesn't work, they [whoever "they" may be] deserve it anyway, for what they're doing." Trump repeated his confidence in the efficacy of torture a few days after his inauguration, saying that "people at the highest level of intelligence" had assured him it worked.

Trump's nominee to replace Rex Tillerson as secretary of state is former Tea Party congressman and CIA Director Mike Pompeo. Known for his antipathy to Muslims (and to Iran), he once endorsed calling his Indian-American electoral opponent a "turban topper."

Pompeo is as eager as Trump to restore torture's good name and legality, although his public pronouncements have sometimes been more circumspect than the president's. During his CIA confirmation hearings he assured the Senate Intelligence Committee of what most of its members wanted to hear: that he would "absolutely not" reinstitute waterboarding and other forms of torture, even if ordered to do so by the president. However, his written testimony was significantly more equivocal. As the *British Independent* reported, Pompeo wrote that he would back reviewing the ban on waterboarding if prohibiting the technique was shown to impede the "gathering of vital intelligence."

Pompeo added that he planned to reopen the question of whether interrogation techniques should be limited to those—none of them

considered torture techniques—found in the Army Field Manual, something legally required ever since, in 2009, President Obama issued an executive order to that effect. ("If confirmed," wrote Pompeo, "I will consult with experts at the [Central Intelligence] Agency and at other organisations in the US government on whether the Army Field Manual uniform application is an impediment to gathering vital intelligence to protect the country.") Unlike many of Trump's appointees, Pompeo is a smart guy, which makes him all the more dangerous.

When President Trump lists his triumphs, often the first one he mentions is the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch as a Supreme Court justice. Gorsuch, too, played a small but juicy role in the Bush torture drama, drafting the president's signing statement for the Detainee Treatment Act when he worked in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel back in 2005. That statement officially outlawed any torture of "war on terror" detainees, and yet left open the actual practice of torture because, as Gorsuch assured President Bush, none of the administration's self-proclaimed "enhanced interrogation techniques" (including waterboarding) amounted to torture in the first place.

Still, of all Trump's recycled appointments, the most dangerous of all took place only recently. The president fired his national security advisor, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, and replaced him with John Bolton of Iran-Contra and Iraq invasion fame.

Under George W. Bush, Bolton was a key proponent of that invasion, which he'd been advocating since at least 1998 when he signed an infamous letter to Bill Clinton from

the Project for a New American Century recommending just such a course of action. In 2002, Bolton, while undersecretary of state for arms control, engineered the dismissal of José Bustani, the head of the U.N.'s Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was involved in overseeing Iraq's disarmament process. A former Bolton deputy told the New York Times that Bolton was dismayed because Bustani "was trying to send chemical-weapons inspectors to Baghdad in advance of the US-led invasion." Presumably Bolton didn't want the U.N. trumpeting the bad news that Iraq had no active chemical weapons program at that moment.

Nor has Bolton ever forgotten his first Middle Eastern fascination, Iran, although nowadays he wants to attack it (along with North Korea) rather than conspire with it, as President Reagan and he did in the 1980s. He's argued in several editorials and as a Fox News commentator—wrongly as it happens—that it would be completely legal for the United States to launch first strikes against both countries. Naturally, he opposes the six-nation pact with Iran to end its nuclear weapons program. When that agreement was signed, the New York Times ran an op-ed by Bolton entitled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran." It should (but doesn't) go without saying that any first strike against another country is again the very definition of the initial crime on that Nuremberg list.

Recycling War Crimes

We can't blame the Trump administration for the decision to support Saudi Arabia's grim war in Yemen, a catastrophe for the

civilians of that poverty-stricken, now famine-plagued country. That choice was made under Barack Obama. But President Trump hasn't shown the slightest urge to end the American role in it either. Not after the Saudis threw him that fabulous party in Riyadh, projecting a five-story-high portrait of him on the exterior of the Ritz Carlton there. Not after his warm embrace of Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman during his recent visit to the United States. In fact, at their joint press conference, Trump actually criticised former president Obama for bothering the Saudis with complaints about human rights violations in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia itself.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to fund and support the Saudi military's three-year-old war crime in that country, providing weaponry (including cluster bombs), targeting intelligence, and mid-air refueling for Saudi aircraft conducting missions there. The conflict, which the New York Times has called "the world's worst humanitarian crisis," has killed at least ten thousand people, although accurate numbers are almost impossible to come by. As of December 2017, the Yemen Data Project had catalogued 15,489 separate air attacks, of which almost a third involved no known military targets and another 4,800 hit targets that have yet to be identified. Hospitals and other health facilities have been targeted along with crowded markets. Government funding for public health and sanitation ended in 2016, leading to a cholera epidemic that the *Guardian* calls "the largest and fastest-spreading outbreak of the disease in modern history."

Through the illegal blockading of Yemen's ports, Saudi Arabia and its allies have exposed vast numbers of Yemenis to the risk of famine as well. Even before the latest blockade began in November 2017, that country faced the largest food emergency in the world. Now, it is in the early stages of a potentially devastating famine caused entirely by Saudi Arabia's illegal war, aided and abetted by the United States. In addition, Trump has increased the number of drone assassinations in Yemen, with their ever-present risk of civilian deaths.

Yemen is hardly the only site for actual and potential Trump administration war crimes. In response to requests from his military commanders, the president has, for instance, eased the targeting restrictions that had previously been in place for drone strikes, a decision he's also failed to report to Congress, as required by law. According to Al-Jazeera, such drone strikes in countries ranging from Libya to Afghanistan will no longer require the presence of an "imminent threat," which means "the US may now select targets outside of armed conflict," with increased risk of hitting noncombatants. Also relaxed has been the standard previously in place "of requiring 'near certainty' that the target is present" before ordering a strike. Drone operators will now be permitted to attack civilian homes and vehicles, even if they can't confirm that the human being they are searching for is there. Under Trump, the CIA, which President Obama had largely removed from the drone wars, is once again ordering such attacks along with the military. All of these changes make it more likely that Washington's serial aerial

assassinations will kill significant numbers of civilians in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and other target countries.

Defense Secretary Mattis has also loosened the rules of engagement in Afghanistan by, for example, removing the “proximity requirement” for bombing raids. In other words, US forces are now free to drop bombs even when the target is nowhere near US or Afghan military forces. As Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee last October,

If they are in an assembly area, a training camp, we know they are an enemy and they are going to threaten the Afghan government or our people, [Gen. John Nicholson, commander of US Forces Afghanistan,] has the wherewithal to make that decision. Wherever we find them, anyone who is trying to throw the NATO plan off, trying to attack the Afghan government, then we can go after them.

Under such widened rules for air strikes—permitting them anytime our forces notice a group of people “assembling” in an area—the chances of killing civilians go way up. And indeed, civilian casualties rose precipitously in Afghanistan last year.

And then there’s always the chance—the odds have distinctly risen since the appointments of two raging Iranophobes, Pompeo and Bolton, to key national security positions—that Trump will start his very own unprovoked war of aggression. “I’m good at war,” Trump told an Iowa rally in 2015. “I’ve had a lot of wars of my own. I’m really good at war. I love war in a certain way, but only when we win.” With Mike Pompeo whispering in one ear and John Bolton in the

other, it's frighteningly likely Trump will soon commit his very own war crime by starting an aggressive war against Iran.

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**Who Allows Usurpation of
Constitutional Values?**

Sandeep Pandey

**Panchayats Massacred
in Bengal**

Mrinal Biswas

**Guilty Men of Two-Nation
Theory:**

**A Hindutva Project Borrowed
by Jinnah in India**

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Karnataka Elections: Some Musings...

Neeraj Jain

With the swearing in of Kumaraswamy as the Chief Minister of Karnataka on May 23, 2018, the curtains have come down on the eight day drama that unfolded in the State following the declaration of election results of the Karnataka State Assembly polls on May 15. The BJP became the single largest party, winning 104 seats, but was 7 seats short of the half way mark. Meanwhile, erstwhile rivals Congress and JD(S), who won 78 and 37 seats respectively, quickly stitched together an alliance and staked claim to form the government in the State.

However, late in the evening on May 16, Governor Vajubhai Vala, an old RSS man, multiple term minister in the Gujarat State government and a close aide of Narendra Modi during the 13 years he was Chief Minister of Gujarat before he was nominated Governor of Karnataka in 2014, chose to invite the BJP legislature party leader B.S. Yeddyurappa to form the government in the State and gave him a huge 15 days to prove his majority. The Congress-JDS combine rushed to the Supreme Court for an urgent

hearing, challenging the Governor's order. In an unprecedented pre-dawn hearing that began at 2.11 am and ended at 5.28 am, the Supreme Court refused to stay the swearing-in of Yeddyurappa as the Chief Minister, but asked the Attorney General to place before it the papers on the basis of which the Governor had taken his decision at the next hearing on May 18. Hours later, in the morning of May 17, Yeddyurappa was sworn in as Chief Minister of Karnataka by the Governor. With the BJP having been given 15 days to stitch together a majority, the Congress-JDS in what has become routine today for Indian democracy quickly bussed out their MLAs to the Telengana capital of Hyderabad to prevent the BJP from reaching out to them and getting them to defect. Simultaneously, the Congress released a series of audio recordings, where BJP leaders (including B.S. Yeddyurappa himself) were heard talking to Congress MLAs, promising them Cabinet berths and huge amounts of cash for switching sides.

Resuming the hearing on the Congress-JDS petition on the morning of May 18, the three judge

Supreme Court bench reduced the 15-day window given by the Governor to Yeddyurappa to prove his majority, and ordered a floor test in the Karnataka Assembly at 4 pm on May 19, turning down pleas made by Yeddyurappa's counsel for more time. This decision effectively sealed the fate of Yeddyurappa, as the time given by the Supreme Court was too less for the BJP to successfully indulge in horse-trading. After 56 hours as Chief Minister, he resigned from his post even before the trust motion was moved in the Assembly.

An analysis of the Karnataka election results reveals that while the Congress got nearly 2% more votes than the BJP (Congress got 38% votes, BJP 36.2%), the BJP was more successful in translating its votes into seats, managing to get 26 more seats than the Congress. The JDS-Congress alliance together has 56.4% of the votes (JDS got 18.4% votes). But the biggest winner of the 2018 Karnataka Assembly elections is clearly the BJP – it increased its vote share by 16% as compared to its tally of 19.9% votes that it got in the 2013 Assembly elections. The Congress too increased its vote share by 1.4% over its 2013 number. The JDS suffered a slight decline in its vote share – it had got 20.2% of the votes in 2013.

This clearly reveals that fascist forces have made deep inroads into the southern state of Karnataka. The BJP-RSS formula of launching hate campaigns against the minorities and raising false emotive issues like the issue of Jinnah's portrait in AMU and thereby polarising the electorate to consolidate the so-called 'Hindu' vote is succeeding even in the south.

Pushed to the wall by the BJP juggernaut which is threatening to marginalise all the opposition parties

in the country, the top leaders of nearly all the prominent opposition parties came down to Bengaluru for the swearing in of the JD(S)-Congress coalition government headed by H.D. Kumaraswamy on May 23. Among those who attended were Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, SP president Akhilesh Yadav, BSP supremo Mayawati, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, LJD leader Sharad Yadav, as well as the Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee and her Andhra Pradesh counterpart Chandrababu Naidu. Clearly, the ground is being set for an anti-BJP coalition for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The opposition needs to thank Governor Vajubhai Vala for creating the conditions which led to this huge show of opposition unity. His decision to invite Yeddyurappa to become the Chief Minister and giving him 15 days to prove his majority – enough time to get at least 7 MLAs to defect – clearly proved once again to the opposition the ruthlessness of the BJP in its quest for absolute power, steamrolling all opposition. The Congress-JDS coalition is also likely to be more stable; the threat posed by the BJP and its RSS pracharak Governor will force both to be more accommodative in the inevitable tussle between them over distribution of Cabinet berths.

If the growing offensive of the fascist forces on the democratic and secular fabric of the country is to be checked, then a unity of the opposition is a must. Only a united opposition can defeat the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. That the BJP can be defeated was proven by the defeat of the BJP candidates in recent byelections held in UP and

Rajasthan. Had the Congress and JDS entered into a pre-poll alliance in Karnataka, they would have swept the polls, winning at least 150 of the 222 seats. The same scenario would have prevailed in the 2017 Assembly elections in UP, where the 39% vote share of BJP would have been no match for the combined vote share of Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party and Congress at over 50%.

But the problem is, even if the opposition unites and wins the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it will not be enough to check the gradual growth of the RSS-led fascist forces in the country. The RSS is probably the world's largest cadre-based organisation. On the other hand, the united opposition is only a rag-tag coalition, that will have only come together due to the threat posed by the BJP. Its commitment to democracy and secularism is very weak, as is proven by so many past instances. Neither does it have an alternate pro-people economic programme. In fact, it is the policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation implemented by the previous UPA Government—which led to rising inflation, worsening unemployment, a huge agrarian crisis, and a massive increase in poverty and destitution—that created the conditions for the BJP to sweep to power in 2014.

Therefore, if indeed the opposition unites and does win the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, there is no guarantee that it will not implement policies that blatantly favour big corporate houses as in the past. There is no guarantee that it will take steps to hugely increase access to free / affordable and good quality education and health care and safe drinking for the ordinary people, that it will provide a decent

pension to the elderly, that it will implement policies that will lead to the creation of a large number of secure and regular jobs with a decent pay, that it will take steps to revive Indian agriculture and bring it out of the crisis which has pushed more than 3 lakh farmers to commit suicide in the past two decades, that it will take steps to reverse the policies of privatisation being implemented in the country for the past three decades. And in case it does not implement these pro-people policies, once again, in the next elections, the BJP will take advantage to come back to power, and meanwhile the RSS will have further increased its strength.

Given this situation, it is important for the socialist parties and socialist activists within this opposition alliance to unite and press the united opposition to accept a minimum alternative pro-people programme. This alternate programme can be the genuine implementation of the economic programme as outlined in the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. The Directive Principles direct the State to:

- strive to build a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.
- strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and ensure that there is no concentration of wealth in the country;
- ensure that the ownership and control of the country's resources should be such that they benefit the common good, implying that they should not be used for private enrichment.
- make effective provision for securing the right to work, for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensure equal

pay for equal work for both men and women, and ensure that people get a decent wage that enables them to have a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.

- regard improvement of public healthcare facilities and raising the level of nutrition of the people as among its primary duties.
- make effective provision for securing the right to education; endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.
- endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities amongst people.

Even though the Directive Principles are not enforceable by law, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar made it very clear in a speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 19, 1948 that the Assembly desires that in future, both the legislature and the executive must make these principles "the basis of all executive and legislative action . . . taken hereafter in the matter of the governance of the country." He went on to explicitly state that the Assembly desires that future governments must strive in the fulfillment of these Directive Principles "even under hard and unpropitious circumstances". This means that the Constitution makers were of the opinion that while at the time of independence, due to the immense poverty of the country, it was not possible to make the economic and social rights embedded in Part IV of the Constitution justiciable, as development proceeds and wealth generation takes place, these rights

must be guaranteed.

Seventy years later, so much wealth creation has taken place in the country. Therefore, all believers in socialist ideology and principles must come together and demand of the united opposition that the time has come to implement the economic programme contained in the Directive Principles, that the economic rights mentioned in the Directive Principles be considered as fundamental rights and they be guaranteed.

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Who Allows Usurpation of Constitutional Values?

Sandeep Pandey

Prakash Singh, a former Director General of Police, who was Chief of the Border Security Force, UP police and Assam police, has written a piece in the Indian Express saying that Kathua and Unnao incidents of rape were not the darkest hour since independence as claimed in a protest letter to the Prime Minister by 49 prominent retired bureaucrats, which include N.C. Saxena, E.A.S. Sarma, Harsh Mander, Wajahat Habibullah and Aruna Roy. Towards the end of his article, Prakash Singh suggests that rather than playing into the hands of forces out to tarnish the image of India, the distinguished civil servants should have asked for systemic changes in the criminal justice system. If he thinks that the incidents of Kathua and Unnao were bad, by writing this article he is conveying a totally opposite message. His article seems to be playing down the incidents.

They were not mere rape incidents. They were incidents in which the government was taking the side of accused. Even that is not something new. In a number of incidents, the political parties in power have for their vested interests sided with the culprits. But what is most appalling about the Kathua incident is that in a rally in support of Special Police Officer Deepak Khajuria who is an accused in the rape and murder of the 8 year old nomad girl Asiya, the tricolour was used by right wing Hindutva group and Bhartiya Janata Party office bearers who participated in it. Such things have never occurred before in this country. The politics

of nationalism is being used either to conduct crimes or to defend criminals.

Consider the kind of things which have started taking place with the rise of BJP as political force and specially since its ascendancy to the seat of power in Delhi:

- Narendra Dhabolkar was shot dead on 20 August 2013, Govind Pansare was fatally attacked on 16 February 2015, Professor M.M. Kalburgi shot dead on 30 August 2015 and Gauri Lankesh too was shot dead on 5 September 2017 for holding views which were critical of right-wing thinking.
- On 28 September 2015 a mob killed Mohammad Akhlaq near Dadri by lynching on the suspicion of having slaughtered a cow and consuming beef. There is a law in Uttar Pradesh to deal with cow slaughter.
- On 18 March 2016 another mob calling themselves gau rakshaks lynched 32 year old Mazloom Ansari and 12 year old Imtiaz in Latehar district of Jharkhand and hanged them to death from a tree when they were walking 8 oxen to a cattle fair.
- On 11 July 2016, four dalit youth who traditionally used to skin dead cows were accused of cow slaughter and beaten in public by gau rakshaks in Una, Gujarat, an incident which created national uproar.
- On 1 April 2017, Pehlu Khan was returning from Jaipur after purchasing cows and calves and heading towards his village

Nuh in Haryana when he was stopped by a cow vigilante group and lynched to death, even though he had all the proper documents from Jaipur Municipal Corporation to show that the cattle was meant for dairy. Sadhvi Kamal praised the murderous gau rakshaks and equated them to Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad.

- On 20 April 2017, the BJP Member of Parliament Raghav Lakhpal Sharma from Saharanpur in UP tried to forcibly take out a rally to mark the birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar through a Muslim locality of Sadak Dudhali village. Ambedkar's birth anniversary is 14 April. Why did he insist on taking out a rally through a Muslim locality? When the police denied him permission, the MP attacked the residence of Senior Superintendent of Police with his supporters.
- On 5 May 2017, members of Thakur community forcibly wanted to take out a Maharana Pratap Jayanti procession through a Dalit basti in Shabbirpur village of Saharanpur. There were clashes at Sant Ravidas temple in which a youth Sumit Singh died due to asphyxiation after he tried to burn the idol of Sant Ravidas. Thakurs took revenge and burned 55 Dalit houses.
- When violence erupted in Kasganj on Republic Day 2018, the District Magistrate of Bareilly, Raghvendra Vikram

Singh, publicly raised the question as to why Hindutva groups forcibly enter Muslim dominated areas, raise anti-Pakistan slogans and create ruckus? One person died that day in the ensuing violence.

- Akhila Ashokan converted to Islam, adopted the name Hadiya, and married Shefin Jehan. In May 2017, the High Court of Kerala annulled the marriage based on a report of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) stating that she was a victim of indoctrination and psychological kidnapping. In March 2018 Supreme Court restored her marriage. NIA has been supposedly established to combat terror in India.

India is not short of problems, from farmers' suicides to malnourishment of children, that

we needed these new types of problems to be thrust upon the country. The above mentioned series of incidents, a list which is by no means complete, have vitiated the atmosphere in the country in which Dalits, Muslims and opponents of right wing ideology have been the main targets. The BJP government has not taken action against the attackers as such incidents promote its political agenda of polarisation of society and hence enables it to garner votes. This has jeopardised the Constitutional values of democracy, equality and secularism, about which 49 former bureaucrats have expressed concern.

Prakash Singh should have stood up against this usurpation of our Constitutional values and made it a half century of former bureaucrats who have spoken out against it,

rather than appearing to take the side of forces which he himself believes to be divisive.

He calls Babri Masjid a dilapidated mosque and regrets that there was no protest over damage to 208 temples in J&K. The first serial bomb blast incident in Mumbai took place in reaction to the Babri Masjid demolition. Even though it might have been a dilapidated structure, it was responsible for triggering a series of terrorist incidents in India. It is a pity that a person of his standing makes this kind of comparison. It is because of people like him holding responsible positions in government that incidents like those described above are allowed to take place and the culprits are not restrained. We hope that he'll review his position.

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Panchayats Massacred in Bengal

Mrinal Biswas

Forebodings were there. People were wondering as to how much violence would be unleashed in panchayat elections this time in West Bengal. Feared perpetrators were the ruling Trinamul Congress led by the maverick Mamata Banerjee. As was expected, widespread violence marred the elections; nearly 30 people died, and there were hundreds of injuries. However, this poll violence did not catch the attention of people across the country, because of the excitement generated by the turbulent Karnataka assembly elections which took place at around the same time.

The brook-no-opposition policy of Bengal's ruling party is no more

a secret. It is now well known that the Trinamul Congress wants opposition-mukt (opposition-free) bodies at different levels. The panchayat elections were held under that fearsome pressure. Lumpen elements with adequate backings manipulated the entire poll procedure, from the very beginning when nomination filings are done to the last stage of vote counting. It was indeed a massacre of democracy in the State.

The State-appointed Election Commissioner apparently failed to act independently. State interference in the affairs of the State election commission were very visible to all. The Commission's notifications

and decisions drew widespread opposition protests. It attracted flak even from people like Somnath Chatterjee, former Lok Sabha Speaker and distinguished lawyer. The Commission was forced to approach the Calcutta High Court and even the Supreme Court under pressure from the opposition parties.

The opposition parties in the electoral arena were the CPI(M)-led Left Front, Congress and BJP. None of these parties were any match to Trinamul in the mobilisation of lumpen elements. Even before the election day, these elements instilled a sense of fear in the minds of the rural citizens with demonstrations of their fire power. Ironically, it was

Is it Politically Relevant Today to Ask Whether Nehru Visited Bhagat Singh in Jail?

Ram Puniyani

the CPI(M) which had in its heydays terrorised the opposition and the voters. Now, Trinamul has imitated this example with great success. No less a handicap for the opposition was the apathy shown by the apparatus of the State machinery, especially the police, which completely failed to do its democratic duty. And so a cakewalk for the Trinamul Congress was a foregone conclusion. Mamata Banerjee has however claimed that the elections were more peaceful than in the past, showing that democracy is truly alive in Bengal, and the election results demonstrate the tremendous support her party continues to enjoy.

When one comes to cold figures it will reveal that no opposition parties could file nominations or rather were not allowed to file nominations for altogether 20,076 seats spread over gram panchayats, panchayat samitis and district councils (zila parishads). Hence, the Trinamul Congress won these seats uncontested, which constitute 34.20 per cent of the total panchayat seats. Elections in the rest of the seats were held in extraordinary circumstances, amid polling officers resigning and several incidents of ballot papers being tampered by armed gangs invading the booths. Opposition polling agents were driven out in several places. These elements created a reign of terror outside several polling centres, with the police remaining mere onlookers. Opposition party activists and innocent voters under attack left the polling booths in many cases. Predictably, Trinamul swept almost the entire panchayat polls, with minor aberrations here and there.

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In the recently held Karnataka elections, Narendra Modi made several statements which were not true, and which were made to raise the emotive pitch against his opponents. In a blatant lie, at a rally in Bidar, he asked, “When Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt, Veer Savarkar, greats like them were jailed fighting for the country’s independence, did any Congress leader go to meet them?” One is surprised as to how can this be an electoral issue today? The central tactic of BJP and communal organisations is to bypass the issues related to people’s needs and distract their attention towards emotive issues. Modi has very regularly raised such issues in an attempt to put his opponents in a bad light. He has no qualms about even saying untruths with great amount of confidence. In the statement–question raised by him about Congress leaders visiting Bhagat Singh and Savarkar in jail, he is speaking a lie on one side and trying to glorify his icon Savarkar on the other.

As a matter of fact, the Indian National Congress, while it had differences with revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, greatly respected the high level of commitment and dedication of these young men. There are reports in the *Tribune* (August 9 and 10, 1929) about Nehru visiting Bhagat Singh and his comrades in jail. Motilal Nehru had even formed a committee to demand humane treatment for the

revolutionaries on fast unto death. In his autobiography, *Towards Freedom*, Jawaharlal Nehru gives a very touching account of his meeting Bhagat Singh, Jatin Das and other young revolutionaries, “I happened to be in Lahore when the hunger strike was already a month old. I was given permission to visit some of the prisoners in the prison, and I availed myself of this. I saw Bhagat Singh for the first time, and Jatindranath Das and a few others. They were all very weak and bedridden, and it was hardly possible to talk to them much. Bhagat Singh had an attractive, intellectual face, remarkably calm and peaceful. There seemed to be no anger in it. He looked and talked with great gentleness, but then I suppose that anyone who has been fasting for a month will look spiritual and gentle. Jatin Das looked milder still, soft and gentle like a young girl. He was in considerable pain when I saw him. He died later, as a result of fasting, on the sixty-first day of the hunger strike.”

The other aspect of the statement by Modi is to equate Savarkar with dedicated young revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. This seems to be a clever ploy to elevate Savarkar to a level to which he does not belong. While Bhagat Singh was in jail, pending death penalty, he was requested by his family to seek clemency, which Bhagat refused. On the contrary, he wrote to the British Government that since he and his comrades have been sentenced

to death for waging war against the empire, he should be made to face the firing squad and not be given death by hanging. In contrast, Savarkar, after being sentenced for his role in the case of murder of a British officer, totally changed his stance in jail, surrendered to the British and wrote a series of apology letters, promising them help in future! He continued to remain loyal to the British after his release from jail.

In the early 1920s, the Congress, in recognition of Savarkar's initial role, tried to put pressure on the British Government for his release, but Savarkar was already writing petition after petition to the British to release him. He in fact gave a written undertaking, which in a way represented his total surrender to the British, "I hereby acknowledge that

I had a fair trial and just sentence. I heartily abhor methods of violence resorted to in days gone by and I feel myself duty bound to uphold law and constitution (British: added) to the best of my powers and am willing to make the 'reform' a success in so far as I may be allowed to do so in future." (from facsimile of Savarkar's letter to British authorities, published in Frontline, April 7, 1995). There are many such letters and finally the British granted him clemency.

This act of his seeking pardon from the British was a betrayal of freedom movement. His followers present it as a tactical ploy to get released so that he could continue his struggle against British rule. As matter of fact, after his release, Savarkar floated the concept of Hindu nationalism, brought to fore the word 'Hindutva' (total

Hinduness) and stated that there are two nations in the country, the Hindu nation and the Muslim nation! This was precisely opposite of the politics of Muslim nationalism being brought up by Muslim league. This is what also contributed to the tragedy of partition.

So Modi on the one hand lies about Congress leaders ignoring those struggling for freedom, while on the other he puts Savarkar in the same category as Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh remained committed to his ideology and path of resistance against British power. For his principles, he undertook a hunger strike in jail. In contrast, Savarkar buckled under the jail conditions and surrendered to the British. The Goebbelsian methods being resorted to by Modi need to be opposed.

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Broken Dreams and Lost Lives: Israel, Gaza and the Hamas Card

Stanley L. Cohen

For days now, the Israeli rewrite has been well underway, working overtime, to convince the world that seven weeks of carnage in Palestine, more particularly Gaza, did not happen. Or, if it did, Israel's response to the Great Return March was a measured, proportionate answer to the menace posed by some burning kites, waving flags and nihilist teens armed with slingshot weapons of mass destruction.

At times, we've seen Zionists rip a page straight out of the "Sandy Hook" playbook, suggesting gruesome virtual film footage of the on-going blood bath was

largely staged as if an anti-Semitic Hollywood back lot production. Indeed, to some, it appears the latest Palestinian victims include the same crises actors used over and over again in false flag operations ranging from Douma, Syria to Parkland, Florida.

Other apologists have turned the morgues of Gaza into a cynical goodwill gesture. Urging belief that if Israeli intent was mass slaughter thousands more would have found eternal peace as opposed to merely being left crippled or limbless on the floors of overbooked hospitals covered with the burn of noxious

fumes as rivers of blood passed them by.

To be sure, the methodical madness that is Israel goes something like this: We have the most effective, disciplined, efficient killers in the world. Had we wished to execute many more, we could have done so with abandon and relative ease.

Of course, it is that very expertise that puts to lie the claim that the 124 clearly identified members of the press killed or injured these past months had fallen victim by mere happenstance, alone.

Apparently, Palestinians should give thanks that Israel merely

wanted to set a tone with a controlled atrocity, these past Fridays of protest, as opposed to one of its, by now, regular scenes of effortless carnage sown throughout Gaza like a well planned mosaic of anguish to the palpable indifference of the world.

Can it be long before Israel deducts the cost of ammunition, otherwise dangled for its token monthly occupation tithe, for the extorted quiet trauma of some two million political prisoners?

After-all, busy these days in Syria, saber-rattling in Iran and preparing for its long overdue coast to coast crush of Gaza, even the most prosperous war criminal can, at times, run up against constraints on available weaponry. Despite being the world's 8th largest arms exporter, Israel, always on the make for more and more military gifts, would have us believe it is no exception.

And, predictably, when other excuses have collapsed to the honest lens of public transparency, the Hamas card is once again played with almost sneering contempt for the world's ability to pierce the half-truths that fly, each day, alongside the Star of David cast throughout the occupied skyline that is Palestine.

Time and time again, many have been an all too willing, if not complicit, party to Israel's deflection use of Hamas to explain away the inexplicable: just how proportionality can ever be manipulated to excuse an unchecked attack by the 16th most powerful military force of our time, with thousands of tanks, aircraft and combat ships, with a multi-billion dollar yearly military budget, upon a largely tattered urban enclave armed with little more than the determination and spirit of its long embattled people.

It works. It has for decades in

a world that long ago condensed the "good" to those with proper skin tone, religion and culture and the "bad" to those who invariably pray five times a day, not once each Saturday or Sunday.

There are distinct components to Israel's grand witting misspeak about Hamas and Palestinians: the first is a desperate attempt to recast who and what the movement is and from where it has come.

On this point, Israel is to be applauded as it has apparently, successfully, packaged and sold an entirely fictitious representation of the movement to those who seek little more than a fabled narrative to maintain their dutiful support of its colonial project.

I am no stranger to Hamas. To me the movement is not an academic pursuit or abstract intellectual curiosity that only takes shape whenever it confronts the brute force that is Israel . . . be it in the 365 square kilometer (141 sq mi) confines of Gaza or in the streets and universities of the West Bank. To the contrary, I have been privileged to represent more than a few of its leaders for some two decades. On occasion, the movement has sought my counsel on issues of international law prior to making its decision on how best to proceed with a given matter.

Many of these men and women have also been close personal friends for years. I have often shared a warm welcome and meal at a family dinner table or an overnight stay with Hamas leaders throughout my travels in the Middle East—on occasion against the backdrop of on-going Israeli carnage or in its aftermath.

I have known well most of its founders and current leadership

including those that have either been assassinated or languish today in Israeli prisons and elsewhere, denied any scrap of justice or due process. Over the years, I have spent literally thousands of hours meeting with movement leaders in prisons, at conferences, in Palestine and elsewhere.

These are virtuous, dedicated nationalists who seek not power for the sake of it or personal profit but have long stood among those who have fought against overwhelming odds and violence to lead the way toward a Palestinian home built of the marrow of freedom, justice and equality.

Contrary to the Israeli and Western effort to reduce Hamas to a collective of essentially unschooled or unsophisticated foreign born so-called Islamists, nothing could be further from the truth. Hamas is a movement born of Palestine, composed of Palestinians who were raised on the very streets where the blood of their people and families has been lost to the occupation terror imposed by Israel. For the many who suffer from a now decade old blockade of Gaza—with its lack of food, water, medicine and mobility—Hamas and their families have known the same isolation and paid a like price.

Comprised, originally, of physicians, scholars, academics, lawyers, scientists, artists, religious leaders and farmers, it is a movement that evolved of necessity, born in the vacuum of what would obviously become the failed vision of Oslo.

More than a few of these leaders escaped the tyranny of Israeli oppression, years before, to obtain education and accomplishment abroad—only later to give up the fruits of all personal success to return

to their homeland and fight for its liberation.

Over the years, Hamas evolved from a social service network, throughout Palestine, to become an armed guard of the Palestinian people through the discrete Qassam Brigades and an elected political movement swept to power in 2006. That victory came in what was described, then, by former President Carter as the most transparent and successful electoral process he had observed as a monitor over his many years of such service in the Middle East.

Not long thereafter, all of Gaza was punished for the temerity of its electoral will through the imposition of the embargo that a decade later remains in place as an on-going stranglehold on the health, welfare and safety of its two million residents, punctuated by massive deadly Israeli onslaughts every few years.

Portrayed as little more than a terrorist group, one story, in particular, speaks volumes about the depth and breadth of the movement. Invited by one of its top leaders to attend a luncheon outside of Palestine, I arrived at a fourth floor walk-up to find most of its leadership, along with a number of other Palestinian resistance movements, engaged in a debate. No, it was not a heated argument over political tactics or military targets. During the next two hours, tempers flared over whether, and to what extent, language immersion should be included as a teaching tool in grammar school education throughout Palestine. The discussion was led by a PhD linguist schooled by the legendary MIT professor, Noam Chomsky. Hebrew was among the languages to be learned.

I am not naive or starry-eyed. Like all political and national liberation movements Hamas has had its problems and made its share of missteps. Nevertheless, Israel's long-standing attempts to reduce it to a selfish and reckless collective willing to sacrifice the interests and safety of Palestinians, including their own families, to the winds of cheap political gain, is just so much nefariously crafted delusion.

Although this unashamed invention has found a warm welcome in the insipid language of Zionist supporters and ignorant pundits, those with informed knowledge or experience with Hamas understand this call for what it is: a shameful and typical deflection from Israeli responsibility for what can only be called a willing slaughter, these last few months, that ranks among its many others . . . always, of course, because it had no choice.

The notion that the movement would ask or send people of Gaza to certain injury or death, at the hands of Israeli assassins lying in wait for all to see, reeks of the grand imperial lie that has been Israel for seventy years.

It is no less repugnant than the racist proposition that Palestinians, themselves, care so little about their own families or community that they would willingly sacrifice them en masse to gain the momentary sympathy of a world long inured to their isolation and loss of liberty and life.

Born of supremacist arrogance, Israel now seeks to reduce millions of Palestinians, who have struggled for generations, to little more than unthinking sheeple awaiting instructions from Hamas on when, and how, to express their will or gain their independence. Those with any

connection to Palestine, or its long oppressed people, know all too well that the bars of its prison will never quiet its innate thirst for justice and freedom.

In Israel, the expedient conflation of victimiser and victim . . . of occupier and occupied . . . is brazen and readily transparent; an indecent marriage of those that would pull the trigger with others who fall prey to its barbaric squeeze. There is simply no honest or moral equivalence.

Yet, in a world that has long found Palestinians to be unworthy of equality and safeguard, this perverse union should come as no surprise. Indeed, willful blindness to Israeli slaughter is the explosive fuel that empowers its rage.

For decades, now, Hamas has become a convenient foil for Israel and its compliant choir after each new horror. Meanwhile, Israel walks away to rearm . . . leaving Palestine to bury her children, but not her hope.

Against the wail of broken dreams and lost lives, the Great Return March, marches on. For Palestinians, there is no choice.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.com

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Nicolas Maduro Wins Venezuelan Presidential Elections

In a big win for the global socialist movement, the heroic people of Venezuela overwhelmingly voted President Nicolas Maduro to power for a second term as Venezuela's president in the presidential elections held on May 20, 2018, Sunday. The National Electoral Council (CNE) of Venezuela announced the result on Sunday night. It declared that with 92.6 percent of the votes counted, Maduro had 5.8 million votes (67.7% of the vote), while his closest rival, former governor Henri Falcón, got 1.8 million votes (21.2%). CNE President Tibusay Lucena added that in total, 8.6 million Venezuelans voted, out of an electoral registry of 20.5 million people.

Despite the crippling sanctions imposed by the United States, and despite its open support for the capitalist opposition which is trying to use every trick in the book to sabotage economic development in Venezuela and push the economy into such a deep economic crisis that the people eventually get fed up and vote Maduro and the Socialist Party of Venezuela out of power, the people firmly stood behind him and the Bolivarian Revolution initiated by former President Hugo Chavez that Maduro is seeking to continue.

As several visitors to Venezuela have pointed out, the people of Venezuela are today amongst the most politically conscious people in the world. While they are of course concerned with the economic crisis gripping Venezuela, they are fully aware that it is the result of imperialism's assault on the Bolivarian Revolution.

In the background of this historic win, we are publishing this series of articles by Marco Teruggi on Chavismo, one article in every subsequent issue. All these pieces were written before the elections.

Chavismo in Seven Parts

Marco Teruggi

Part I: First Delivery: The Old Man and the Machete

One must ask: what are we naming when we say 'Chavismo'? How many types of Chavismo live within Chavismo? It is necessary to break down this word that we use daily. More than a word, it's a category, with a history of more than 20 years. It's necessary to do it particularly in times like these, where we are in dire straits: the presidential elections are round the corner, and we need to win.

I write from certainty: Chavez is more than Chavez. More than a government; a party; a liturgy; 2,000 communes; two million houses; dozens of elections, almost all won. What is it? Chavismo is greater than its very core.

In order to get an answer, you have two steps: dismembering it then putting it back together as a whole. An exercise of analysis to delve into the depths of a political process that adversaries loathe and fear, and which often—in their own ranks—

is reduced to its governmental dimension.

It's hard to understand how we continue standing, against the ropes or in the center of the ring, without getting into the territories where Chavez passions are born; the subjectivities; forms of organisation; relationship between the parties, tensions that seem sometimes to reach the limit and then they're resolved. Behind this question is the main question: what do we defend when we go to elections or confront violence designed to push us to a civil war?

They are eight chavisms. Put them on the table in parts, which are then rearranged to become a single word. It is ourselves, in eight deliveries and a metamorphosis.

First Delivery: The Old Man and The Machete

The old man relates the tale of

when they put a needle in his eye and it loosened everything. He imitates it with his finger, from far away to almost touching it. After they scraped the inside, he thought that was it and he would never see again. During the day the light went from thin to full, and Cuba was not Cuba but Venezuela again, in the lower part of Merida, which is sometimes Zulia, or also Trujillo, and this area is known as Sur del Lago. He returned to grab the machete, put on his boots, walk with his half-opened shirt, and rescue land from the hands of the landlords. This can cost you your life. More than 300 peasants were killed in 18 years. Taking power away from those who have always had it unleashes death.

It was his first time on a plane; in an excellent clinic, everything was free. What political process invests money in the eyes of an old peasant? What does an old peasant

think when he recovers the eyesight he once took for granted? He went with his wife and several contingents of Venezuelans. He has not forgotten a single detail, nor about how land is retaken: 15 years later, he is still there; stubborn, with his machete and his muddy boots. The country has changed in that time; the wave of advances against the oligarchy stagnated, with a balance of more than four million hectares recovered and several open debates. Did the lands that were rescued become productive? Did recoveries work better in the hands of the state or organised peasants?

Thousands of pages of similar stories could be written, from the dispossessed masses who could study, get medical attention; those who went from being excluded to politicising, entering theaters and offices—not only to clean them—to access new, imaginary departments, to be claimed by Chavez, coming from that historical territory. It was a radical democratisation in the hands of ordinary people. The barrios, the poor, peasants, marginalised, women—especially women.

Like a dam that burst, and the losers of betrayals of independence and elite pacts broke into the scene. With joyful passions, shockingly cheerful.

Historic Debt

The accumulated historic debt was immense when Hugo Chavez assumed the presidency. Lack of health, access to education, housing, identification, water, food. The greed of those who drove an oil-producing country to poverty. The myth of a happy Venezuela pre-Chavez is false. That Venezuela had flown through the air on February 27, 1989, and the protagonists were the ones who built the backbone of Chavismo. Chavez put his strategic bet on them. And the first thing to

solve that debt in an accelerated way was the opening of public health centers, educational missions, water for the barrios, and food on plates.

Reducing the issue to material affairs is like reducing Chavismo to a government: a mistake. The process encouraged millions: as a people, their national history, their way of life, their skin color. Dignity was the power that was set in motion: it faced the 2002 coup d'état, the oil strike, allowing us to resist these years in which material conquests—with the exception of housing—no longer go forward, but they go backwards instead. Those who are mostly affected are the middle and lower classes, centrally the Chavista social base.

Chavismo was configured as something of its own identity, the political name for those who were always out of the game. There is an equation that rarely fails: the more materially humble a neighborhood is, the more Chavista its people are. The emerging middle class was the first to move away from the impacts of a war designed and combined with errors of their own—the historic middle classes mostly associated their destiny with that of the rich emigrants to Miami. The dimension of Chavismo as identity, enhanced by the rational/sentimental link with Hugo Chavez, was built by the conquest of things: they did not fall from the sky.

I hear the old man. When we are thirsty, he cuts a coconut with the machete, shares its water; part of the production—the recovered lands that now produce corn, yucca, bananas—because this is about democratising the land and restoring its productivity, which the landlords never exploited. The old man has not become rich; he has skin like leather, skinny with tense muscles. Who is going to take away his Chavista vision? Although the situation is

difficult, peasants have been evicted with the complicity of those who should be Chavistas. When offered a bribe in dollars, they turn their back on Chavismo, or maybe they never believed in it. He himself is Chavismo.

Chavismo's Social Base

There are millions like him: the hardcore social base of Chavismo, emerging when many insist the fight is over. On July 30 last year, more than eight million people went out to vote for the National Constituent Assembly after four months of violence, when being a Chavista in an upper-class area was almost certainly a death sentence. Why did they cross rivers to get around paramilitaries and go to vote? It was not for the government, the party, or the need to change the constitution. It was for something bigger, more profound. A history; an identity, it was for oneself. The scale of priorities, values and responsiveness is another.

If you do not understand class—its past, territorial, economic, cultural forms, its way of doing politics—Chavez is not understood. There is the genesis. And that's where you should begin to achieve common sense again. Because many in the same popular areas have moved away, disaffiliated, entered the army of those who rise every day to solve material problems and stopped believing in the revolution. They do not go to another political option; they return to privacy, withdrawal. A product of the wear of war and disappointment with Chavismo leaders who reproduce the ways of doing politics against which the revolution rose: monopolists of the word. It is Chavismo against itself, the many Chavismos within Chavismo. The old man knows it.

Chavez said: "I'm no longer myself." He was right.

Guilty Men of Two-Nation Theory: A Hindutva Project Borrowed by Jinnah in India

Shamsul Islam

No other fascist organisation, in the present world, can beat Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in demagoguery, double-speak and unabashed use of conspiracies. A leading Indian English daily, in the aftermath of 2002 genocide of Muslims in Gujarat, candidly wrote that in case of the RSS, what George Orwell termed as “doublespeak” would be an understatement.¹ It stands true always in the case of RSS. So far as its conspiring mind-set is concerned, it was none other than Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who became the first President of independent India, who brought to the notice of the first home minister of India, Sardar Patel that,

I am told that RSS people have a plan of creating trouble. They have got a number of men dressed as Muslims and looking like Muslims who are to create trouble with the Hindus by attacking them and thus inciting the Hindus. Similarly there will be some Hindus among them who will attack Muslims and thus incite Muslims. The result of this kind of trouble amongst the Hindus and Muslims will be to create a conflagration.²

These above mentioned nasty characteristics of the RSS are in full flow in the case of the recent Hindutva hoodlums’ attack on Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in the name of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Here is a brief recap of the attack: The former Vice President of India,

Hamid Ansari was to address students of AMU as part of awarding the life-time membership of the Aligarh Muslim University Students’ Union (AMUSU) ceremony on May 2, 2018. This programme of Ansari, the former VP of India had the clearance of the intelligence agencies and local State administration as per the protocol.

According to Ansari, his programme at AMU was publicly known and the authorities concerned had been officially intimated about the standard arrangements, including security for the occasion. Despite all this, “the access of the intruders to close proximity of the university guest house where I was staying remains unexplained”.³ The Hindutva hoodlums justified the attack arguing that in AMUSU a photo of founder of Pakistan was displayed. Jinnah’s photo was there as he was conferred life-time membership in the year 1938. It never bothered the Hindutva gang for more than 80 years, but they now resurrected this issue as Hindutva rulers in power in UP were losing fast support of the common Hindus. Ansari rightly said that the precise timings of the attack on AMU and “the excuse manufactured for justifying it” raises serious questions. The Hindutva arsonists demanding removal of Jinnah’s portrait thought that nation did not know that Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, ran coalition governments with the Hindu Mahasabha in 1942–43, as we will see later.

A Few Facts About Jinnah We Must Know

It is pertinent to know the past of Jinnah before he became a prophet of Muslim separatism. During the early decades of the 20th century, he was a die-hard secularist and a part of the Congress leadership, which included Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Annie Besant, M.K. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel and other such icons who led the freedom movement against British rule. Importantly, during these years when Jinnah was apostle of Hindu–Muslim unity and stood for freedom of a united India, the Hindutva camp bracketed him with Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Azad and denigrated him.

Jinnah was not a supporter of militant activities against the British but when Bhagat Singh was jailed and the British Government, which was hell-bent on judicially murdering Bhagat Singh, introduced a bill in the Central Assembly that allowed the court case to begin against him even in the absence of the accused, he delivered a powerful speech against his trial in the Central Assembly (the then Parliament of India), on September 12, 1929. Jinnah said:

The man who goes on hunger strike has a soul. He is moved by that soul and he believes in the justice of his cause. He is no ordinary criminal, who is guilty of cold blooded, sordid wicked crime. . . . I do not approve of

the action of Bhagat Singh . . . I regret that, rightly or wrongly, the youth of today is stirred up . . . however much you deplore them and however much you say they are misguided, it is the system, this damnable system of governance, which is resented by the people.⁴

Earlier, in 1916, he was the leading defence counsel of Bal Gangadhar Tilak (a favourite of the Hindutva clan) in a sedition case against him, punishment for which could have been the death penalty. Jinnah won the historic case against the British government to the terrible humiliation of the foreign rulers.

Around 1935, there arose a serious religious conflict between Sikhs and Muslims of Lahore over possession of a religious site which was claimed to be a martyr's Gurdwara and a mosque by Sikhs and Muslims respectively. The Muslim party approached Jinnah to fight the legal battle on its behalf. Jinnah refused the brief and kept away from the case.

Jinnah parted with the Gandhiled Congress in 1920–21, as he was against mass politics, especially involving religious leaders in national politics. Congress tried to isolate him. Instead of fighting back, he chose to take a path which led him to lead the same Muslim League which earlier he had described as a representative of feudal and aristocratic elements of the Muslim community. In his personal habits and religious beliefs, he could not be counted as a practicing Muslim. Incidentally, he did not know how to read or write Urdu, being proficient in English and Gujarati.

Hindu Nationalists and Not Jinnah Propounded the Two-

Nation Theory

Long before the appearance of Muslim advocates of the two-nation theory, Hindu nationalists had propounded this idea. Muslim League advocates of the two-nation theory were late comers. In fact, in this case, they borrowed heavily from the Hindutva school of thought.

The ball was set rolling by Hindu nationalists at the end of the 19th century in Bengal. In fact Raj Narain Basu (1826–1899), the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh, and his close associate Nabha Gopal Mitra (1840–94) can be called the co-fathers of two-nation theory and Hindu nationalism in India. Basu established a society for the promotion of national feelings among the educated natives which in fact stood for preaching the superiority of Hinduism. He organised meetings proclaiming that Hinduism despite its casteism presented a much higher social idealism than ever reached by the Christian or Islamic civilisations.

Basu not only believed in the superiority of Hinduism over other religions but also was a fervent believer in casteism. He was the first person to conceive of the idea of a Maha Hindu Samiti (All India Hindu Association) and helped in the formation of Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, a precursor of Hindu Mahasabha. He believed that through this organisation, Hindus would be able to establish an Aryan nation in India. He visualised a powerful Hindu nation not only overtaking India but the whole world. He also saw,

the noble and puissant Hindu nation rousing herself after sleep and rushing headlong towards progress with divine prowess. I see this rejuvenated nation again illumining the world by

her knowledge, spirituality and culture, and the glory of Hindu nation again spreading over the whole world.⁵

Nabha Gopal Mitra started organising an annual Hindu Mela. It used to be a gathering on the last day of every Bengali year and highlighted the Hindu nature of all aspects of Hindu Bengali life and continued uninterrupted between 1867 and 1880. Mitra also started a National Society and a National Paper for promoting unity and feelings of nationalism among Hindus. Mitra argued in his paper that the Hindus positively formed a nation by themselves. According to him,

The basis of national unity in India is the Hindu religion. Hindu nationality embraces all the Hindus of India irrespective of their locality or language.⁶

R.C. Majumdar, a keen observer of the rise of Hindu nationalism in Bengal, had no difficulty in arriving at the truth that:

Nabha Gopal forestalled Jinnah's theory of two nations by more than half a century.⁷ (And since then), consciously or unconsciously, the Hindu character was deeply imprinted on nationalism all over India.⁸

Role of Arya Samajists

The Arya Samaj in northern India aggressively preached that Hindu and Muslim communities in India were two different nations. Bhai Parmanand (1876–1947), a leading light of the Arya Samaj in northern India, who was also a leader of both the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, produced an enormous amount of anti-Muslim literature which stressed the fact that India was a land of Hindus and that Muslims

should be relocated.

Long before V.D. Savarkar (1883–1966) and M.S. Golwalkar (1906–73) laid down elaborate theories of Hindu Rashtra allowing no place for minorities, it was Bhai Parmanand who declared in the beginning of the 20th century that followers of Hinduism and Islam in India were two different peoples because Muslims followed a religion which originated in Arab lands. Parmanand specialised in writing popular literature in Urdu in which the main emphasis would be on Hindus being true sons of India and Muslims as outsiders. As early as 1908–09, Parmanand called for the total exchange of Hindu and Muslim populations in two specific areas. According to his plan, elaborated in his autobiography,

*The territory beyond Sind should be united with Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier Province into a great Mussalman kingdom. The Hindus of the region should come away, while at the same time Mussalman in the rest of India should go and settle in this territory.*⁹

Lajpat Rai (1865–1928), a renowned leader of the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha as well of the Arya Samaj, was another prominent advocate of the two-nation theory. A.G. Noorani writes that:

*Long before Mohammad Ali Jinnah pronounced his poisonous two-nation theory in 1939 and demanded a ruinous partition of India in 1940, the Mahasabha leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Savarkar had openly advocated this theory. . .*¹⁰

In 1899, Lajpat Rai while writing an article for the Indian National Congress in the Hindustan Review

declared that “Hindus are a nation in themselves, because they represent civilisation all their own.”¹¹ By 1924 he was more articulate in expounding his two-nation theory. He wrote:

*Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province of the North Western Frontier (2) Western Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.*¹²

Lajpat Rai proposed the partition of Punjab in the following words,

*I would suggest that a remedy should be sought by which the Muslims might get a decisive majority without trampling on the sensitiveness of the Hindus and the Sikhs. My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority, to be a Muslim-governed Province; and the Eastern Punjab, with a large Hindu–Sikhs majority, to be a non-Muslim governed Province.*¹³

It may be noted that the Muslim flag-bearers of the two-nation theory had a fair knowledge of theories propounded by Lajpat Rai and others. However, instead of challenging this anti-national and anti-Muslim theory, they simply copied it.

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Citizens' Statement on Police Violence Against Sterlite Protestors in Thoothukudi

On May 22, 2018, the Tamil Nadu police opened fire in Thoothukudi on a protest march in which thousands of people were participating, demanding the closure of the Sterlite Copper Plant in their area. At least 13 people have died in the firing, and hundreds injured. The police even gave hot pursuit and shot at women and others in fishing hamlets like Thereseapuram.

The people who died are just ordinary people who have been forced to take to the streets, and march to the Collectorate to demand action from an administration that has systematically and for decades failed to enforce the law on Sterlite, and allowed it to violate environmental and land use planning laws with impunity for over two decades.

The District Collector, the chairperson and member secretary of Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, the Secretaries holding the environment portfolios in the Central and State governments, the Ministers of Environment at the State and Centre, and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu need to account for their inaction in the face of overwhelming evidence of illegalities, environmental harm and damage to public health.

Just two months ago, on March 24th 2018, there was a similar protest in which too tens of thousands of people had participated. This forced the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) and the Rural Development Officer (RDO), to take groundwater samples from

7 locations within Sterlite factory premises and 8 from villages around the factory. The results revealed widespread and high levels of contamination in all 15 groundwater sources. Levels of the neurotoxin heavy metal lead, which is particularly toxic to children, were found to be between 4 and 55 times higher than levels considered safe for drinking water.

The company has been shut down many a times through court orders for violation of environmental safeguards, since 1998. At least 15 workers have died and many have been injured due to hazardous working conditions. In 2013, the Supreme Court of India too found the company guilty of misrepresentation, unlicensed operation and polluting the environment, but curiously allowed the company to operate after paying a small fine as it felt India needed the copper.

The company failed to reform its ways even after this narrow judicial escape. The regulators—TNPCB and Ministry of Environment and Forests—too continued their cosy relationship with Sterlite ignoring blatant violations of statutory conditions and clear indications of pollution.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has lost its moral right to govern, and should at the very least ensure that the senior ministers who failed to read the signs properly and take preventive action resign. But before anything else, the Government of Tamil Nadu should have the decency to declare an end to the

toxic terrorism unleashed by Sterlite and permanently close down the polluting unit.

We also demand of the Govt. of TN immediate disbursement of at least Rs. 1 crore compensation to the families of each of the deceased persons, Rs. 50 lakhs to each of the severely injured persons and a permanent government job to at least one member in the family of each of the deceased.

Sd/ by over 100 activists from all over the country.

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Make in India to Kill in India

Sankara Narayanan

BJP's New Sand Mining Policy:

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Sandeep Pandey

**Archbishop's Letter: Storm in
a Tea Cup**

Irfan Engineer

**Strife Torn Kashmir: Longings
for Peace**

Ram Puniyani

**Guilty Men of Two-Nation
Theory:**

**A Hindutva Project Borrowed
by Jinnah in India**

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After Raigad, Jaitapur (Maharashtra), Kalinganagar, Niyamgiri, Gandhamardhan, Dhinkia and Khandadhar (Odisha), Nandigram, Singur (West Bengal), Dandakaranya, Raipur (Chhatishgarh), Saranda (Jharkhand), Singrouli (MP), Kovvada, Sompeta (Andhra Pradesh) and Koodankulam and Neduvasal (Tamil Nadu), the recent unfortunate events at the copper smelter plant of Sterlite Industries at Tuticorin bring out the basic issue back to the table. Can the state agencies and the companies impose projects on the unwilling people?

Lawrence Summers, the World Bank's chief economist in a confidential memo in 1991 said, "Shouldn't the WB be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs (Less Developed Countries)? The measurement of the costs of the health impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view, a given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost, which will be the country of the lowest wages. I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic

waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that." Sterlite Copper is a perfect example of WB's expectations.

The most serious issue with regards to the Sterlite Copper plant, like every other toxic industry, is the ecological damage inflicted on the surroundings. Right from its inception in 1993, the Sterlite plant has been facing resistance from the fishermen groups and the local people. According to residents, the area in the vicinity of the unit is unfit for human habitation. Sterlite is accused of discharging noxious gases, especially during night. Medicines have become the staple diet for the people living around the plant. Impotency and abortion rates are also common now. Eye irritation and disease and death of cattle are some of the other complaints.

Because of the polluted air and ground water, respiratory problems, skin rashes and related problems are rampant. Way back in 1998, the National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), on the instructions of the Madras High Court, checked out groundwater samples taken from a bore well adjacent to Sterlite's surge pond. It found the presence of heavy metals

way beyond permissible levels, including arsenic and aluminum.

With several litigations going on in various courts against the plant, the persistent opposition from the local people and now the latest police firing that killed 13 people, the plant's future appears to be very bleak, despite the covert assistance provided to the company from state agencies. The TNPCB has issued a closure notice to the company, and the power supply is disconnected. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has also announced his government's intention to close down the plant. (*As this article was going to the press came the news that the TN Government has ordered the permanent shut down of the plant – Editor.*)

How could a plant of such hazardous nature play havoc with the environment and the lives of people for over two decades? We have adequate laws to deal with poisonous industries. Even the health inspector of a municipality is vested with powers to shut down such toxic industries. Yet rarely these laws are enforced resulting in massive pollution of the air and water sources and destruction of health and livelihoods of people living around such plants.

The Supreme Court has delivered several pathbreaking judgments in the past three decades with regards to environmentally polluting industries (in cases relating to Kanpur tannery, Oleum gas leak, Udaipur chemical industry, Vellore tannery, Tirupur dyeing, etc). One of the vital guarantees in our Constitution is the protection of the Right to Life enshrined in Article 21. The apex court expanded the concept of the right to life to include the right to a wholesome environment.

Explaining this, the Supreme Court stated: "Article 21 protects the right to life as a fundamental right. Enjoyment of life . . . including [the right to live] with human dignity encompasses within its ambit, the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation, without which life cannot be enjoyed."

Our Constitution evinces great concern for the environment. Article 48-A of the Directive Principles mandates that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment. One of the fundamental duties prescribed in Article 51-A is to protect and improve the natural environment.

Despite these constitutional provisions, pollution continued unabated. The river Ganges was brazenly polluted by the discharge of effluents by some tanneries in Kanpur who, despite notices issued by the Supreme Court to take steps for the primary treatment of industrial effluent, had utterly failed to do so. Hence the court was constrained to issue directions for the closure of the tanneries. The court was conscious that closure of tanneries may bring unemployment and loss of revenue, but it significantly ruled that "life, health and ecology have greater importance to the people."

A five-judge bench, in the Oleum Gas Leak case, unanimously ruled that "an enterprise which is engaged in a hazardous or inherently dangerous industry which poses a potential threat to the health and safety of the persons working in the factory and residing in the surrounding areas *owes an absolute and non-delegable duty to the community* to ensure that no harm results to anyone on account of

hazardous or inherently dangerous nature of the activity which it has undertaken."

In 1996, in the *Udaipur Chemical Industry case*, the court pointed out that the rule of absolute liability is premised on the very nature of the activity carried on and that "the enterprise carrying on the hazardous or inherently dangerous activity *alone* has the resource to discover and guard against hazards or dangers and not the person affected."

The Supreme Court further introduced the Polluter Pays Principle, wherein it stated that the financial costs of preventing or remedying damage caused by pollution should lie with the undertakings that cause the pollution. Under this principle, it is not the role of the government to meet the costs involved in either prevention of such damage, or in carrying out remedial action, because the effect of this would be to shift the financial burden of the pollution incident on the taxpayer.

In its subsequent judgment in the *Vellore Tannery case*, the court held that "the Precautionary Principle and the Polluter Pays Principle are essential features of Sustainable Development." This is a milestone judgment in our environmental jurisprudence. The court reaffirmed the Polluter Pays Principle laid down in its previous judgments to mean that "the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation. Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of Sustainable Development and as such the *polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of*

reversing the damaged ecology.”

Supreme Court judgements constitute the law of the land and are binding on all courts, authorities and persons. Yet Sterlite Copper has violated three important rulings of the apex court, namely: (1) Precautionary Principle; (2) Polluter Pays Principle; & (3) Sustainable Development. These violations by the Sterlite were allowed and blessed by the State agencies and unfortunately the judiciary also rendered a helping hand disregarding its own directives.

With the prospect of Sterlite Copper closing its shop looking bright, Tuticorin is facing a hazardous future. The Supreme Court's ruling

mandates that it is not the role of the government to meet the costs involved in either prevention of ecological damage or in carrying out remedial measures. No part of the liability arising out of industrial pollution can be limited nor passed on to the government.

There can be two views about the advantages or disadvantages of foreign investment in India. But there can be only one view regarding environmental pollution: the health, well-being and protection of our people are paramount and must override revenue considerations. It would be against the cherished fundamental rights of the people of India, whose protection should be

the primary concern of any civilised democratic government. Foreign multinationals are not solicitors of the fundamental rights of our people. The Bhopal Gas case is a burning reminder.

It is very doubtful that the present governments at Chennai and Delhi will force Sterlite to implement remedial measures to bring the ecology back to its original state and compensate all the victims, both now and in the times to come. Let's hope the judiciary comes to the people's aid in this, it appears to be the only ray of hope for the people of Tuticorin.

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BJP's New Sand Mining Policy: Award Contracts to Party Supporters

Sandeep Pandey

When Bhartiya Janata Party government was formed in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath a number of educated middle class people thought that days of caste politics and corruption were over. They were expecting a clean government.

The Yogi Adityanath government cancelled all sand mining contracts alleging illegality and corruption in operations and announced that it will soon come up with a new sand mining policy. This seemed justified because the escapades of Gayatri Prasad Prajapati, the Mining Minister in the previous government, were fresh in public memory. Illegal sand mining is not just a menace in UP but is an all India phenomena

and officials have had to pay with their lives if they tried to take action against illegal operations. To recall a few incidents, the sand mafia killed deputy tehsildar R. Venkatesan in 2004 in Tamil Nadu, IPS officer Narendra Kumar was killed in Morena (MP) in 2012, forest guard Narendra Sharma was run over by a tractor trolley and crushed to death in Raira, Gwalior (MP) in 2016, and earlier this year, Boyini Sayulu, a Village Revenue Assistant, in Kamareddy, Telengana was mowed down by the sand mafia when he tried to stop a sand tractor which was illegally transporting sand.

Now, the UP Government has awarded three sand mining contracts to Suprayas Construction, Deoria,

Reliable Infrabuild, Gorakhpur and Globe India Infrastructure, Maharajganj in the bed of Narayani or Badi Gandak river in Kushinagar district. All these companies are connected to BJP Members of Parliament Guddu Pandey from Padrauna, Harish Dwivedi from Basti and Pankaj Chaudhary from Maharajganj, and were recommended by at least another ten BJP Members of Legislative Assembly. These contracts are expected to fetch Rs. 2,47,61,520, Rs. 2,65,21,530 and Rs. 2,32,45,410 respectively, as revenue for the government in the first year. This means that government will get a total of Rs. 7,45,28,460 from these contracts. A tractor trolley, which can fill upto 3 cubic metres

of sand, is sold for Rs 4,000 in the market. The cost that the contractor is required to pay to the government is only Rs 65 per cu.m. The margin is enormous.

No mining contract has been awarded ever before in this area. These contracts were awarded without the formation of a sub-divisional committee or a appraisal committee which is required for taking a decision on this matter. Instead, a junior officer, an Assistant Engineer, was made to sign the approval for these contracts.

Interestingly, a senior executive engineer of the Irrigation department, who is in-charge of floods, has written a letter to the District Magistrate, Kushinagar on 2 February 2018 that sand mining in this area will be a threat to the 17 km long Ahiraulidan–Pipraghat (AP) embankment on the UP–Bihar border. This provides protection to close to 50 villages having a total population of 1.5 lakh. The river is notorious for its vagarious behaviour, as it has dramatically changed its course and devoured a number of villages in the past. It is ironical that against an expected revenue of Rs 7.5 crore from the new sand mining contracts, the government spent Rs 22 crores in 2016–17 and another Rs 36 crores in 2017–18 for protection of the embankment from erosion by the river. Even if we attach no cost to the lives of the people who will be drowned if there is a breach in the embankment, even then no cost-benefit analysis can justify these contracts!

The leader of the Congress Legislature Party in UP, Ajay Kumar Lallu, who happens to be the MLA from Sewrahi, which is located at

one end of the AP embankment, is leading a sit-in at Virvat Konhwalia village on the embankment for the last more than hundred days, since 3 February, 2018, demanding cancellation of the above mentioned three contracts. Nineteen protestors were arrested by the district administration on false charges on 6 April 2018, of which 17 have been released on bail. Narad and Gautam Singh are still in jail facing charges of dacoity and attempt to murder, whereas the fact is that the protestors caught six trucks illegally carrying sand. Because of the continuous sit-in of the villagers, the mining activity in the river has come to a standstill.

In an unrelated incident and a major scandal, the Forest Department of the UP government has registered a First Information Report on 5 May 2018 against its own officials serving on deputation, the Managing Director, UP Forest Corporation, S.K. Sharma, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and General Manager Manoj Sinha and Divisional Manager, Eco-restoration, G.C. Sinha, for inviting online tenders for coarse sand mining under the euphemism of 'eco-restoration,' in violation of State and Central government norms and regulations. The proposed activities were to be carried out in Nazimabad, Urai, Hamirpur, Mirzapur and Sonebhadra on forest land, which was completely illegal. Could the three senior officers have undertaken the exercise in violation of Indian Forest Act and Supreme Court ban on sand mining in forest areas on their own, without any external political pressure acting on them? Did they not know that they would be liable to be punished? S.K. Sharma

has been forced to go on leave and the two Sinhas have been suspended. It needs to be investigated that on whose behest these three senior officers were acting ?

Far from checking corruption the BJP government seems to have opened new avenues for it, at higher rates. It has failed to demonstrate the political will to act against illegal sand mining business. Instead, it too has adopted the beaten path, where politicians become part of the bandwagon of corruption.

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Archbishop's Letter: Storm in a Tea Cup

Irfan Engineer

The gross over reaction of the *Sangh Parivar* to the letter of Archbishop of Delhi, Anil Couto, dated 8 May 2018 and addressed to all parish priests and religious institutions in the Archdiocese of Delhi asking them to pray for 'our nation' seems to be well calculated. The letter begins with the observation: "We are witnessing a turbulent political atmosphere which poses a threat to the democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution and the secular fabric of our nation." The letter then requests the 138 parish priests and 5 religious institutions within Delhi to observe "a Day of Fast every Friday . . . offering our penance and all our sacrifices for our spiritual renewal and that of our nation." Assuming that the request is complied by all the 138 parish priests addressed in the letter, it is still a very tiny number.

Christians (including Protestants who are not addressed in the letter) are 0.87% of Delhi's population. The Hindu supremacists project the letter as a huge problem even when this very tiny section of the population which hardly counts politically was addressed! However, by responding to an otherwise innocuous letter, the BJP leaders have made it a national issue reaching out to a much wider audience.

The Hindu supremacists have problematised the timing of the letter—just one year before the General Elections, as well as the observation of the Archbishop about the "turbulent political atmosphere which poses threat to the democratic principles enshrined

in our Constitution and secular fabric of our nation." The two most important persons after the PM Narendra Modi in the BJP and in the NDA Government responded to the letter. Rajnath Singh, Minister of Home Affairs, said, "there was no discrimination against anyone". The letter made no claim to the contrary. Amit Shah's response was: "polarising people in the name of religion" was "not appropriate". The letter remotely doesn't seek to polarise in the name of religion. In fact it calls upon people to pray for principles enshrined in the Constitution and preserve the secular fabric of the nation. Both the leaders, and other Hindu supremacists, read something that is not there in the letter or want to deliberately draw conclusions to give it a political colour.

Elections are one year later and the letter will be forgotten by most people. Even if remembered, a very tiny section could hardly influence the outcome of the elections. Besides, elections are almost always round the corner in some state or the other and such a letter could always be problematised whenever written.

Turbulent political atmosphere

The surge in hate spouted by the Hindu supremacists against non-Hindus is visible to all. To the Hindutva followers, the test of nationalism is neither in following Constitutional values nor in respecting rule of law nor in respecting democratic institutions like the legislature or judiciary. Their test of nationalism asserts supremacy

of the privileged upper caste Hindu traditions and is proved only if one says *jai shri Ram*, *Bharat mata ki jai* and singing *Vande mataram* which, often, they themselves cannot sing. Variants of these like *jai Hind* which is the tradition in the security forces, or hoisting the national tricolour, would not do. Expressing nationalism through constitutionally acceptable methods and plural traditions but which are not in conformity with the desires of Hindu supremacists becomes ground for them to indulge in violence and hate crimes. Violence against Muslims, Christians, Dalits and women are on the rise. Social hostilities based on religion are on the rise, particularly as the Hindu supremacists find an enabling environment where politically influential leaders and even ministers spout hatred against Muslims and Christians. Muslims are often advised to take permanent residency in Pakistan, an enemy state according to Hindu supremacists. Pakistan is projected to be patron state of Muslims in India. The BJP President Amit Shah publicly asserted while campaigning during Bihar Assembly elections—'Pakistan will celebrate if BJP loses elections in some innocuous Indian state'. Beef eaters (read: Muslims and Christians) are advised to emigrate to Pakistan (Anil Vij, Minister in Haryana).

A Minister in the Central Government Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti publicly stated that Hindus were *Ramzade* (progeny of Lord Ram) and the rest—Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis,

atheists who do not accept Lord Ram to be their God—are *haramzade* (bastards). The Sadvhi continues as minister and she was not even reprimanded. Maneka Gandhi, another Union Minister, said the profit from cow slaughter was financing terrorism. Sakshi Maharaj, BJP MP, asserted that Madrasas (religious schools run by Muslims) were terrorist training centres. The person who asserted that Hindus should forcibly marry 100 Muslim women (and convert them to Hinduism) for every Hindu woman who chooses to marry a Muslim man (and gets converted to Islam), has been made Chief Minister of UP.

Attacks on Churches and prayer meetings of Christians have dramatically increased. Instead of arresting the criminals, they are sought to be protected by categorising the attacker/s as mentally disturbed person/s. Mob lynching of Muslims and Dalits on accusations of consuming beef or slaughtering cows have grown manifold in the last four years.

Table 1: Incidents of Mob Lynching on Accusation of Cow Slaughter

Year	No. of incidents
2010	-
2011	-
2012	1
2013	1
2014	3
2015	13
2016	25
2017	35
Total	78

Source: www.indiaspend.com & www.news18.com

Mohd. Afrajul was hacked to death and then burnt alive in Rajsamand (Rajasthan) by Shambhulal Raigar, a follower of Hindu supremacist ideology. He videographed the incident and uploaded it for popularity. Junaid Khan and Mohammed Akhlaq were lynched to death. Recently a Dalit youth Mukesh Vaniya was beaten to death in Rajkot for refusing to clean up a factory premise belonging to an upper caste. Those who lynched Pehlu Khan to death in Rajasthan have been discharged and the accused freed. Survivors of mob lynchings have on the contrary been charged.

Communal conflicts have escalated. Communal violence has increased in Bihar since Nitish Kumar aligned with the BJP to form the state government. Massive Ram Navmi processions were taken out in March 2018 in several towns through new sensitive routes passing through minority areas in order to provoke and resulting in communal violence. In Kasganj, Muslims celebrating Republic Day were asked to halt their Indian flag hoisting to make way for a bike rally of Hindu supremacist and on requesting them to wait a little, they sparked off a communal riot. In West Bengal, there were riots during Muharram and Ram Navmi.

Table 2: Number of Communal Incidents in the Years 2014–2017

Year	No. of Incidents	Deaths	Injured
2014	561	90	1688
2015	650	84	1979
2016	703	86	2321
2017	822	111	2384

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs' reply in Parliament

Religious festivals are becoming tense moments for communities.

Crime against women are on increase. Rape in Kathua was motivated by religious hostility and the Hindu Ekta Manch organised massive demonstrations in defence of the accused. A BJP MLA in UP has been arrested for raping a child and later beating her father to death along with other accomplices. We could fill pages with sordid cases. If these are not turbulent times, what else could be? The PM of the country has by and large remained silent on all these issues.

Pew Research Centre, an independent non-partisan polling and research organisation, has been publishing its annual *Global Restrictions on Religion Report* since 2009. In their research, India ranked fourth in the world in 2015—after Syria, Nigeria and Iraq—as having the highest social hostilities involving religion. India's ranking worsened sharply since 2014. The report comprises of two indices—the Government Restrictions Index and the Social Hostilities Index. While the former measures government restrictions on the free practice of religion, the latter looks at hostilities between groups around the issue of religion. The Social Hostilities Index looks at 13 indicators including crimes motivated by religious hatred, mob violence related to religion, communal violence, religion-related terrorist groups, using force to prevent religious groups from operating, the harassment of women for 'violating' religious dress codes and violence over conversion or proselytising. India ranked 'very high' on the index with an index value of 8.7 out of 10, 10 being the worst. Syria ranked at 9.2, Nigeria at 9.1 and Iraq at 8.9

Real reason

Hindu supremacist leaders problematise the Archbishop's letter as polarising and influencing voters. Such a conclusion would be a very remote possibility, and as pointed out above, would not influence the outcome. However, appeal by varied Hindu God men is far more direct and materially influences electoral outcomes. To give just a few examples, Haryana Chief Minister and several ministers visited controversial godman Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh's Ashram and he is known to have appealed to his followers to vote for the BJP. The Ashram was a beneficiary of Haryana Government funds. Another controversial godman Asaram was visited by the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee and other leaders (for votes obviously) and his Ashram in turn has been a beneficiary of government largesse in the form of land and the State turning a blind eye to illegal activities going on within the Ashram.

Baba Ramdev's Patanjali empire rapidly expanded after the BJP came to power. Patanjali's Acharya Balkrishna has become the 8th richest person in the country with a 173% rise in his wealth to Rs 70,000 crore. Patanjali has secured the second place in Indian FMCG market share in under 5 years, according to Hurun India Rich List 2017 (BT Online 2017). The rapid growth is because Baba Ramdev is openly associated with the BJP and has been given government land at highly concessional rates in several states ruled by the BJP. The Haryana government invited the Digamber Jain monk Tarun Sagar to address the State Legislative Assembly for 40 minutes. In his address, he asserted

that relations between religion and politics should be like those between husband and wife. Just as the wife needs to serve the husband and the husband needs to protect his wife, politics should serve religion. In his words, "*Rajniti par dharam ka ankush zaroori hai. Dharam pati hai, rajneeti patni. Har pati ki yeh duty hoti hai apni patni ko sanrakshan de. Har patni ka dharam hota hai ki woh pati ke anushasan ko sweekar kare. Agar rajneeti par dharam ka ankush na ho toh woh magan-mast haathi ki tarah ho jaati hai.*" The Monk's assertion is against both the Constitutional principle of equality of genders and secularism.

When other parties approach Imam Bukhari for Muslim votes, then that becomes anti-secular and even anti-national (although election results do not bear out that Muslims vote according to the diktats of Imam Bukhari or for that matter any other Muslim religious leaders). In the 2014 General Elections, Rajnath Singh hobnobbed with Shia religious leaders. It is difficult to believe that during election time such a visit by the BJP leader was only a courtesy call without any electoral and political motive.

The BJP is not worried that the innocuous letter by the Archbishop will contribute in any way towards losing even a few votes. Its real objective in problematising the letter is that it wants to create a fear among the majority community about (non-existing) unity within the minority community. They scare the majority community that unity within minorities would lead to assertion of 'their' culture and dilution of the Hindu culture or 'Hinduness' of the nation. Minorities struggle for secularism and space for their culture, which is perfectly in

accordance with our Constitutional principles, but is against the political ideology of Hindutva. It is the secularism and loyalty of the minorities to the principles enshrined in the Constitution that worries the Hindu supremacists and the BJP. The BJP leaders have always ridiculed secularism as assickularism. The BJP has problematised Archbishop's letter mainly because being from the minority community he has dared to speak up for Constitutional principles and the secular fabric of our nation.

The revered ideologue of Hindutva—M.S. Golwalkar—wanted that minorities should dream of nothing but the glory of Hindu (read upper caste) nation and Hindu upper caste traditions and symbols. The objective of Hindu supremacists is to relegate the minorities to the status of second class citizens. Bharatkumar Raut, former Rajya Sabha member of Shiv Sena—a party that subscribes to Hindutva ideology—even wrote an article demanding that the Muslims be disenfranchised—a demand which is a punishable offence under section 153B of the IPC.

It is the idea of equality of all citizens that scares the BJP though it pays lip service to *sabka saath sabka vikaas* (with everyone and development of everyone). Even if this slogan is sincerely implemented, it would actually negate the democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution. It only asserts that if the infrastructure of an area is developed, all communities would benefit 'equally'. However, that is not true. If a road passes through a village, those people having vehicles would benefit more than others; and which village gets the road is itself a political decision and may be based

on which community or caste forms the majority in the village.

What kind of new India do we want to build? Do we want to build an India where lynch mobs undermine

the rule of law and have the freedom to do so because they belong to the majority religion, while those who stand up for democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution and

the secular fabric of our nation are questioned because they belong to minorities?

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Strife Torn Kashmir: Longings for Peace

Ram Puniyani

The Green of the valley has regularly witnessed the blood of militants, Kashmiris, personnel from armed forces and now even those of tourists. On May 2 this year, a school bus was stoned leading to a class 2 student suffering a head injury. This is the background in which Mehbooba Mufti, the Chief Minister of Kashmir, sitting on the heap of a coalition, which is ideologically spilt down the middle, requested for a unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir in the holy month of Ramadan. Kashmir lately has witnessed increased violence as the Central Government, which is calling the shots in Kashmir, has adopted an iron fist policy, in place of the earlier one wherein it was partly sensitive to the grievances of local population. It is during this period that the fake encounter of Burhan Wani unleashed a series of protests, and the disgruntled and alienated youth intensified their favorite method of protest, 'stone pelting'. Now the frustration levels of the protesters are so high that they are not scared of the consequences of the repressive steps of the State.

The earlier UPA era of 'dialogue with firm handling' has given way to the muscular, hyper nationalist, high handed attitude, which in turn has increased incidences of violence in the valley. So far in

2018, forty militants, twenty four soldiers and thirty seven civilians have lost their lives. While the PDP earlier was talking separatist language, it later tied up with the Hindu nationalist BJP, which has been asking for abolition of article 370 (the autonomy clause), for the sake of grabbing power. The BJP is wearing its anti minority stance on its sleeves and is out to undermine the Muslim majority of the state. Mehbooba Mufti is in a Catch-22 situation; neither can she implement policies which can sooth local sentiments nor is she able to counter the high handed Hindutva policies of its ally BJP. Mufti is forced to remain a mute witness to the Centre's high handed attitude in Kashmir, barring probably the lone example of Kathua rape and murder where she could assert herself and the BJP leaders had to bite the dust.

The present scenario, worsening by the day, may affect tourism, which is the prime source of revenue for the State. The plight of the average Kashmiri needs empathy as with BJP rule in the Centre, matters have taken an adverse direction. The simmering discontent, which came out in the form of stone pelting, is worsening by the day due to lack of mechanisms of democratic protests and the possibility of dialogue from the authorities. The Chief Minister

has been calling for a dialogue, but she has been overruled by the BJP, as the latter's interests are to maintain the intimidating dominating attitude for its electoral and divisive Hindu nationalist goals.

Most of the times; all the blame for the discontent among the people is put on instigation from Pakistan. The fact is that Kashmiris are dissatisfied due to multiple factors, role of Pakistan being just one of these. The Al Qaeda clones are another and the attitude of the army is not helping the matters in any way. The army's basic duty is to protect the borders from the enemies. Here a civilian area is under army control for decades. The army's attitude was exemplified when Farooq Ahmad Dar, a weaver who had come to cast his vote, was used as a human shield. The army is trying to defend the action of the officer who subjected a civilian to such an ignominy. He was tied for over five hours and now he has to live with this humiliation all his life. Can such attitudes let the people live their lives in a normal way? The central hallmark of democracy is the process of dialogue, which is missing in the State. Many earlier leaders had attempted to bring peace; Vajpayee's famous doctrine aimed at peace, progress and prosperity in the Valley by bringing in the spirit of *Insaniyat* (Humanity), *Jamhuriyat*

(Democracy) and Kashmiriyat (Identity of the people of Kashmir). It also aimed at improving relations with Pakistan. Mehbooba Mufti is reminding the present rules of the Vajpayee doctrine, but her plea seems to be falling on deaf ears.

UPA II undertook a major step by appointing a team of interlocutors, Dileep Padgaonkar, M.M. Ansari and Radha Kumar. They undertook extensive interactions with diverse groups in the state and submitted their recommendations, which basically called for promoting autonomy of the State assembly, dialogue and improvement of relations with Pakistan. The report has been completely ignored. It is time that this report, the last major step at reconciliation on the issue, is revived to bring in peace in the Valley. The BJP's role in the alliance has been very negative and has marginalised the Muslim community in a Muslim majority state. The question we need to ask is, can Mehbooba Mufti assert herself to articulate the democratic aspirations of the people of Kashmir? The anger of people against Mufti has grown immensely. The ceasefire declared by the government is a welcome move and it needs to be backed up by humane policies to restore peace in the Valley.

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Chavismo: Part II

Marco Teruggi

An Organisational Path

Go for a walk in any humble neighborhood of Venezuela—urban or rural—and you will always find some form of organisation. It never fails. It is no accident, it is a way to cultivate ongoing politics from point zero of the revolution. From the first speeches of Hugo Chavez to his last remarks, the call for organisation was constant. It was, along with the unravelling of the historic debt, the essential task. Moreover, it was through organisation that it was possible to respond to the avalanche of demands Chavismo faced during its first years and for which the institutional framework had no capacity to respond.

You can build a genealogy of the organisational forms: from social missions, public meal homes, public water aid, the Bolivarian circles, urban land committees, Zamorano communal haciendas, communal councils, communes, presidential councils of popular government, to the local supply and production committees. Each experience responded to the material and political needs of the moment; it was part of a learning and collective creation.

Arranging global affairs, being endangered like any order within a multitudinous and heterogeneous process, one could speak of three moments. The first, from 1999 to 2006, marked the constituent process for national refoundation, followed by the resolution of the historic debt in water, health, education, identification, food, with the

massive shift to sectoral/claiming organisational processes. Each need was developed into a participation process. It was the stage in which the revolution faced the coup-led assaults of the right-wingers, which came to paralyse the oil industry and almost the whole country.

Socialist Horizon

The second moment can be understood until 2012. A time of defeats and strategic ravings by the right, it was also a time for Chavez to consolidate his government and himself as leader. The economy grew and the socialist horizon appeared. It was no longer about boosting organisational experiences in terms of sectoral demands, but trying out forms of organisation that carry the power of the transition to socialism. They are centrally the communal councils and the communes, which must install community governments in their territories.

Finally, the current stage, from the death of Chavez in 2013 to the present. It is a period marked by a siege on all fronts. New trials of transition and co-government appeared, such as the presidential councils of popular government and a centralisation in local food distribution committees. This decision can be read in pragmatic terms in view of the need to respond to the economic crisis, as well as under the predominance of a political view that discovers communal possibilities.

The common thread between

the three periods lies in the call by the leadership / government to the organisation. In this permanent process, one of the central dimensions of Chavismo was formed, which is his experience of collective organisation. I speak of tens of thousands of communal or production committees councils, for example.

Political Revolution

It is an essential part of the political revolution, which was ahead of the economic one. Men and women who had never participated politically, nor had any previous experience. It was about the democratic eruption of the excluded, at the same time as the emergence of new forms of democracy, particularly in the communes: 'the expression of a new political culture.' Organisation, formation and mobilisation: the revolutionary triad, the meeting between a call and a need. With a weakness: the material dependency of the organisation on institutions,

which also resulted in political dependence, raised by Chavez himself. To what extent is this people's power actual power?

The unity between political identity and organisational processes gives Chavismo a radicalism to advance and resist this era. It is possible to investigate what has been left in the territories, what predominates in these adversities that seek to destroy this weave. Some experiences were integrated with others, in particular to communal councils and communes. Others have returned for the needs, such as the feeding houses, while the production committees took centrality in an accelerated way in the communities. It could not be otherwise: they are a partial food response when food is scarce or unaffordable. You could hardly have started on that scale without all the previous experience accumulated.

Chavez Formula

It is good to go further in the analysis and enter into debate

about the perspectives that carry different organisational forms. The local supply and production committees have been thought of as palliative mechanisms in an emergency situation, not as socialist forms of trial in a transitional perspective. That can and should be the communes, which are the territorialisation of socialism, the test of establishing it on communal governments with the capacity for self-management capacity, of being a new institutionality with the capacity to exercise a communal and national power. An articulated network of communes covering the country to come, beyond parties, movements, institutions. To put it another way: without communal development, where is the socialism of the 21st century? What is 21st century socialism? It is a question about the strategic project.

Without this organisation in constant growth, there is no possibility of founding the new.

It is the Chavez formula.

Guilty Men of Two-Nation Theory: A Hindutva Project Borrowed by Jinnah in India - II

Shamsul Islam

Moonje, Har Dayal, Savarkar and Golwalkar as Prophets of Two-Nation Theory

Dr. B.S. Moonje was another prominent Congress leader (who equally dabbled in organising the Hindu Mahasabha and later helped the RSS in its formation) who carried forward the flag of Hindu separatism long before the Muslim League's Pakistan resolution of March 1940.

While addressing the third session of the Oudh Hindu Mahasabha in 1923, he declared:

Just as England belongs to the English, France to the French, and Germany to the Germans, India belongs to the Hindus. If Hindus get organised, they can humble the English and their stooges, the Muslims . . . The Hindus henceforth create

*their own world which will prosper through shuddhi and sangathan.*¹⁴

It was sheer semi-illiteracy of Moonje that he presented England, France and Germany as justification for India for Hindus. The English, the French and the German identities had nothing to do with religions, these were secular identities of the people living in those countries.

Lala Har Dayal (1884–1938), a well-known name in the Ghadar Party circles, too, long before the Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland for Muslims, not only demanded the formation of a Hindu nation in India but also urged the conquest and Hinduisation of Afghanistan. In a significant political statement in 1925, which was published in the Pratap of Kanpur, he stated:

I declare that the future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and of the Punjab, rests on these four pillars: (1) Hindu Sangathan, (2) Hindu Raj, (3) Shuddhi of Muslims, and (4) Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the Frontiers. So long as the Hindu Nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great grandchildren will be ever in danger, and the safety of Hindu race will be impossible. The Hindu race has but one history, and its institutions are homogenous. But the Mussalman and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hindustan, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arab, and European institutions. Thus, just as one removes foreign matter from the eye, Shuddhi must be made of these two religions. Afghanistan and the hilly regions of the frontier were formerly part of India, but are at present under the domination of Islam . . . Just as there is Hindu religion in Nepal, so there must be Hindu institutions in Afghanistan and the frontier territory; otherwise it is useless to win Swaraj.¹⁵

All such ideas of declaring India as a Hindu nation and excluding Muslims and Christians

from it were further crystallised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his controversial book *Hindutva* as early as 1923. Interestingly, he was allowed to write this polarising book despite being in the British jail. According to his definition of the Hindu nation, Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. Savarkar decreed:

Christians and Mohamedan [sic] communities, who were but very recently Hindus and in majority of cases had been at least in their first generation most willing denizens of their new fold, claim though they might a common fatherland, and an almost pure Hindu blood and parentage with us cannot be recognised as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu Sanskriti [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours.¹⁶

Savarkar, the originator of the politics of *Hindutva*, later developed the most elaborate two-nation theory. The fact should not be missed that Muslim League passed its Pakistan resolution only in 1940, but Savarkar, the great philosopher and guide of RSS, propagated the two-nation theory long before it. While delivering the presidential address to the 19th session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar declared unequivocally,

As it is, there are two

antagonistic nations living side by side in India. Several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These our well-meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities. That is why they are impatient of communal tangles and attribute them to communal organisations. But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and Moslems. When time is ripe you can solve them; but you cannot suppress them by merely refusing recognition of them. It is safer to diagnose and treat deep-seated disease than to ignore it. Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a Unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India.¹⁷

The RSS, following in the footsteps of Savarkar, outright rejected the idea that Hindus and Muslims together constituted a nation. The English organ of the RSS, *Organiser*, on the very eve of independence (August 14, 1947), editorially chalked out its concept of nation in the following words:

Let us no longer allow ourselves to be influenced by false notions of nationhood. Much of the mental confusion and the present and future troubles can be removed by the ready recognition of the simple fact that in Hindusthan

only the Hindus form the nation and the national structure must be built on that safe and sound foundation . . . the nation itself must be built up of Hindus, on Hindu traditions, culture, ideas and aspirations.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a keen researcher of communal politics in pre-independence India, while underlying the affinity and camaraderie between Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League on the issue of the two-nation theory, wrote:

Strange it may appear, Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue are in complete agreement about it. Both agree, not only agree but insist that there are two nations in India—one the Muslim nation and the other Hindu nation.¹⁸

Ambedkar warned that Savarkar's rhetoric that "Hindu nation will be enabled to occupy a predominant position that is due to it and the Muslim nation made to live in the position of subordinate co-operation with the Hindu nation" was "creating a most dangerous situation for safety and security of India".¹⁹

Hindu Mahasabha Formed Coalition Governments with Muslim League

The children of Hindu nationalist Savarkar who are presently ruling India are oblivious of the shocking fact that the Hindu Mahasabha led by Savarkar entered into alliances with the Muslim League in order to break the united freedom struggle, especially the 1942 Quit India Movement against the British rulers. While delivering the Presidential

address at the 24th session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Cawnpore (Kanpur) in 1942, he defended hobnobbing with the Muslim League in the following words,

In practical politics also the Mahasabha knows that we must advance through reasonable compromises. Witness the fact that only recently in Sind, the Sind Hindu Sabha on invitation had taken the responsibility of joining hands with the League itself in running coalition government. The case of Bengal is well known. Wild Leaguers whom even the Congress with all its submissiveness could not placate grew quite reasonably compromising and sociable as soon as they came in contact with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Coalition government, under the premiership of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the able lead of our esteemed Mahasabha leader Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, functioned successfully for a year or so to the benefit of both the communities. Moreover further events also proved demonstratively that the Hindu Mahasabhaites endeavoured to capture the centres of political power only in the public interest and not for the loaves and fishes of the office.²⁰

Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League formed a coalition government in NWFP also.

Muslims Against Partition

One of the greatest lies concerning partition of India continuously spread by the Hindutva gang is that all Muslims of India in unison demanded Pakistan and they got the country divided. This lie, believed as truth by the Hindutva cadres, has

become the most important cause of persecution of Muslims in India. It is true that India was partitioned in 1947 due to Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland for Muslims. And there is no denying the fact that the Muslim League was able to mobilise a large number of Muslims in favour of its demand. But it is also true that very large sections of Indian Muslims and their organisations stood against the demand for Pakistan. A galaxy of leading Muslim intellectuals like Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari (who was in the forefront of struggle against the communal politics of the Muslim League and died in 1936), Shaukatullah Ansari, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Syed Abdullah Brelvi, Shaikh Mohammed Abdullah, A.M. Khwaja and Maulana Azad were associated with this movement against Pakistan. Several Muslim organisations produced large number of booklets in Urdu against the two-nation theory and in support of co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in India.

These 'Muslims against Partition' challenged the Muslim League theoretically and confronted the latter on the streets. Such Muslims fought heroically, many times paying with their lives. The lie of culpability of all Indian Muslims for the partition of India continues to be spread not only due to the nasty anti-Muslim politics of Hindutva but also due to the fact that Indian Muslims are not aware of the great heritage of their ancestors who challenged the politics of the Muslim League politically, religiously and physically.

Within weeks of the Pakistan resolution of the Muslim League at Lahore, Indian Muslims organised the 'Muslim Azad Conference'

in Delhi (Queen's Park, Chandni Chowk) between April 27–30, 1940 (it was to conclude on April 29 but was extended by one day due to tremendous participation) with 1,400 delegates from almost all parts of India attending it. The leading light of this conference was the former Premier of Sind, Allah Bakhsh, who presided over the conference.

The major Muslim organisations represented in this conference were All India Jamiat-ul-Ulema, All India Momin Conference, All India Majlis-e-Ahrar, All-India Shia Political Conference, Khudai Khidmatgars, Bengal Krishak Proja Party, All-India Muslim Parliamentary Board, the Anjuman-e-Watan of Baluchistan, All India Muslim Majlis and Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadis. The Conference was attended by duly elected delegates from all major Provinces, including United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces, Punjab, Sind, NWF Province, Madras, Orissa, Bengal, Baluchistan, Delhi, Assam, Ajmer–Mewar, Delhi and Bombay, as well as several native states, thus covering the whole of India.²¹ There was no doubt that these delegates represented the “majority of India’s Muslims.”²²

Allah Bakhsh in his presidential address declared the Pakistan resolution as suicidal for Muslims as well as for India. Stressing the inclusive nature of Indian society and polity, he said:

As Indian nationals, Muslim and Hindus and others inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its material and cultural treasures alike according to the measure of their just and fair rights and requirements as the proud sons of the soil. Even in the realm of

literature one finds common classics like Heer Ranjha and Sassi Pannu, written by Muslim poets, equally and proudly shared by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab and in Sind; to quote but only one example. It is a vicious fallacy for Hindu, Muslim and other inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves an exclusively proprietary right over either the whole or any particular part of India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country alike and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of the Indian Muslim as of other Indians. No segregated or insolated regions, but the whole of India is the Homeland of all the Indian Muslim and no Hindu or Muslim or any other has the right to deprive them of one inch of this Homeland.

Muslim League Terror

How many of us know that long before M.K. Gandhi’s murder by Hindu nationalists, Allah Bakhsh was murdered on May 14, 1943 by professional assassins hired by Muslim nationalists (Muslim League leaders) at Shikarpur town in Sind. He needed to be liquidated as he had become a symbol of unity amongst Muslims against the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan, just as Gandhi had to be killed as he had become the biggest stumbling block in the Hindutva project of converting India into a Hindu Rashtra.

But not just Allah Bakhsh, all leading leaders of the anti-Pakistan movement were physically attacked, their houses looted, their family members attacked and mosques where they stayed or addressed Muslims damaged. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, famously

known as Sheikh-ul-Islam, was a victim of violent attacks in UP and Bihar. Maulana Azad, the respected Ahrar leader Maulana Habibur Rahman, Maulana Ishaq Sambhali, Hafiz Ibrahim, Maulana Mohd. Qasim Shajahanpuri and many other leading ulama faced murderous attacks. At several places, ulama were attacked with daggers causing severance of body parts, they were shot and office of the Jamiat at Delhi was set on fire. Momin Conference meetings were special targets of attack and many of its cadres were killed, forcing the Conference to warn the Muslim League of war.

According to a contemporary document,

It is painful to describe how respected nationalist ulama (scholars) and leaders throughout the country were treated by ML. It was despicable, heartbreaking and inhuman. In villages, towns and cities meetings of nationalist were showered with stones and attacked regularly in the most criminal manner. MNG, the volunteer force of ML, indulged in unspeakable violence against nationalist Muslims. It was difficult for nationalist Muslims to travel as they were attacked ferociously while undertaking journeys. All those opposing Muslim League were scared and if any dared to challenge them had to bear terrible consequences.²³

Hindu Nationalists Who Believed in the Two-Nation Theory Paraded as Indian Nationalists

Despite all these facts, only Muslims are branded as the guilty men of partition and originators and perpetrators of the two-nation theory. The leading Hindu nationalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak,

Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malviya, M.S. Aney, B.S. Moonje, M.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar and Swami Shradhanand (some of whom were also Congress leaders) did not subscribe to an all-inclusive India but were committed to the building of an exclusive Hindu nation. They believed that India was primordial a Hindu nation and should be nurtured as one. Nevertheless, they went around as great Indian 'Nationalist' leaders, and many of them are considered so even today.

The majority community has had the advantage of disguising its communalism under the cloak of nationalism. Take one glaring example, Madan Mohan Malviya. He was President of the Indian National Congress which stood for a composite India in 1909, 1918 and 1933; but he also presided over the sessions of Hindu Mahasabha in the years 1923, 1924 and 1936. He was the originator of the most divisive slogan 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindusthan'.²⁴ Despite his history of spreading communal hatred, he continues to be known as a great Indian nationalist leader.

If Muslim leaders can be distinguished on the basis of whether they believed in a multi-religious India or in the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims, then the same distinction should apply to Hindu leaders. When we study Indian nationalism we are generally told that all Hindus were nationalists, whereas there were few patriotic Muslims and the rest were with the anti-national Muslim League. In order to clear the air we need to define what nationalism meant during the Indian freedom struggle. If Indian nationalism during those days meant creating a multi-religious

secular nation state, only those who shared this commitment should be called nationalist or patriotic. But this is rarely the case when we discuss communal Hindus or Hindu nationalist leaders. Despite their being decidedly against a multi-cultural India, they are still held up as nationalist icons. The truth is that the Hindu nationalist leaders were decidedly anti-patriotic or anti-national, in precisely the same way as the Muslim League was.

In the same way that not all Hindu leaders were patriotic by this standard, not all Muslims were anti-patriotic. A large number of Muslim individuals and mass-based Muslim organisations opposed the two-nation theory and the creation of Pakistan with all their strength and resources, often laying down their lives. The saddest part is that the children of the Hindu nationalists, inheritors of the politics of the two-nation theory, are today ruling India. This ruling elite, whose political ancestors like Moonje, Savarkar and Golwalkar played no role in the freedom struggle, who cooperated with the Muslim League and the British rulers, are today questioning the patriotism of Indian Muslims.

Task Before Indian Muslims

Indian Muslims, instead of getting defensive against this onslaught by the anti-national Hindu nationalists, must aggressively challenge the propaganda against Muslims. History is with them. Indian Muslims are children of those fearless Muslims who waged a glorious fight against the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan. They did not agree to Pakistan, but unfortunately were helpless victims of a deal amongst the British rulers, the Muslim League and the Congress

for partitioning India. The following statement of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, renowned as the Frontier Gandhi, to M.K. Gandhi in June 1947, after Congress had agreed to the partition of India, symbolised the pervasive sense of betrayal of anti-Pakistan Muslims. He wrote:

*We Pakhtuns stood by you and had undergone great sacrifices for attaining freedom. But you have now deserted us and thrown us to the wolves . . .*²⁵

Whereas the children of Savarkar and Golwalkar, who rule India today, hail from a heritage which propounded the two-nation theory and allied with Jinnah, the Muslims who stood firmly against the partition of India resolutely opposed Jinnah and the division of the country on the basis of religion. This becomes clear from the anti-Pakistan poem titled Pakistan chahne walon se (To those who want Pakistan) penned by the renowned poet, Shamim Karhani, which became Indian Muslims' anthem against the Muslim League. It is a poem every Indian Muslim should be proud of:

*Humko batlao tau kiya matlab hae
Pakistan kaa
Jis jagah iss waqt Muslim haen,
najis hae kiya who ja*

(Tell me, what does Pakistan mean?
Is this land, where we Muslims are,
an unholy land?)

*Nesh-e-tohmat se tere, Chishti kaa
seena chaak hae
Jald batlla kiya zameen Ajmer kee
na-paak hae*

(Your slur has wounded Chishti's
breast
Quick, tell me, is Ajmer impure?)

*Kufr kee vaadi maen imaan kaa
nageena kho gaya
Hai kiya khak-e-najis maen shah-e-
meena kho gaya*

(Can you say the precious jewel of
Islam ‘Shah Meena’
has been lost in the unholy valley of
infidelity?)

*Deen kaa makhdoom jo Kaliyer kee
abaadi maen hae
Aah! Uskaa aastana kiya najis vaadi
mae hae*

(The place of high dignity at Kaliyar
where the Master of religion is
resting
Is it an unholy valley?)

*Haen imamon ke jo roze Lucknow
kee khaaq per
Ban gaye kiya tauba-tauba khitta-
e-napak per*

(The shrines of Imams at Lucknow
Are they built on impure land?)

*Baat yeh kaisee kahee tuney kee dil
ne aah kee
Kiya zameen tahir naheen dargah-
e-Noorullah kee*

(A deep sigh came out over your
statement
Can you say the Shrine of Noor-ul-
lah (at Agra) is not pious?)

*Aah! Iss pakeezah Ganga ko najis
kehta hae tu
Jis key paani see kiya Muslim
shahidon ne wazoo*

(Alas! You call the holy Ganga water
impure
which was used by martyrs for the
ablution)

Nam-e-Pakistan na le gar tujhko

*pas-e-deen hae
Yeh guzishta nasl-e-Muslim kee badi
tauheen hae*

(Don’t take the name of Pakistan if
you have least respect for your faith
because demanding Pakistan is
immense disrespect to our Muslim
predecessors)

*Tukre-tukre ker nahin sakte watan
ko ahl-e-dil
Kis tarah taraj dekhien gey chaman
ko ahl-e-dil*

(Those who have a sensible heart
cannot split the country
how will they dare to see a ruined
and plundered motherland?)

*Kiya yeh matlab hae ke hum
mahroom-e-azadi rahen
Munqasim ho ker Arab kee tarah
faryadi rahaen*

(Do you want us to remain devoid
of freedom
and lament like divided Arabs?)

*Tukre-tukre ho kay Muslim khasta-
dil ho jayegaa
Nakhl-e-jamiat sarasar muzmahil
ho jayegaa.*

(By division Muslims will split and
the tree of community will wilt.)²⁶

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A False Step
Kuldip Nayar

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Parties Bothers BJP**
Anil Sinha

The Enigma Called Gandhi
Salil Misra

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Raj Kishore: An Uncompromising Journalist

Prem Singh

Veteran journalist Raj Kishore passed away on 5 June 2018 at the age of 72. He had recently lost his 42 year old son Vivek, also a journalist, merely one and a half months ago. Vivek met a sudden death on 21 April due to a massive brain stroke.

Raj Kishore, as usual, was calm at the crematorium and even discussed with me the possibility of bringing out a Hindi magazine on the pattern of *Mainstream Weekly*. I came to know from other colleagues that he had similar discussions with them as well. Despite the numbing loss, he resumed his writings the very next day. I could feel that he was in some sort of a self-denial mode. The mental shock of the death of his young son ultimately took its toll sooner than one might expect. Raj Kishore suffered an attack of pneumonia just a few days later. He was first admitted to Kailash Hospital at Noida on 15 May. Next day, with the help of Dr. Anup Saraya, he was shifted to the AIIMS and admitted in the ICU for 22 days till he bid farewell to this world.

Raj Kishore started his career as a journalist in Calcutta with *Ravivar* under the editorship of Surendra

Pratap Singh. He was admired by the readers for his innovative ideas, deep human and social concerns, philosophical insights, playful language and a novel style. The aspiring youth who sought to pursue their career in journalism learnt a lot from his writings. He left *Ravivar* for a short period to start his own magazine *Parivartan*, but later again joined *Ravivar*.

He was brought to Delhi by Rajendra Mathur in 1990 and was assigned the responsibility of the editorial page in *Nav Bharat Times*. He took a rented accommodation in Anand Vihar which is where I first met him. He inspired me too for writing in newspapers. After a service of seven years, he was ousted from the *Nav Bharat Times* by the new management of the Times Group because he outrightly refused to accept their decision of converting *Nav Bharat Times* into a 'Hinglish' newspaper.

Raj Kishore, a staunch Lohiaite, was groomed in the values of the freedom movement and the post-independence era of nation-building. He was firm in his ideological and ethical convictions. Therefore,

he never got a job in any of the media houses till his death. In fact, he became the first victim of the neoliberal political economy adopted by the media houses in the beginning of the nineties.

From 1997 onwards, Raj Kishore did freelancing for the survival of his family. He started his own Hindi monthly journal *Dusara Shanivar* in 1997, but could not sustain it due to financial constraints. Apart from writing articles / comments / features for newspapers and magazines, he wrote and edited several books. The *Aaj Ke Prashan* series edited by him became very popular, particularly among young readers. The series was focused on contemporary contentious issues related to Dalit, women, subaltern and minority discourses, the impact of neoliberal policies and the secular–communal question. He developed and encouraged several new writers through this series.

He edited the 'Panchayati Raj Update' in Hindi and English for

more than a decade for the Institute of Social Sciences. He made study tours to certain European countries during this period. He also worked briefly with the Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwa Vidyalyaya as writer-in-residence. He stayed there from 2011 to 2014 and edited *Hindi Samay*, an online site of the university. It is one of his important gifts to Hindi literature apart from his invaluable contribution to Hindi journalism.

As the remuneration in Hindi writing is negligible, he had to burn the midnight oil to make both ends meet. The continuous pressure of work affected him badly. However, there was no choice before him but to work hard for sheer survival. He started editing *Ravivar Digest*, a small Hindi monthly in 2015. True to his uncompromising self, he left the job a few months ago because the owner declined to publish an article selected by him which critiqued Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's *Ekatm Manavwad*.

A few days before the death of his son, Raj Kishore, in search of some new assignment, asked me to talk to Dr. A.K. Arun, editor of *Yuva Samvad*, just to check whether he would be inclined or interested to associate him with the magazine. Even before we could make any move on this, everything ended rather abruptly. The philosopher journalist left his family—wife, daughter, daughter in law, two little grand children—and all of us totally unprepared!

For a life as brilliant and committed as Raj Kishore's, his passing is definitely an irreparable loss to his family, but the larger vacuum it has left in the world of journalism is tangible, even if it doesn't seem apparent. The damage is most to Hindi journalism as it has lost a figure that stood up staunchly to the pressures of corporate commerce, cynicism and the new age madness of neoliberalism.

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A False Step

Kuldip Nayar

Pranab Mukherjee has accepted the invitation to visit the RSS headquarters at Nagpur to address the cadre. To quote RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, "Mukherjee was graceful enough to accept the invitation." Mukherjee accepting the invite is a surprise because the place never put up the picture of Mahatma Gandhi because he represented an ideology of pluralism and egalitarianism, which are not conducive to the RSS philosophy of establishing a Hindu Rastra.

Actually, Pranab Mukherjee is a man of all-political affiliations. He

has occupied the highest position as a Congressman and has also floated a political party with a few of his associates in the Congress. But one can call him a self-made man in the political arena.

I recall Pranab Mukherjee as a man of humility who invited me to his house to hear the recital of his wife, a vocalist. Then he was struggling to make his mark as a politician. His residence gave a modest look with minimum furniture. He was known as a man of simple habits. But everything changed over the years as he gradually established himself as

an affluent politician with authority.

During the emergency I happened to visit him at his residence and to my surprise I found a well-furnished sitting room. He was then the Commerce Minister in the Indira Gandhi cabinet and very close to Sanjay Gandhi, who was an extra-constitutional authority and practically held the reins of power. To say candidly, Pranab Mukherjee was his Man Friday who carried out his orders.

The latter virtually ruled the country with Pranab Mukherjee on one side and Bansi Lal, then Defence

Minister, on the other. It was during this period that Pranab Mukherjee granted or stopped licences at the bidding of Sanjay. Raids on shops and residences of critics were carried out throughout the country. People rightly defeated him and Indira Gandhi when elections were held after the lifting of the emergency in 1977.

Pranab Mukherjee was a contender for prime ministership, but Sonia Gandhi's compulsion and determination to make her son Rahul Gandhi the prime minister came in the way of Mukherjee's political ambitions. Realising the mood, he announced that he would not contest the 2014 elections.

It was because he had served the dynasty faithfully that Pranab Mukherjee appointed the President by Sonia Gandhi. It was a gift to a loyal person who was even willing to say that the sun rose from the west if she said so. He was another Giani Zail Singh, whom Mrs Indira Gandhi had got appointed as President out of the blue.

The rule of Pranab Mukherjee was an insult to the democratic ethos of the nation. If he had been a sensitive person, he would have felt the wrongs done during the 17 months of emergency. If nothing else, he could have at least regretted the imposition of the emergency when more than one lakh people were detained without trial, the press was 'disciplined' and civil servants lost the distinction between right and wrong, moral and immoral.

I have followed the period when he was at Rashtrapati Bhavan and I found to my horror that it was a rule which had a negative impact. I cannot spot one instance when he upheld democracy and pluralism. It did not behove the President

to release his memoirs during his tenure. Seldom have people felt as let down as they did during his presidency.

Had there been a Lokpal, he would have pointed out where Mukherjee failed as President. Alas, there is no such institution to assess a President's tenure. Heads of institutions are not generally assailed. The idea behind such thinking is that criticism may harm the institutions, which are essential for the sustenance of democratic polity. Among the most important of the institutions is that of the President. Therefore, the President is spared even when he or she crosses the line that the office delineates. Maybe it because of this consideration that Pranab Mukherjee has escaped censure.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Pranab Mukherjee has weakened the struggle against communal forces. The RSS or, for that matter, the Bhartiya Janata Party can tell the nation that Nagpur does not represent communal forces because Mukherjee has chosen to address the RSS cadre. Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has defended the former President's decision to address the RSS cadre by saying that he was not visiting an ISI camp.

Surprisingly, the Congress has not uttered a word to condemn Mukherjee's step. The silence is a sort of endorsement of what he is doing. Only one former Congress minister has urged him to reconsider his decision in the interests of secularism.

Some Congressmen believe that the former President, who has been a Congressman all his life, would deliver a strong message on pluralism from the RSS platform. In fact, veteran leader Salman Khurshid

defended him saying that the party must have faith in Pranab Mukherjee and "trust him not just for his true allegiance to the idea of India, but also for being sagacious and wiser than us."

This is a weak argument. The very presence of Mukherjee at Nagpur would confuse the nation because they have heard from every Congress leader that the RSS is an antithesis of pluralism. Sonia Gandhi and Congress President Rahul Gandhi should have criticised Mukherjee for his visit. Had they done so, Congress would have gained much respect among those who wish to stand up for secularism and pluralism in the country.

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Re-emergence of Regional Parties Bothers BJP

Anil Sinha

The regional parties have again taken a centre stage in the politics of the country. The assumption that the BJP led by Narendra Modi may politically marginalise the regional forces has come under serious doubt after the results of Karnataka assembly polls and the bypolls across the country. They have demonstrated the re-emergence of regional parties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah, who are virtually deciding everything in BJP, will try hard to neutralise the repercussions of this change. This can be done only by forcing the regional parties to remain limited to their own areas. Is it possible? Of course it is possible, but only if regional parties are prevented from getting national visibility.

For the BJP, this is not only necessary if it wishes to win 2019 polls, but also for getting to the throne if a hung parliament is the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls. Regional parties can only be prevented from performing a role at the national level if they do not get a truly national ally. It does not need any elaboration that the Congress is the only party in the country which can provide such an alliance. The corollary of such an assumption is that the Congress should not in position to do this.

If we give a closer look at the recent moves of Prime Minister Modi and BJP president Shah, we can have a glimpse of their strategy. They have started targeting the Congress and Rahul Gandhi individually to isolate them from regional parties.

The accelerated pace with which the cases of corruption against Congress leaders like Chidambaram are being investigated also points to the same. It is not difficult to understand as to why the criminal case against senior leader Shashi Tharoor has now become a priority after a very long period.

The change has indeed come after party's failure to install a non-Congress government in Karnataka. The Congress could blocked BJP's way to power in the state with success. The event also generated a hope among regional parties that they could even capture power at the Centre if they join hands in opposing Modi and are able to prevent splitting of anti-BJP votes. The BJP is rightly apprehending the potential threat Rahul Gandhi is posing to the party's prospect of reelection in 2019. That he can mobilise diverse political forces against the BJP is now a reality. The BJP was expecting a slow and timid response from Rahul-led Congress in Karnataka after its defeat as had been the case in Goa and Manipur. However, Rahul Gandhi acted with the required speed and stitched an alliance with the JDS without losing any time. This move changed the scenario in the State as well as at the national level. All the important regional formations came together to celebrate the installation of a non-BJP government. And this has given a loud and clear message of Opposition unity.

BJP has other reasons also for targeting Congress. It fits into the

broad narrative that India has lost almost six decades under an 'inept family rule'. It is also easy to hold Congress responsible for all that which India has failed to achieve in these decades. It helps Modi build up an image of a saviour who can give leadership to the country to make it a leading nation of the world. His campaign on completing four years in office is directed towards this end only. Addressing a rally at Cuttack in Odisha he alleged that all these years, the Congress has been pursuing a policy of "family first instead of country first." Modi alleged, "During UPA regime, the Congress party was running the government through remote control. It only gave the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' but did not serve the poor. Half of the population does not have gas, electricity or road connection."

When it came to the poor health infrastructure in Odisha, he refrained from directly accusing the State government which is in power for over one and half decades, and held the UPA government responsible for it. Modi said, "The situation is worse here in Odisha. I wonder what were the previous governments doing? If the State governments do not carry out their responsibilities properly, the Centre does it."

Odisha Chief Minister has been following a policy of equidistance from both the BJP and the Congress. He did not attend the oath-ceremony of H.D. Kumaraswamy as Chief Minister of Karnataka. The BJP had become ambitious in Odisha after getting an impressive vote share

in the panchayat elections held in 2017. However, it soon realised that it would be premature to celebrate the success because the party had to face a drubbing in an assembly bypoll that was held soon after the panchayat polls.

In its campaign in Kairana and Noorpur bypolls in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP targeted the Congress and its politics despite the fact that the Congress had no candidate in any of these constituencies. In a public meeting near Kairana, Modi had targeted the Nehru-Gandhi family. This seems to be a part of the fresh campaign the Sangha Parivar has launched against the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. The same old allegations of purported disrespect to Sardar Patel and Subhash Bose are being made.

However, the results of these byelections show that personal attacks are not fetching votes. The weapon was used extensively in Gujarat and Karnataka also, but it failed to give the expected results.

In addition to attacking the Congress, the Modi-Shah duo is trying to tie up with regional parties to force Congress to go to the polls without allies. However, the party is hardly finding it easy. Most of the dominant regional parties have by now gone away from it. Even in the States where the Congress is in direct contest with the regional forces, the latter are considering the BJP to be a bigger threat. In these States, regional parties are not averse to some kind of arrangement with the Congress. There are not showing any inclination towards joining hands with the BJP. They consider the BJP as their main enemy.

The BJP is finding it difficult to retain existing allies as well. The TDP has left the National Democratic

Alliance, while its other allies are also showing uneasiness. Its pre-poll allies in Bihar, the Lok Janshakti Party of Ramvilas Paswan and the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party of Upendra Kushwaha, are exhibiting discomfiture. The post-poll alliance with JDU is also showing strains. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has started attacking his partner. Once a supporter of demonetisation, Kumar has now become a critique of it. He is also unhappy with the amount sanctioned for the flood relief. The Chief Minister has also indicated that he might agitate for a Special Status for the state.

Tensions have been brewing in Uttat Pradesh as well. Smaller parties like Apana Dal are not happy. They are asking for more seats to contest and BJP is in no mood to oblige them. The BJP is also trying to bypass these parties by directly addressing the social segments they are representing. The BJP is contemplating a change in the reservation formula to provide separate reservation for the more backward classes within the quota for backward classes. The party had won many seats in 2014 with the support of other backward classes.

On the other hand, Congress has been winning allies. The regional parties are also restructuring their relations with each other. Till recently, an SP-BSP alliance was considered to be a most difficult proposition, but it is now a reality. The bypolls in Uttar Pradesh have proved the effectivity of this alliance as well.

If Congress' open arm policy is giving sleepless nights to BJP leaders, the attack from opposition on issues like unemployment, price rise and farm distress is also causing discomfort to the ruling party.

“The ruling party before coming to power made big promises such as employment to 2 crore youth every year, remunerative prices to farmers, bringing back black money stashed abroad, eradication of corruption, and so on and so forth. There were 42 big promises made but none of the promises has been fulfilled,” said senior leader Sharad Yadav who has just launched a new political party, the Loktantrik Janata Dal.

Weakening of federalism is the major cause of regional assertions. But this is hardly being recognised in the ruling political circle of New Delhi!

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The Enigma Called Gandhi

Salil Misra

Politics in independent India has shown a tremendous obsession with Gandhi. Khadi, worn by most politicians, protests through Satyagraha, hunger strikes, voluntarily courting arrest, civil disobedience, all carry the indelible stamp of the politics practised by Gandhi during the course of the national movement. Most rituals and symbols of Indian politics today emanate from Gandhi. It would appear to any outside observer that politics in independent India is deeply influenced and inspired by Gandhi and his ideals.

Such a conclusion would be wholly wrong. The ritualistic obsession with Gandhi is accompanied by an amazing ignorance about him. Indian politics today is completely devoid of anything remotely Gandhian. It would be fair to say that since Gandhi has been elevated, or reduced, to the level of an abstraction or a mere idea to be celebrated, we have done away with the need to understand him and engage with his legacy.

The first basic misunderstanding pertains to the kind of individual Gandhi was. Anyone trying to construct Gandhi on the basis of his pictures of 1920s and 1930s would easily conclude that he was an illiterate poor villager clad only in a peasant *dhoti*. This of course would be a completely false picture. The truth is that Gandhi was born in a reasonably affluent Gujarati family. His father was a Diwan in a princely state, combining the functions of a chief minister and an estate manager. Gandhi went to good schools to

study and lived his early life mostly in cities—Rajkot, Kathiawad, Ahmedabad and later Calcutta and Bombay. For his higher studies he went to England and acquired a Law degree from London. After spending three years in England, Gandhi spent around 21 years in South Africa. It was only in 1915 after returning to India that Gandhi began to encounter and experience village life from close quarters. He was also a full-time journalist who set up a press in 1903 and started a paper *Indian Opinion* from Johannesburg. In short, he was an anglicised, West-trained, cosmopolitan, lawyer-cum-journalist.

If Gandhi was no illiterate peasant, he was no Mahatma either, at least not in the conventional sense of the term. The Mahatma-hood had been conferred upon him by Rabindranath Tagore as early as in 1915, when Gandhi was only 46 years old. The conventional Indian understanding of a Mahatma is that of an otherworldly saint-renouncer. Gandhi could be considered a Mahatma in the restricted sense that he firmly believed in the moral foundations of social life. He was convinced that our collective social life must be rooted in a moral conception. But apart from this, Gandhi was no saint renouncer. He constantly thought about and engaged with the world he lived in. And he was always busy with trying to solve some social problem or the other. Between his return to India in 1915 and his death at the hands of a fanatic in January 1948, Gandhi was constantly busy grappling with

some important issue or the other. Consider the following. In 1925 he was involved in a social movement in Vykam (Travancore) seeking to open temples, wells and roads for the lower castes. In 1938, he led the struggle against the ruler of Rajkot, a princely state, for introducing some democratic rights for the people. In 1917, 1918 and 1928, he led the peasant movements in Champaran (Bihar), Kheda and Bardoli (both in Gujarat) against forced cultivation of indigo, enhanced revenue and high taxes imposed by the government, respectively.

In 1918, Gandhi led the strike of the Ahmedabad textile workers for an enhancement of wages and undertook a hunger strike for the first time. In April 1919, he was at the helm of a civil liberty campaign against the Rowlatt Act imposed by the British, under which anyone could be arrested without any notice or warrant. During 1920–22, 1930–34, 1940 and 1942, Gandhi led huge anti-imperialist struggles against the British rule. Gandhi thus led movements against caste oppression, for democratic rights in a princely state, peasant movements, strike by industrial workers, movement for civil liberties and direct struggles against British imperialism, all within a span of less than 33 years.

This was not all. During 1933–34, Gandhi undertook a long tour on foot, called *Harijan* tour, in which he went from one village to another in order to open public wells and temples for the lower castes. Further, he spent around five months in Bengal (November

1946–March 1947) visiting the areas hit by communal violence and trying to restore communal unity there. He also underwent imprisonment six times for a total period of more than five years. Gandhi was also the full-time editor of the English weekly *Young India*, started in 1919 and renamed *Harijan* in 1934. He wrote editorials, articles and also answered questions from the readers. Gandhi set up three major organisations—*Harijan Sevak Sangh*, *All India Spinners Association* and *Hindustani Prachar Sabha*. He wrote many books during this period, the most important being his autobiography (*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, published during 1927–29) and *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1928).

All this was done in a period of around 32 years. Could he have done it if he had been a Mahatma of a renouncer variety?

From the above description, what is the kind of picture of Gandhi that emerges? That he was a man fully dedicated to the service of humanity, a social reformer committed to purge Hindu religion and society of its evils, a leader determined to infuse moral values in human conduct, and a visionary involved in a mammoth social engineering project in which men and women will live their lives by moral standards. Gandhi lived a life of service. He had a blueprint of an ideal social order in his mind and he devoted all his life towards its realisation. He was committed to the idea of a transformation in human life without violence or coercion. He never gave up the effort. Nor did he give up the thought that all this was possible. If he thought that this could be achieved in his lifetime, he would be considered either too ambitious or too naive. He obviously

did not succeed in his endeavour. But even the severest of his critics would not deny that he was sincere and truthful—albeit impractical—in his mission.

The question is: what made Gandhi what he was? Is there an explanation? Or should we simply give up the effort by declaring him as idiosyncratic?

Some explanation can be found in an amazing and rare combination of continuity and change. There were certain traits he picked up early in his life and they remained with him throughout. A certain edifice of a wholesome life got constructed early in his life and continued to guide his actions till the very end. At the same time, Gandhi also displayed a rare flexibility in being adept at growing and changing. He possessed a rare capacity for incorporating new changes in his personality and interactions with the world outside. As he himself wrote in 1933: “I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he still has faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.”

So what remained constant and

what changed?

Very early in his life Gandhi decided that he would lead a life of service to human community. It did not matter where this community was located. It could be the indentured Indian labourers in South Africa, or the peasants of Champaran, or the Indian people suffering under British imperialism, or the people of England corrupted and dehumanised by their own imperialism, or entire humanity increasingly cut off from its roots and swept aside by the huge tidal wave of modernisation. His life was at the service of a cause. In his life of service he learnt the techniques of assertion without aggression and standing up to injustice without giving in. All this of course was to be done wholly non-violently.

In his diagnosis of what ailed human civilisation, Gandhi identified two fundamental elements—poverty and discrimination. The two were independent of each other. India, his own society, suffered from both. But he also saw the affluent European societies being gripped by the virus of discrimination. His own remedy for this malady was that the world could be transformed through human effort. Contrary to the dominant doctrines of his times, he did not look upon humans as passive members of the social order in which they lived, whose lives would be transformed following a change in the social order. Gandhi credited humans with a capacity for independent action, capable of transforming the social order. As a result, Gandhi constantly worked on humans, training them, organising them, educating them and preparing them for action. He evolved his technique of non-violent *Satyagraha* (action leading to the triumph of

truth) and declared that *Satyagraha* could never fail if the individuals could be trained to practise it properly. He wrote in his weekly *Young India*: “I have repeatedly stated that Satyagraha never fails and that one perfect *Satyagrahi* is enough to vindicate Truth. Let us all strive to be perfect *Satyagrahis*. The striving does not require any quality unattainable by the lowliest among us. For Satyagraha is an attribute of the spirit within. It is latent in every one of us. Like *Swaraj*, it is our birthright. Let us know it.” The privileging of organised and trained individuals over any laws of social action was one trait that remained constant with Gandhi. This human force had to be constantly pushed into a life of service.

If service of humanity through non-violent *Satyagraha* was one feature that remained constant, an uncompromising faith in religion was another. Early on in his life, a search for a source of morality led him to explore religion. And he explored them all. The Vaishnav Hinduism was inculcated to him during his early socialisation. His first exposure to religion was through his mother. In England he came into contact with Christians of various denominations. He also read *Bhagavat Geeta* (in English) and the *New Testament* in England. Many years later he read the *Quran*. In South Africa he came into contact with his Muslims patrons and Evangelical well-wishers. Both in England and in South Africa he moved in very different and diverse circles. He engaged with them with empathy and compassion, but always as an outsider. His search for a perfect religion took him to the shores of many faiths. Interestingly he was looking for a religion that

did not monopolise Truth and which recognised the prevalence of Truth in other religions. Through this journey he discovered what was common to all religions—Truth as a moral force. This discovery took away from him the need to adopt any particular religion as his own. So even though he remained a Vaishnav Hindu denominationally, he became a universalist in matters of faith. For Gandhi, the importance of religion was not so much in specific rituals—each religion had its own—but in morality, which was common to all religions. He began to distinguish the two with the use of ‘R’ (Religion as a source of faith and morality) and ‘r’ (many religions). “There are many religions, but there is one Religion”, he would say. He also explained this plurality at one end and oneness at the other through the imagery of the tree. Just as a tree had one trunk and many branches, so did Religion. Religion had one trunk but many branches. This Religion became his great ally, his greatest strength and his biggest shelter in times of crisis and despondency.

It is thus clear that Gandhi’s basic philosophic vision of human life and the techniques for transforming it remained unchanged throughout his life. What however changed was the manner in which he understood the nature of the world being transformed in a modern direction. In England he witnessed the dissolving old world and the triumphantly emerging modern industrial society. He encountered the optimists celebrating the arrival of the new order capable of taking humanity to the shores of prosperity and happiness. He also met the pessimists who bemoaned the loss of soul under the new world order but looked on helplessly at the

juggernaut of industrialism. Gandhi was attracted to the pessimists, but temperamentally he was not given to passivity and resignation. He was initially convinced that industrialism was a ‘curse’ that had gripped human society. In his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909) written during the ship journey from London to South Africa, he delineated the ills of the new industrial civilisation and also tried to suggest a way out of it. His understanding was that the whole of mankind had moved away from its original moorings and—without reaching the destination—was floating around without any rudder or compass. Fully convinced that the industrial civilisation could only enslave humanity, not liberate it, Gandhi raised a fundamental question: Is there a way out?

There is no evidence that Gandhi found the answer (though he never admitted it). But there is evidence that Gandhi’s basic outlook to modernity began to undergo a change. During the course of the national movement, Gandhi came into contact with some of the finest minds of the times. And, as he transformed the national movement with his leadership, he was also transformed by it. Gandhi began to look differently at the entire paraphernalia of the industrial civilisation he had dismissed earlier in *Hind Swaraj*—hospitals, courts, parliamentary democracy, bureaucracy, modern State, modern science, etc. He began to see their utility for human life. Without abandoning his basic position on the modern industrial civilisation, he now began to see it as an important instrument. ‘How to use the instrument in one’s favour without being enslaved by it’ was now his concern. There is plenty of evidence that by the 1940s Gandhi’s

uncompromising opposition had been moderated quite a bit. He was still not a 'convert' to the new world. But he could see that the new world, given the intervention by trained, organised and committed men and women, was indeed capable of alleviating the basic problems of poverty and discrimination.

In July 1946, 18 months before his death, Gandhi spelt out his vision of an ideal social order. He wrote: "In this structure of innumerable

villages there will be ever widening, never ascending, circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life . . . sharing the majority of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Let India live for this true picture, though never realisable

in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want before we can have something approaching it."

This was Gandhi's dream. Nobody knows how such a world can be achieved. But hardly anyone would disagree that it is a world well worth aspiring for.

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Secularism and the State: Categorising the Nehru Model

Anil Nauriya

I. The "Nehru Models": The Historical Nehru Model and the Posthumous Nehru Model

In most circles where opinion making on behalf of minorities takes place, one of the reasons for appreciation of Jawaharlal Nehru's approach towards the minorities generally is his statement that majority communalism, that is, sectarianism, is more dangerous than minority communalism. He said that "the communalism of a majority community must of necessity bear a closer resemblance to nationalism than the communalism of a minority group".ⁱ This statement must, however, be understood along with his insight expressed on the same occasion that majority and minority communalisms feed off each other.ⁱⁱ His approach is not therefore a blank cheque to minority communities to nurture and nurse their own respective communalisms as some of his majoritarian detractors allege.

One consequence of the focus on this aspect of Nehru's approach has been that other features of the Nehruvian secular state have not received as much analysis as these deserved. It was hardly ever noticed

therefore that there are in fact at least two models that contend for recognition as the Nehru model.

The notion of the secular state that was implemented after independence emerged from the Congress-led freedom struggle. Nehru invariably emphasised the connection between the establishment of a secular state and the "whole growth of our national movement".ⁱⁱⁱ It is intrinsic to the Gandhi-Nehru framework. It is a model of equality and equal citizenship.

A secular state was thus established and it went beyond the usual European notion of a denominational state whose secularism consisted merely in the separation from the very church to which that state was simultaneously committed. We understood, and rightly understood, a secular state to be a non-denominational state and a state that was religiously neutral as specified in the Karachi Resolution of 1931. Gandhi, in speaking of a secular state, had also defined it in clear terms in what would now be depicted as a Nehruvian manner, that is, in terms of separation of the state from denominational religion.^{iv}

Similarly, when it came to society, as distinct from the state, both Gandhi and Nehru emphasised the concept of equal respect and protection of all religions, thus reconciling the concept of a religiously neutral state with a concept of equal respect for the humanist values that may be located in each religion. For Nehru, "A secular state means a state in which the state protects all religions, but does not favour one at the expense of others and does not itself adopt any religion as state religion."^v

And then there is a constructed Nehru model or a quasi-Nehruvian model which is actually a posthumous Nehru model constructed largely after the split in the Congress in 1969. This model resembled but was somewhat different from the actual Nehruvian model. It could not last for more than six or seven years and ended dramatically with the firing at Turkman Gate, Delhi during the tenure of the Emergency regime in 1976.

Let me begin by first speaking about the first Nehru model.

II. Has the Nehru Model failed?

It would be fallacious to say so.

It will be my contention that the actual Nehru model in fact succeeded. It contained and managed a very serious situation that had developed after the partition of India. It built a state based on equal rights for all citizens and a consensus behind such a state. It provided for regional expressions of linguistic aspirations as well.

The problem was essentially not here but with what emerged as a posthumous Nehru model. There was, I would say, a cut-off point in 1969. After 1969 what might be called a gloss on secularism came to be projected upon the New Congress. The post-1969 Left-of-Centre circle around the then Prime Minister was well-intentioned in wishing to initiate a break from the old guard in the Indian National Congress which, it believed, was holding up further economic reform. In the process the 1969 split in the Congress which this group helped bring about also, however, cut the Congress off from its roots.^{vi}

In fact, the quasi-Nehru model became more contentious in public discourse when it began to be presented as cut-off from the country's struggle for freedom and as a sort of immaculate conception. More than the model itself, it is this projection that not only became problematic but actually helped the forces of majority communalism in particular to present the Nehruvian vision as an artificial imposition upon Indian society rather than as a natural culmination from its social character and political struggle.

As I have said, the quasi-Nehruvian, or posthumous Nehruvian, model was different essentially in the historical provenance that it sought to project. It sought to delink Nehru from the mainstream national struggle,

pluck him out of the Gandhi–Nehru framework and to establish an isolated posthumous quasi-Nehru model whose definition could be subsumed under what currently passed for academically acceptable progressive ideas. This happened in the context of the Indira Gandhi–CPI alliance post-1969. The alliance itself was unexceptionable; the problem arose in the unhistorical attempt to extrapolate it backwards and seek to diminish or exclude the Congress' own struggles, as it were, from its own history.^{vii}

Perhaps because the post-1969 model did not have a strong foundation in historical fact and was an unhistorical attempt to extrapolate backward the post-1969 alliance between Indira Gandhi's Congress and the CPI, it was easily toppled first by a callow youth and his organised hoodlums, and then after 1980 by a succession of Non-Resident Indian lobbies.

The posthumous Nehruvian model could hegemonise the state but could not take the society with it. This quasi-Nehruvian model lacked Nehru's democratic temper.

It disregarded society though claiming to speak in the name of the people

In the end, in the 1990s, remnants of this model, far from defending themselves against the onslaught from Hindutva, could not defend even the gains from the Gandhi–Nehru framework.

III. Why did this projection become problematic?

The answer to this is a complex one.

To some extent an essential and necessary accompaniment had been absent even in the years of the actual Nehru model but this feature came more prominently to the fore after the 1969 events.

K.R. Narayanan (1920–2005), who would serve as the President of India between 1997 and 2002, saw the point perspicaciously as early as in 1970. In a paper, presented at a seminar on Nehru and Nation-building (December 21–23, 1970) at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, K.R. Narayanan observed: "In his passion for legislative revolution Nehru and the Indian National Congress did not, after independence, place sufficient emphasis on the aspect of a social reform movement in the country."^{viii}

This defect or shortcoming came to the fore especially after 1969 because the split in the Congress and the lines on which it occurred had the effect of cutting the Congress off from the constructive work movements, that is, the very civil society organisations which were its roots and which had provided it sustenance.

It is necessary to dwell on this point a little further. In the 1930s, the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, made a tour of Bengal. On coming back he spoke at the Bombay session of the AICC in 1934. And the point that he made was to underline the link between the constructive work programmes of the Congress and its political programmes. He said he noticed in the course of his tour that people were willing to come forward and listen to the Congress wherever the constructive work programme had reached. For example, he noticed, that where the khadi (handspun and handwoven cloth) programme had reached and had been able to help generate some income, people would flock to the Congress meetings to hear their message.

The vital link that the Frontier Gandhi observed in 1934 was over time lost sight of in independent India and especially in the post-

1969 phase of the Congress and Indian politics. The flaw which K.R. Narayanan noticed in 1970 was over-reliance, or rather near-exclusive reliance, on state action, legislation and state policies. The prevailing logic appeared to be: now that we are in power, we do not need to build up civil society institutions for social reform and action because we have the state to do this for us.

The wages of this neglect were not immediately obvious because, for one thing, the Congress was historically associated with a network of ground level constructive work institutions on whose support it could implicitly rely in the first 22 years after independence. The 1969 split in the Congress gave a rude shock to this arrangement. The implications were not immediately obvious in the short term. This was primarily for other reasons, such as the short-term electoral victories that the posthumous Nehru model secured in the General Elections of 1971 and the nationwide elections to the State Assemblies which followed in 1972. In the General Elections of 1971 it was the freshness of Indira Gandhi's faction, which had emerged from the Congress split of 1969, that swayed the electorate. In the State Assembly elections in the following year there was the added factor of victory in the Bangladesh War.

Yet the overall impact of the 1969 split in the Congress did not take long to make itself felt and it was soon obvious that the Congress, or what remained of it, was on a declining curve.

Meanwhile, the Hindutva organisations, on the other hand, had been working ceaselessly in society and the rise of these organisations was, in this scenario, like a time-bomb waiting to explode.

A more recent recognition,

especially in the wake of the findings of the Sachar Committee, has been that neither the Nehru model nor the posthumous Nehru model, nor indeed the models of development in force in other Opposition-ruled States, in their action on the ground placed adequate special emphasis on policies to ensure the welfare and human development of the minority communities. [This was although Nehru himself recognised as early as in 1951 that such special emphasis would be required especially in the case of Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others.^{ix}] And that more specific steps are required for their education and development.^x

IV. What Now?

The shortcoming or defect, to which K.R. Narayanan drew attention in 1970, remains. Until this is remedied, the outlook would remain grim. Even if the present ruling dispensation returns to power and confines its focus to re-adjustment of state policies, it is unlikely to remedy the flaw that K.R. Narayanan under-lined. Similarly, whatever combination of political parties comes to power in the near future, it is unlikely to be able to provide the durable alternative that is required if it merely follows a statist approach. A long-term alternative can come about only with the emergence of a secular party which has the backing of grassroots civil society organisations with roots in the community life of the Indian people.

Merely taking control of the state will not suffice.

(Lecture delivered at the Dr K.R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies and Centre for Zakir Husain Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia on March 3, 2009. The endnotes are subsequent additions.)

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Endnotes

- i *The Tribune*, November 30, 1933.
- ii Ibid.
- iii *The Statesman*, Delhi, July 8, 1951.
- iv Anil Nauriya, "Gandhi on Secular Law and State", October 22, 2003, <http://www.thehindu.com>.
- v *The Statesman*, July 7, 1951.
- vi For a development of this point see my article "1969 in Retrospect", *The Hindu*, March 17, 2000.
- vii That is, for example, the extensive pre-freedom struggles conducted by the Congress and such peasant organisations as were non-antagonistically associated with it, the various Congress-associated institutions' constructive work programmes, and their strivings for the social rights of the underprivileged and for a linguistically accommodative and non-sectarian understanding of nationalism inclusive of the minorities.
- viii K.R. Narayanan, *Nehru and His Vision*, DC Books, Kottayam, 1999, p. 34.
- ix See *The Statesman*, Delhi, July 8, 1951.
- x Whether this should be achieved through programmes directed at minorities specifically or through programmes aimed at the underprivileged irrespective of religion, caste and creed is a matter for consideration. In my opinion, a mix of the two approaches would be more likely to succeed than the one or the other.

Chavismo: Part III

The third part of a seven part article by Marco Teruggi on Chavismo, the ongoing socialist revolutionary project in Venezuela.

Chavismo Will Be Socialist Or It Will Cease To Exist

Marco Teruggi

‘Made in socialism.’ That phrase resonated a lot in Venezuela a few years ago. It was on chocolates, yoghurts, oils, posters, embedded in a heart logo and the inevitable red five-pointed star. Every ministry claimed to be representative of people's power, and each bakery or route was labelled as socialist. Chavez questioned this obsession on national TV: calling things ‘socialist’ does not make them socialist. If there was something he longed to build, it was a transition to 21st century socialism. Chavismo must be socialist.

It was not like that from the beginning, at least publicly, perhaps because he had not yet reached that conclusion. Or because, in the political arena, the idea was to reach that conclusion collectively: the people must be collectively willing to move in that direction; the historic subject, the epicenter of politics, people, must develop the desire for socialism. Which is why Chavez only mentioned socialism for the first time in 2005.

Until that moment, in his initial writings—for example, the Blue Book—there were strong ideas about combining and mobilising. He talked of the recovery of the betrayed independence project: Bolivarian popular nationalism. The Bolivarian movement was the assertion of a national project with a Latin American dimension: the ethical refounding of a devastated country, plundered for decades

by a corrupt political / business class. The movement had as its symbols the tricolour flag, the red beret, and military discipline, and combined plebian, national and social liberation. It represented the recovery of a country in organic crisis, a recovery brought about by the people involved in a massive mass movement beginning from the Caracazo in 1989 ultimately leading to the emergence of Chavez like a thunderbolt in 1992.

Socialist Roots

The central aspect—and here we can trace the socialist roots before their public announcement—of the Bolivarian project was to implement it through centrally driven programmes like creating spaces for the exercise of participatory democracy, creating popular organisations and creating conditions for their multiplication, and launching several movements which were essentially independent of and parallel to the state, like the various missions, whose aim was to build the human being who could carry forward the Bolivarian project. All these programmes had at their centre the working people, the lower classes, and the centrepiece of the Bolivarian project was the construction of a people's power, which took different forms over the years. The state needed to first assert its control over the economy, and then transfer this control to the organised people, who simultaneously needed

to gradually learn how to exercise that power. A complex architecture, virtuous, possible, necessary. The socialist programmes thus appeared before the announcement of their socialist character.

The Bolivarian project is not about challenging neoliberalism so as to build a more stabilised and a more egalitarian capitalism, but about challenging the capitalist order itself. “This revolution has assumed the banner of socialism, and that requires and demands much more than any other revolution. We could have stayed within the frame of a national revolution, but behind those often undefined terms are hidden statements that end up being reformist, rightwing, that end up eventually toeing the line,” explained Chavez.

The official launch of the socialist project in 2005 coincides with the formation of communal councils, followed by communes. Chavez draws the communal road to socialism, which means rebuilding a new state on the basis of the political, cultural and economic power of the communes. He left it in writing: the bourgeois state had to be pulverised, and for that he outlined a plan and also the steps to be taken within that. It meant democratisation of the inherited state, building a different kind of state, on participatory and self-managed roots, a plan which has its basis in the analysis of Istvan Meszaros. A socialism from below, an endogenous socialism.

State Socialism

This socialist proposal of Chavez was in contradiction with another, which can be summarised in a few points: the centralised state should be at the centre of the whole project, it should be the protector and main player or actor; the various forms of popular organisation should be subordinated to the state and should be limited to only certain areas; the state should enter into agreements with businessmen, both old and the new emerging businessmen, and should strive to create a new national bourgeoisie. This latter project, known as state socialism, is essentially a more egalitarian capitalism, is capitalism with relatively more distributed wealth, is socialism in name but having its foundations in capitalism.

This debate can be understood through concrete policies implemented by Chavez on a national scale in Venezuela. As Meszaros says, “The measure of socialist achievements is: to what degree the measures adopted contribute actively to the constitution and consolidation of a deeply rooted and substantial democracy, of social control and general self-management.” The way to build state socialism, where the objective is more efficient management of the state, will be different from the way to build socialism as Chavez understood it, where the aim is to advance towards consolidating power in the hands of organised communities as the basic founding bloc of a new state. The aim of the revolution is not having a more progressive minister or mayor, but organising of the popular classes to collectively control power.

Chavez strived to develop social forms of ownership over the means of production in order to

lay the foundations for building of communal and feminist 21st century socialism. He spent years politically and economically experimenting to build such social forms of ownership, and by the time he died, enough had been done to create the possibility for the revolution to advance further in that direction.

The advance of Chavismo in Venezuela has not been smooth, it has had its ups and downs. In particular, since 2014, the economy has been on the ropes. There have been conflicts within Chavismo about how to deal with this crisis. The revolution found itself at crossroads, with two possible paths: one, to take a conservative stance, retreat from advancing down the road of more communal power, a road whose goal appears to be historically very distant, which would also mean giving up on some of the advances already made; and the second, to further advance down this road

and deepen the changes already initiated as well as expanding the program of democratisation of people’s power into more areas. Which path should Chavismo take? Going along with the path to greater community control, or strengthening the agreement with the business community?

It is a river that has stirred up the past in the present. The various actors wanting take Chavismo in different directions have differing desires and interests, depending upon their class interests. There are many who are tired of the deepening economic crisis. They wonder, how much more we need to endure to advance towards socialism. And so, they have come to disbelieve the historical project. There are also many others, who strongly believe that either Chavismo will be socialist, or it will cease to exist.

Breaths of Fresh Air from a Pontifical Mouth of the South

Earl Bousquet

Ever since becoming maximum leader of the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics in 2013, Pope Francis has not minced words to take strong positions on major international issues. But on the eve of a visit to his native South American continental homeland, he was called upon to speak out loudly—and act strongly—against men of his cloth accused of sexual abuse.

All Francis’ predecessors – except Syria-born Pope Gregory III in the 8th century -- have been

Europeans. But none has been as outspoken as the first Christian pontiff from the Americas and the Southern Hemisphere in all of 13 centuries.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as a young man he worked as a chemical technologist and a nightclub bouncer before becoming a priest in 1963.

As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Bergoglio embraced Liberation Theology and the Argentine cleric was admired across South America for his trademark humility.

Rejecting Comforts

Rejecting the comforts guaranteed by his top church position, he traveled by bus across his diocese and rejected the luxurious quarters his predecessors resided in, opting instead to live alone in a small rented apartment.

Elevated to his pontifical throne at the palatial Vatican, Pope Francis did likewise, choosing to stay in a guesthouse and rejecting the papal limousine in favor of an ordinary car.

Less than one square mile in area, located within Italy's vast capital (Rome) and with a resident population of only a few hundred citizens within its walls, The Vatican is officially the smallest country—and with the smallest population—in the entire world.

Officially called 'The Holy See', it also has non-voting rights at the United Nations (UN) and the Pope is its Head of State.

Eternal Wrath

But Francis quickly earned the eternal wrath of die-hard conservatives within his religious empire for breaking with traditional church dogma on several issues.

In 2014, he told the members of the top-ranking Pontifical Academy of Sciences that he supported the 'Big Bang' theory and Evolution—positions he said were “not inconsistent with the theory of Creation.” He also supports actions to protect the earth against Climate Change.

Between 2014 and 2015, Pope Francis spoke out against the misuse of political and economic power internationally, lamented the disappearance and suspected murder of 43 students in Mexico and condemned the dangers and loss of life caused by immigration.

He condemned financial mismanagement at The Vatican; and his decision to excommunicate members of the Mafia, though hailed worldwide, earned him several death threats.

Francis opposes “unbridled capitalism” and sees consumerism as “irresponsible development”.

He played a leading role in facilitating the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the US and Cuba in 2015.

Then, in December 2017, he called for “serene dialogue” between the government and opposition in Venezuela, as they prepared for crucial talks in the Dominican Republic on January 11 and 12, 2018.

Opposing Ills...

In his fifth annual Christmas Message, delivered on December 25, 2017, Francis did not break with his tradition of speaking out against the ills affecting the world.

On Palestine, he urged “a resumption of dialogue” towards “a negotiated solution” that would allow for “the peaceful coexistence of two states within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders.”

Opposing militarism and capitalism, he said, “The winds of war are blowing in our world and an outdated model of development continues to produce human, societal and environmental decline.”

On tensions on the Korean peninsula, he hoped that “mutual trust may increase, in the interest of the world as a whole.”

On refugees and economic migrants everywhere, he said the millions involved “do not choose to go away” but are “driven from their lands” and “forced to travel alone

in inhuman conditions, becoming easy targets for human traffickers” while “risking their lives to face exhausting journeys that end at times in tragedy”.

Francis' 2017 end-of-year message also urged de-escalation of conflicts in Iraq and Syria and he called for peace in South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Nigeria.

His 2018 New Year message, delivered to coincide with the church's observation of World Peace Day, was also dedicated to the cause of refugees, calling on the world to show solidarity with those forced by dreadful conditions to leave their homes in search of better elsewhere.

'Apostolic Exhortation'

But all this didn't just fall out of the sky.

In early December 2013, soon after taking his high office, the still new pope gave an 'apostolic exhortation'—an address calling for big changes in the church, including rethinking long-held but outdated customs.

He said: “I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets”, rather than one “which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

“I do not want a church concerned with being at the center and then ends being caught-up in a web of obsessions and procedures,” he added.

Not Above Criticism

However, Francis has not been without or above criticism.

As soon as he was elected to pontifical high office in 2013, the Western press unearthed earlier

criticism that as head of the Argentine Catholic Church, he failed to openly criticise successive dictatorships.

He was even accused of failing to defend and protect priests hounded by dictators—to which he responded by pointing out that he had in fact once given his official ID card to one who resembled him so that he could escape the country.

Francis was also accused of not taking swift and strong enough action against a former Vatican Ambassador to the Dominican Republic who was found to have been a serial sexual molester of little boys. The guilty senior cleric was recalled to the Vatican where internal investigations began, but he died before the proceedings ended.

In more recent cases, Francis came under pressure from critics in Australia and the USA regarding senior clerics also accused of child molestation, both of whom were recalled to the Vatican and one of who died and was buried without paying for his sins of commission.

Now, ahead of his upcoming visit to Chile and Peru, protesters defending the cases of victims of abuse have been threatening to protest during his Chile visit over claims that the Vatican is too slow and ineffective in taking action against senior clerics accused of abuse and of inaction against the alleged perpetrators.

In the Chile case, extremists have attacked churches with explosive devices, even threatening Francis that unless he acts according to their demands, “the next one will be in your Cossack.”

The Pope faced similar criticism and pressure last year before and during his visit to Myanmar, where he was being canvassed to denounce the treatment of Rohingya victims of

abuse and "ethnic cleansing."

No Genuflection

But this ex-bouncer has always found ways and means to not only accept criticisms, but also to act in ways that, in the end, give time to address the issues in manners that do not reflect genuflection to those holding proverbial guns to his head.

Ahead of the Chile visit, for example, while there were no plans to meet the victims of priestly abuse, his spokesman in Rome made it clear that such a meeting was “not impossible”.

Without saying so, Francis seems to be signaling to his loud critics that he is not deaf, but their causes are not the only ones on his large plate in a world that is more quickly turning away from religion than ever before.

Spiritual Eclipse?

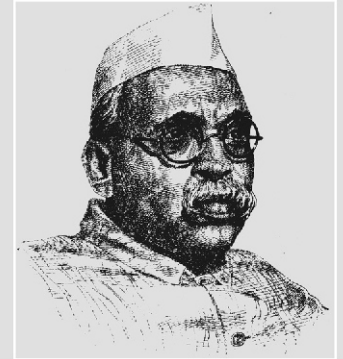
Today, 21st Century automation and innovation, along with other advances in modern science and technology, are increasingly attracting youth away from religion worldwide, leaving most church leaders fearing a growing apparent eclipse of traditional spiritual dominance.

Yet, in the midst of it all, the criticisms notwithstanding, Francis keeps bucking the traditional trend by remaining the loudest mouth of and for the south, in a world still so unfairly dominated by the north.

With popes appointed for life, the words of the first spiritual leader of a major Western faith to emerge from the Southern Hemisphere in 13 decades not only still sound good to his global flock, but also feel like a lasting breath of fresh air they pray will last in 2018 and beyond.

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Progress of RSS is Ominous

Kuldip Nayar

**Why Do Soldiers Continue
to Die on the India-Pakistan
Border?**

Sandeep Pandey

**Massive Public Opposition to
Konkan Refinery Project**

Sukanya Shantha and
Ruchira Petkar

**Four Years of Modi
Government: Two Circles
of Growth**

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He Came, He Spoke, the RSS Conquered

Apoorvanand

It says something about our times that the whole nation was glued to their television sets to watch a former president visiting the birth place of K.B. Hedgewar and the offices of a semi-secret organisation called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Nearly all news channels ran a live telecast of not only Pranab Mukherjee addressing the swayamsevaks of the RSS but also the speech of Mohan Bhagwat, the sar sanghchhalak, or supremo, of the RSS which came just before. A nondescript RSS function became a national event and the message of the Sangh reached all corners of India thanks to our curiosity over what India's former president was going to do there.

Picture perfect for the RSS. It got not only one, but many frames which it will showcase to future generations to prove that it is not shunned by the civilised: Pranab Mukherjee standing on the balcony of the birth place of Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS; Mukherjee garlanding his statue; Mukherjee's remarks in the visiting book: "I came here to pay my respects to a great son of India."

As Mukherjee was providing the RSS these photo-ops, I flipped through Pathey, a pocket-sized book full of the gems of Hedgewar Thought which swaymsevaks are supposed to carry around. The Telegraph has reproduced some of them for our benefit, to enlighten us about the greatness of the mind of this son of India:

- The Sangh wants to put in reality the words "Hindusthan of Hindus". Hindusthan is a country of Hindus. Like other nations of other people (eg Germany of Germans), this is a nation of Hindu people.
- Only a piece of land cannot be called 'Nation'. A nation is created where people of one thought, one culture and one tradition live together since ancient times. Because of exactly the above reasons, 'Hindusthan' is the name given to our country and this is a country of the Hindus.
- Expecting help from others and pleading for it is a clear sign of weakness. This clearly reflects in behavior. So, Sangh swayamsewaks should fearlessly proclaim, "Hindusthan of

Hindus". Remove all narrow-mindedness. We do not say that others should not live here. But they should be aware that they are living in Hindusthan of Hindus. (Like others would realise, if they were living there, that they are living in France of French people, or Germany of Germans, or Spain of Spanish people). Others cannot infringe on rights of Hindus here.

- Seeing the Saffron Flag (Bhagwa Dhwaj), the entire history of the nation along with its tradition and culture comes before our eyes. The mind rises and special motivation comes in it. Only this Saffron Flag (Bhagwa Dhwaj) we consider as our Guru, as a symbol of our Tatva, i.e. principle. Sangh has regarded the most sacred Bhagwa Dhwaj as the Guru instead of any particular individual.

The same Hedgewar had called Muslims "Yavana snakes", who should be seen with suspicion for their reluctance to pay homage to mother India.

Every word of his contradicts the idea of India that Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari, Azad and Sarojini Naidu shaped through their struggles, and he built the RSS to dismantle the edifice of secular India that Mukherjee eulogised in his speech.

If Hedgewar is great, then the very notion of greatness would need to be revised or upturned. Would any sensible German politician call an anti-Semitic ideologue a great son of Germany?

Apart from these, the picture of Mukherji himself standing at attention to watch the saffron flag go up and the parade of the lathi-wielding swayamsevaks would be

taken around as trophies by the RSS.

The spokespersons of the RSS lost no time in telling the world that the speeches of Bhagwat and Mukherjee complimented each other. They did in many ways, even if the Congress party and the commentariat is applauding Mukherjee for his great, statesmanlike address.

Bhagwat used the cover of unity in diversity to camouflage his real message that Hindus are specially responsible (uttardayi) for India. And Mukherjee, while dwelling at length about the great ancient period of India and its unbroken history of 5,000 years, wrapped up the crucial medieval period in just two sentences. To tell an audience of swayamsevaks that "Muslim invaders" came and ruled India for 600 years, after which the East India Company captured India, is to endorse their wrong-headed, communal reading of history in which they speak of "800 years of foreign rule".

What Mukherjee chose not to say

The whole event was high in symbolism. Mukherjee obliged the RSS by not embarrassing it by putting a mirror to the Sangh. We may be pardoned for calling him Gandhian but his speech showed that he lacks the courage of Gandhi. Gandhi did not mince words when he told the leaders of the Sangh of his unhappiness at learning they were involved in anti-Muslim violence, or when he forced Golwalkar to say that the RSS did not believe in violence against minorities. Of course, Golwalkar, like a true Sanghi, never meant it.

No one expected Pranab babu to be as forthright as Patel, who slammed Golwalkar for the obstinacy of the RSS and its refusal

to mend its ideology of violence against the minorities. Mukherjee used diplomatese, but he was not honest. He said "violence" when he should have said murder and lynching. He said "at the heart of violence is darkness" when he should have said that at the core of violence is the anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hatred spread by the RSS and its affiliates. He should have talked about lumpen crowds taking over India and the goondaism that is being practised in the name of nationalism. Instead, Mukherjee gave a sanctimonious speech which—as a friend from Gujarat, Prasad Chako, rightly said—"would fit any audience anywhere, a speech which anyone could interpret in any manner".

Mukherjee only flattered his hosts when he said that India was the fastest growing economy. He complained about India being very low on the happiness index. But he did not care to identify the unhappy lot or the sources of their unhappiness. Otherwise, he could have talked about the farmers who are dying and battling against a murderous economic regime, he could have talked about the youth which feels unwanted in this great land, he could have mentioned Dalits, who are being attacked everywhere, and of course Muslims and Christians who are at the target of the government and the RSS. He preferred not to do that. That could have struck a discordant note on a solemn occasion like this.

Since people love positivity, Mukherjee could have talked about the humanity that people like Yashpal Saxena of Delhi and Imam Rashidi of Asansol, who lost their sons to the communal frenzy that the RSS and its affiliates have unleashed on

the people of this country. Or, the sadhus of Ayodhya who held an iftar for their Muslim neighbours in their temples, or the heroic strivings of the citizens of Gurgaon who are battling the demon of divisiveness by bringing Hindus closer to Muslims. He did not remember them. He could have. He decided not to.

By pitching himself above the divides which are tearing apart the lives of ordinary Indians, @CitiznMukherjee, as he calls himself on Twitter, shied away from the duties of a true citizen. Citizenship is cultivated by standing together with those who are being denied the rights attendant on citizenship.

What the ‘great son’s’ message really is

Bhagwat, so lovingly and reverentially addressed as sarsangha chalakji by Mukherjee, anticipated the impact of the event when he said that after it was over, the Sangh would remain the Sangh and Pranab Mukherjee would remain Pranab Mukherjee.

Bhagwat was right. Just when the nation was preparing for the passing out parade of the swayamsevaks at Nagpur, one of them, their senior, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, a BJP MLA from Karnataka, was heard instructing corporators not to work for Muslims.

“I am telling you corporators, don’t work for the welfare for Muslims. You must work for the welfare of Hindus only. Who voted us to power? I told my staff, no one wearing skull caps or burqas should visit my office,” the Indian Express reported Yatnal telling his party workers.

Yatnal is only following the “great son of India”, Hedgewar, and his *maatr sanstha*, the RSS.

Before he is called fringe, let us remind ourselves that he has served as a minister in the government of the darling of Indian democrats, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a proud swayamsevak.

Nice words fail to gloss over the viciousness of the mind that lurks behind them.

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Progress of RSS is Ominous

Kuldip Nayar

I find the followers of secular ideology as fanatic as the others. There was a furore over the visit of BJP president Amit Shah to my residence a few days ago. Criticism over telephone and emails were numberless. And all that they said was “you should not have allowed him to visit you.”

I want to put the record straight. A couple of days before Shah’s visit, a few activists came to my house. We were together in the Jayaprakash Narain movement. They asked me that if I had any objection to meeting Shah at my residence. I told them that anybody can come to my house and I do not discriminate people on the basis of their ideology.

I feel that my ideology of not mixing religion with politics is probably the best and we should not wear beliefs on our sleeves. One should not be afraid of sharing thoughts with the people who are staunchly opposed to you. Ideological differences should have no place. After all, democracy is all about discussion and debate.

Mahatma Gandhi talked to Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and even visited his residence to persuade him not to insist on partition. After his visit, he observed that he had failed to convince Jinnah. There was no bitterness in their thought. Gandhi,

in fact, went on fast for 21 days on what he called “purification.” The lesson to be learnt is that we should not hesitate to sit across the table to iron out our differences.

I must admit that my opinion about Amit Shah was that of a person emitting fire and brimstone. But I was completely bowled over by his courtesy and politeness, clear thought process and perception and, above all, possessing an affable temperament. He was anxious to convince me even though he knew my philosophy was opposite to his and that of the BJP.

He said he was six years old when he started going to the RSS shakas. I could spot the pride in his eyes when said this. Indeed, he has been through the grind at Nagpur. It has been a long haul for Shah but he has ultimately emerged as the party president.

India is at the crossroads. Followers of Hindutva want to capture power and oust the principle of togetherness. I partly touched on this topic while talking to Amit Shah. He said that the BJP develops an area comprehensively when it takes over. My observation was that in the process the mosques also get demolished. He refused to be provoked and responded saying that development dependent on the deputy commissioner of the area.

The two main points on which Shah dwelt during his meeting with me were caste and partition. He said that the socialists ended up in caste politics and mentioned that Ram Manohar Lohia, the founder, underlined caste all the time. That is probably the reason, according to me, why they were able to capture power only in States in initial years and not at the Centre. Shah also emphasised that the present set of leaders of different parties were following the same path.

Strange, those who believe in the ideology of development for all should get divided on the betterment of certain groups when they come to power. This is understandable at the State level. But they do not get over divisive politics even when they come to power at the Centre. The ruling BJP is one example. They have 21 States under their rule and the party has employed different tactics and methods in different States to capture power.

Even the Congress, the oldest party with secular outlook, is no longer an organisation which it used to be. Its problem is that it has no leader and has resorted to parochial politics. Rahul Gandhi will have a hard time in 2019 when he would have pitted himself against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been able to push the BJP down the Vindhyas. The Karnataka example is before the country.

Amit Shah, talking on partition, said that if “we had waited” the Indian subcontinent would not have got divided. Shah is wrong on this issue. Lord Clement Atlee, the British Prime Minister, who announced the end of their rule had fixed June 6, 1948 as the date when they would leave India as either one country or more. But partition took

place in mid-August in 1947, at least 10 months before the deadline set by Lord Atlee.

When I asked Lord Mountbatten why partition was effected earlier than June 1948, he said he could not hold the country together. He regretted the death of millions of people in the process. However, he justified partition on the plea that it could not be helped. So what Shah thought was contrary to the events which ultimately unfolded.

When I told Lord Mountbatten that he was responsible for the death of people during partition, he said that he had saved the lives of two million people when he diverted to Kolkata the food ships meant for his troops in South Asia. Before the Almighty he would swear that he had saved as many people from

starvation.

Shah’s remark had a tinge of disappointment. But his party does not seem to have learnt any lesson. It is trying to impose a Hindutva rule of sorts even when the BJP realizes that 17 crore Muslims are against what the party is attempting to do. And one thing which Shah and his party should remember is that India has a secular Constitution and whoever rules the country should follow it in letter and spirit.

Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem so. The RSS is spreading itself all over and, in the process, extinguishing the identity of others. The BJP needs it because it has no cadre of its own. Whatever the reason, the rule of RSS is forbidding.

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Why Do Soldiers Continue to Die on the India-Pakistan Border?

Sandeep Pandey

In 1947 India was divided by the foreign rulers by playing a game of divide and rule to which the religious fundamentalists fell prey. Since then, India and Pakistan have had a checkered history and uneasy relationship, sometimes climaxing in violent conflagrations and war.

While both the governments prefer to maintain an adversarial relationship, which now sustains vested interests on both sides, the common people and business interests on both the sides want peace. They do not want conflicts in which people die. The soldiers dying on both sides, after all, come from mostly modest middle class rural backgrounds. While the leaders

can meet when they choose to, the common people do not have control over their destiny. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stopped over in Pakistan in December 2015 while on the way from Afghanistan and participated in a family event of Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif; the former heads of intelligence agencies of both countries, Asad Durrani of the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan and Amarjit Singh Dulat of Research and Analysis Wing of India, co-authored a book *The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace*; the National Security Advisors of the two countries, retired Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua and Ajit Doval,

continue to meet in third countries; Adani is interested in selling 4,000 MW of power to Pakistan; and powerful business interests have ensured a peaceful border in Gujarat. Why then do soldiers keep killing each other on the northern border? We never hear of any Indian soldiers dying on the Indo-China border, probably because India and China have an unwritten / unspoken agreement not to kill each other's soldiers. If this is so, why can't a similar understanding be reached with Pakistan. After all, leaders of governments and intelligence agencies and security advisors are talking to each other.

We believe that if the governments of India and Pakistan cannot solve the disputes between the two countries, then the people should take the initiative. If the common people of the two countries are allowed to meet, then over a period of time peace and harmony will prevail. The two governments should facilitate the meeting of common people from the two sides by granting them passports and visas easily. Since people from the two sides of the border share a common culture, they can play an important role where the governments have failed.

Along the Indian border with Pakistan, there are openings between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in Kashmir, at Wagah–Attari in Punjab and at Munabao–Khokrapar in Rajasthan–Sindh. Gujarat doesn't have an opening into Pakistan even though a number of fisherfolk from both sides land up in each other's jails. The people in Bhuj, Kutch have had intimate relationships with people from the other side, and given an opportunity, trade can flourish between the two areas again.

If the border between Gujarat

and Sindh is opened either at Khavda or Nada Bet, the people from the two sides will get an opportunity to meet easily, there will be promotion of trade and tourism, and ultimately peace and friendship will be strengthened. The fisherfolk whose relatives land in jail on other side can easily travel across the border to find out about their well being and make an effort to get them released. It is in the interest of common people that borders are opened up.

If people of the two countries are allowed to meet freely, an atmosphere of peace and harmony will be created in which it will be easier to resolve the outstanding disputes too. When our defence expenses will go down, resources will be freed up for developmental activities which will benefit the poor on both sides.

When the two Koreas can end their enmity after almost as long a period as India–Pakistan animosity has existed, why can't the two South Asian neighbours not achieve the same feat?

The two governments should also take an initiative to replace the military ceremony on Wagah–Attari every evening with a peace ceremony where people are allowed to meet and celebrate peace, harmony, friendship and their shared culture. Such a model of peace ceremony can then be replicated on all border openings. A model for peace ceremony has been developed by a class on Social Movements at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar during 2016–17.

The governments of India and Pakistan should create a situation in which ultimately all restrictions on travel across the border are removed and people are allowed to meet freely. This will be a great service

to humanity.

An India–Pakistan Friendship and Peace March is being organised from 19 to 30 June, 2018 from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad to Nada Bet on Pakistan border, 290 km from Ahmedabad. Organisations endorsing this March include Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, Aaghaz-e-Dosti, Minority Coordination Committee, Gujarat, Gujarat Lok Samiti, Bandhkam Mazdoor Sangathan, Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Research, Karachi, National Alliance of People's Movements, Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal, All India Secular Forum, Manthan Samayiki, Kolkata, Jharkhand Nagrik Prayas, sacw.net, Confederation of Voluntary Agencies, Hyderabad, Hamari Awaz, Insaf Foundation, Gujarat Mazdoor Panchayat, Khudai Khidmatgar and Socialist Party (India).

When European countries, which were such bitter enemies of each other that they converted their wars into World Wars less than a hundred years ago, can create a Union in which all restrictions on travel have been removed, why can't the same thing be achieved in South Asia? If over a hundred countries in five regions of the world can sign on agreements to make themselves Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, why can't India and Pakistan do the same? In the long term, there is no alternative to the low intensity war currently being waged between the two countries other than to establish peace and friendship, especially since a full-fledged war is not possible because of the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides.

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Massive Public Opposition to Konkan Refinery Project

Sukanya Shantha and Ruchira Petkar

On May 30, around 15,000 villagers – the police had come prepared for around 10,000 protestors – gathered at the Rajiv Gandhi Maidan in Rajapur to demand an uncompromising roll-back of an oil refinery project announced by Fadnavis’s government early last year. The protestors included not just men and women in equal numbers from the affected villages, but also several hundred people from neighbouring villages who had come to show their solidarity with them in their struggle to protect their livelihoods.

The Rs 3 lakh crore oil refinery project which, officials say, will employ over one lakh people, is being opposed by all political parties, including the Shiv Sena, by environmentalists and also by human rights activists. But so far, the government has stayed resolute in its decision and in April, amidst opposition, it went ahead with signing a Memorandum of Understanding between Saudi Aramco and three state-owned companies – Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited. When completed by 2022, the project will be the world’s biggest single-location oil refinery project with a capacity to process 60 million tonnes of crude annually.

The oil refinery is planned over an expanse of 14,675 acres (5,870 hectares) of land in Maharashtra’s Konkan region. Of this, only only 126 acres (52 hectares) belong to the state. The rest has to be acquired. The 17 villages identified for the project

are in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts along the western coast and include Nanar, Sagwe, Taral, Karsinghewadi, Vadapalle, Villye, Dattawadi, Padekarwadi, Katradevi, Karvine, Chowke, Upade, Padwe, Sakhar, Gothiware, Girye and Rameshwar. Each of these villages has several smaller revenue villages under them. Nanar gram panchayat, for instance, consists of four revenue villages – Nanar, Ingalwadi, Palekarwadi and Wadi Chivari. The flourishing farmers and fisherfolk of these villages will all be displaced if this project goes ahead.

Konkan, a biodiversity hotspot and one of the most prosperous belts of the state, is home to the famous Alphonso mango, among other produce. The picturesque western coastline of India has innumerable beaches, mostly unexplored and underexposed to tourist activities. With rains in abundance, the farmers of this rich land, unlike those from Vidarbha and Marathwada region, have managed to do well without needing the state to extend its loan waiver scheme to the region. Konkan alone contributes 41% of Maharashtra’s GDP.

Coastal fishing here has remained a primary source of income for most Koli and Kokani Muslim communities who work harmoniously together. These fishing communities, unlike their farmer counterparts from the region, are only marginal landholders. And with this project underway, it is the fisherfolk who face the maximum risk of losing out on their source of livelihood without any reasonable

compensation.

Majid Adam Bhatkar, former sarpanch (head of the village) calls these beaches the community’s ATM. “Absolutely no family has ever gone to bed hungry. One could just go into the sea for a few hours and return home with fish worth a few hundred. These beaches have been our lifeline for generations,” Bhatkar explains.

Mango and paddy cultivation is the main source of earnings for the farmers. Vinod Suke, the newly-elected sarpanch of Rameshwar village in Sindhudurg explains that an average household here manages to earn between Rs 6-10 lakh from Alphonso mangoes alone. “It is a six-month-long work starting November. Even the poorest in the village owns over 100 mango trees. The earnings are enough for them to live a reasonably comfortable life,” Suke says. Last year, over 54 thousand metric tonnes of mangoes were sold from these 17 villages. This is over and above other produces like paddy, ragi and toor dal.

Yogesh Natekar, another resident of the village and an active member of the Konkan Refinery Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti, an organisation of affected persons floated to oppose the project, points out that no farmer in this region had to ever end their life due to failed crops. “Kokani (Konkan) soil has never failed its people. Even in the worst times, people have managed,” Natekar claims.

The farmers here boast of being self-reliant, which is also one of the primary reasons why they do not

consider an oil refinery project as a “gateway to development”.

“What jobs will the government provide us. Even the poorest here employ four or five workers under them,” says 69-year-old N.D. Kulkarni of Sagve village. The villagers claim Ratnagiri alone has over one lakh migrant labourers working at the Alphonso orchards. Kulkarni, who worked in Mumbai for over three decades, said the project will, in fact, render a large number of people jobless. “At present, even an elderly person like me is able to earn for his living. Once our lands are taken away, the state will consider only the younger generation eligible for employment. What will the older generation, especially those living alone do?” Kulkarni asks.

On at least two occasions, representatives from the revenue department had visited villages for land measurements, but the villagers obstructed their way and they had to return. The district administration has made several attempts to speak to the village heads and convince them to organise meetings with the villagers, but these official efforts have not made any headway so far. The people are in no mood to listen – they want the project to be cancelled.

Konkan and the people’s struggle

This is not the first time a massive scale project has been planned in Konkan. Also, this is not the first time that a project has been met with massive protest.

In 1992, Vedanta’s Sterlite Industries was allotted 500 acres of land in Zadgaon village of Ratnagiri to set up a 60,000 tonne per annum copper smelter and associated facilities by the state government. But a well-informed people’s

movement pushed the company outside the state and the project finally moved to Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu.

This was followed by another project set up by the Dabhol Power Company in the early 90s. The project was initiated by the now-defunct US energy major Enron. This project went through a lot of political churning and people’s opposition. The land acquisition was forced upon the locals by the then Congress government. While the BJP and Shiv Sena had initially opposed the project, they too went ahead with the project when they were voted to power in 1995. The project since has run into major losses and its future is now uncertain.

Another project, the Indo-French nuclear power initiative at Jaitapur, has also faced vociferous opposition from the local people and the Shiv Sena. The project, with a capacity to generate 9,900 MW electricity, was planned in 2010 by the then Congress-led United Progressive Alliance. Though land for the project was acquired amidst vehement opposition, it has barely made any progress because of concerns about the cost of the electricity that will be produced.

The political drama

People in Nanar say they understand the games of politicians all too well. “Every ruling party has had a chequered past. When in power, they have only taken an anti-people stand. Although the Sena and the Congress are extending their support, we aren’t relying on them in our agitation. It is a people’s movement, organised and executed by the locals,” said Nanar’s sarpanch Omkar Pabhudesai.

Seeing the popular mood,

local political leaders and village representatives have unanimously decided to keep their party allegiance aside while participating in the agitation. The village gram sabhas have passed numerous resolutions opposing the project and have already submitted a bunch of “no-consent” applications to the government.

Unfair means

Even though the villagers are confident of their unity and say that with time the movement will only intensify, they fear that bulk buying of the land by “outsiders” could dent their agitation. Even before the state had decided on the project, several investors, mostly from Gujarat, suddenly begun buying land from the locals. They paid high prices and bought land in bulk.

When villagers were served notice and asked to submit their consent letters to the revenue department, these new buyers – now considered “farmers” in official records – swiftly consented to the project. “It is pretty obvious that they had only blocked the land and were acting at the behest of the state,” says Prabhakar Devlekar, ex-sarpanch and vice president of the Konkan Refinery Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti.

The land, Devlekar says was bought from villagers for around Rs 3 lakh per hectare and upon acquisition by the state, could yield the owners anywhere around a crore of rupees, he estimates. There are fears that the state will use this way to show that the locals have acceded to the project.

Environmental impact

The project is expected to destroy over 14 lakh mango trees, six lakh cashew trees, paddy fields

spread over 500 acres along with huge parcels of flora and fauna, hence endangering the region's fragile coastal environment. Even before an exhaustive environment assessment could be carried out, Fadnavis had declared the project would emit "zero pollution" and that it would not pose any hazard to the environment.

But environmentalist Girish Raut says these are mindless claims made to keep the locals in the dark. He says the first impact of the refinery will be on the intertidal zone, which is a critical interface between terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Not just will the trees be felled for the refinery, but the habitat of marine life will also be severely impacted, Raut adds.

The villagers here are conscious of not wanting to be seen as "anti-development". "There are at least a dozen different projects that the state can provide us. Why can't they set up a processing unit to help farmers store and sell their produce?" asks Satyavan Palekar of Nanar. "We want development, but our question to this government is, at what and whose cost?"

(Note: This article has been edited by us.)

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Chavismo: Part IV

The fourth part of a series of seven articles by Marco Teruggi on Chavismo, the ongoing socialist revolutionary project in Venezuela, that the Venezuelans fondly call Bolivarian revolution.

'We Are All Soldiers'

Marco Teruggi

I was captivated by the man the very first time I saw him in Mar del Plata (Argentina), in 2005. He was standing before a packed stadium, quoting Eva Peron, talking about Francisco de Miranda. It was raining, there was a sea wind, and he was there for a master class in history. Beginning as a soldier in the Venezuelan military, he had already faced everything an empire unloads when one wants to challenge it and advance. That day I unknowingly became a Chavista. I was not the only one, we were thousands. There was something in his words, the historical time he carried, the certainty he offered.

I later saw him in Caracas. He made such a powerful impact. I remember the crowded avenue, the wait, the joy when suddenly, from the top of a truck, he appeared. Seeing him, the crowd went into a frenzy. It was a fascinating sight. The man had already become a myth.

A leadership of this magnitude was necessary to channel Venezuela's organic crisis into a revolutionary outlet. There had been huge mobilisations of people since 1989, there had been so many struggles and defeats, and the country was at the crossroads, without knowing where to go. The left was fragmented, and its various factions were small, without much following. "There was no mass work, the popular struggles were frozen," explained Chavez. The

subjective and objective conditions were both ripe for a change; what was needed was someone who could gather around him the scattered people and mould them into a revolutionary force. Chavez declared he would do it. And he did it.

He built himself up as the President, Head of State, head of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB); he moulded himself as the leader of a historical movement and of a political party; he became a mass pedagogue, an astute political strategist, a theoretician. As sociologists say, he was a charismatic leader. Such leaders emerge every few decades on our continent, they break with the past, revive the class struggle, and lay the foundations for rebuilding society.

Understanding Chavismo

You cannot understand Chavismo without understanding the role of the leadership, both in the civilian government and the military. He was the one who led the movement from the front. He was the one who took along with him all the various parties and the different ideologies, who could contain the worst tendencies and advance the revolutionary project and gradually push it more and more towards the left. He became an almost mythical figure, who decisively won every election, including the one held just before his death. His last victory

summoned a continent. The right, the empire, just did not know how to handle him.

Most political observers understand all this about Chavez. But Chavez was more than that: the people loved him, he was both father and brother to them. He continues to be among the people, continues to ignite their passions, continues to be in their prayers, they continue to light candles at the altar for him.

His death created a vacuum. Chavismo needed a new leadership, but it did not exist. The enemy was waiting for such an opportunity, it unleashed a violent war with full fury. With Chavez no longer at the helm, the enemy thought that it needed only a push to demolish Chavismo. But it was wrong. Chavez remained alive even after his death, and he continues to be the unifying element in the people's resistance that continues to this day.

How to fill the vacuum left by Chavez? How was the vacuum in the leadership of the government, state, Bolivarian movement, the FANB, mass pedagogy to be filled? This was the task that Nicolas Maduro had to fulfill, when he became the President after Chavez. But leadership cannot be exercised by decree, it has to be won. Furthermore, Maduro had to perform these tasks in a situation where the enemy launched three violent attacks on his presidency within a space of four years. These assaults brutally bruised the economy, badly damaging all the gains of the revolution, while also worsening the historical problems of the Venezuelan economy, such as corruption.

Closing Ranks

Maduro is not Chavez. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. Nor

is there Madurismo. But Maduro has displayed amazing leadership qualities, the clearest example being his call for the convening of the National Constituent Assembly in 2017 when the country was going down a confrontationist path from which it appeared there would be no return. Maduro redirected the country down the democratic way, demonstrating that he was a brilliant strategist, and was more able than the opposition. Responding to Maduro's call, Chavismo closed ranks around Maduro, ensuring his victory in the strategic battle. As Maradona, the legendary Argentinian footballer, described it, in times of crisis, we are all soldiers.

How much should be asked of the leadership? Maduro is not Chavez, it wouldn't be fair to ask him to perform the exemplary leadership role that Chavez played. Now that Chavez is not there, it is Chavismo that has to fulfill that role. Chavismo means all the various players in Venezuela, acting in unison. These include the parties, movements, communes, FANB, intellectuals – they must all come together to defend the revolution and advance it. The opposition wants to focus all attention on Maduro, to vilify him, to put the blame for all the problems on his leadership, and thereby launch a campaign to unseat him from the presidency and replace him with an opposition leader. They had done this with Chavez, they are doing it now with Maduro.

It is of course necessary to build leadership, one that is respected by the people and carries authority. This is particularly important at a time when there is a huge leadership vacuum in Venezuela, and when the country is facing a war from within and without, which has brought to

the fore all the negative tendencies that had been overcome during the Chavez years. However, these tendencies had not completely gone away, that takes a very long time, and they have increased in a big way again, such as benefiting oneself at the cost of society.

Consolidating Leadership

Chavismo is a heterogeneous, multiclass movement, ranging from the peasantry, the native Indians and city slum dwellers to the new entrepreneurial class. It is to the credit of Maduro that he has been able to consolidate his leadership within these diverse ranks of Chavismo, which is why there was a broad acceptance to his appointment as the Chavismo candidate for the 2018 presidential elections. On the other hand, it is also true that within the not so diehard supporters of Chavismo, or those supporters of Chavismo who have become disillusioned with it because of the economic crisis, or among the ordinary people who were watching the struggle from the sidelines and were never very passionate about social change, Maduro's authority is being questioned. All these sections of society have come to believe in the propaganda war being waged by the domestic opposition with the help of its international supporters, that the economic crisis has its roots in Chavismo, that Chavismo is fundamentally incapable of leading the country out of the economic crisis.

Chavismo needs a leadership having the authority and acceptability and charisma of a Chavez. Venezuela needs such a leadership. It was the titanic leadership of Chavez, his capacity to unify the country and guide it down the revolutionary

path, that enabled the revolutionary process to advance in Venezuela, an advance that no one had predicted till it actually took place. Now that Chavez is no longer there, it would be foolhardy to expect another Chavez to come on the scene and advance the revolution. The new President is trying his best, but ultimately, the revolutionary advance will now depend on the conscious actions of all of us, the the believers in Chavismo, the many Chavismos that we all are.

Are we all Chavez ?

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Saying a Firm 'No' To Displacement: Mahava Bharala Struggle in Rajasthan

Bharat Dogra

At a time when there is growing social and legal agreement that farmers' lands should not be acquired where the entire community is firmly opposed to it and when there are other options available to the government, it is inexplicable why the government has been so insistent about acquiring land in Mahava and Bharala villages (Neem Ka Thana Block of Sikar district). For the last four years, the overwhelming majority of the people of these villages have united to resist the notices served to them regarding takeover of their lands so that an industrial corporation can allot it to various industries.

As villagers explained during a recent visit to these villages, this has always been regarded as a two-crop area and has good prospects for agriculture and animal husbandry. Even what is described as wasteland in official records is actually very useful for supporting animal husbandry and related livelihoods, people say. Bhagvati Devi, who has been in the forefront of the anti-displacement struggle, says, "This land has provided for seven generations of villagers and we are determined that our future generations also continue to get this support."

Villagers here fear that as a large number of stone crushers exist in nearby areas, so their lands when acquired may also be used for this purpose, making it impossible to live

here because of the health destroying pollution caused by stone crushers.

Already indiscriminate mining has started in this area. In Mahava village this has begun just near a water body, which should never be done. This water body is being destroyed by this mining. Agriculture, animal husbandry and other sources of livelihoods are also being adversely affected and houses are being damaged. When people protested against this indiscriminate mining, they were lathi charged. One woman suffered a hand fracture but still was jailed along with another woman for some days.

People are afraid of the mining and crusher mafia which is all powerful in this belt of about 150 villages in Sikar, Jaipur and Jhunjhunu districts. Yet they are determined to carry forward their struggle to protect their lands and village. Their struggle should get wide support.

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Four Years of Modi Government: Two Circles of Growth

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 which 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 UPA II.

No doubt the situation today is not what it was in 2012–13 when there was a macroeconomic crisis. But presently 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. So, 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.

1. What NDA Inherited in 2014

In May 2014, the CPI inflation rate was at about 9%. The quarterly rate of growth in the second quarter of 2014–15 when the NDA government took over was a high of 8.5%. It had recovered from a low of 4.5% in the last quarter of 2013–14. The growth data are based on a revised method of estimation. The Current Account Deficit in external trade was

at 1.7 % in 2013–14, a considerable improvement over the high of 4.8% the year before. The Fiscal Deficit of the Central government in 2013–14 was at 4.5% while it was at 4.9% the year before. The Foreign Exchange Reserves were at \$304 billion in 2013–14 as compared to \$292 billion the year before. Thus, there is no doubt that the economy faced a macroeconomic crisis in 2012–13 but it was recovering from that crisis in 2013–14, just before the NDA government took power in May 2014.

The economic crisis during the UPA regime was triggered by national and international factors. Nationally, there was a loss of confidence in the economy due to policy paralysis brought about by the revelation of massive corruption cases and the massive people's movements that started in 2010–11. People linked the high levels of prices to corruption brought about by crony capitalism—what went into the pockets of the corrupt came out of the pockets of the public. Droughts led to decline in agriculture and distress among farmers and also higher prices.

At the international level, high crude oil prices and low growth in major economies resulted in declining levels of exports and Balance of Payment (BOP) difficulties. Rising crude oil prices meant a larger import bill, higher trade deficit and inflation. It also led to higher levels of subsidies which meant a higher level of deficit in the budget. The macroeconomic problems led to lower levels of

investments in the economy, lower levels of employment generation and crisis in the lives of the young who could not get jobs commensurate with their training. The youth looked for a leader who could get them out of the morass they found themselves in.

2. Government's Performance Since 2014

The NDA government in May 2014 was lucky to inherit an improving macroeconomic situation. Crude oil prices moderated, drought abated and growth in the advanced countries picked up so that exports improved. In 2018, the CPI rate of inflation is down to about 3%, the rate of growth is at about 7% (official data), Fiscal Deficit of the Central Government is down to 3.6%, foreign exchange reserves are at \$402 billion and the Current Account Deficit is at 0.7% of GDP. The PM has argued that the sales of passenger vehicles have grown by 12% and that of commercial vehicles by 23%. Domestic air travel has increased by 14% and international air freight traffic by 16%. This growth is on a low base. But even if it is taken at face value, none of these pertain to the unorganised sectors of the economy. They reflect the growth of the better off sections.

The lower crude prices resulted in lower energy prices and lower levels of inflation. It also resulted in lower import bill and not only lower levels of subsidies from the budget but increased tax collections due to higher excise and sales tax. All this led to lower current account

deficit, higher capital flows and higher foreign exchange reserves and lower level of deficit in the budget. However, the farm crisis and the employment crisis are continuing in spite of the much better macroeconomic conditions that the NDA regime has had.

So, why has a better macroeconomic situation not led to improvements in the conditions of the marginalised sections of the country? Income and wealth disparity is on the rise, with the top few per cent cornering all the growth in the economy. According to OXFAM, the top 1% in India own 73% of the wealth while the bottom 50% hardly saw any increase in their wealth. The World Inequality Report of 2017 shows that the top 1% of the income earners got 22% of the national income. This does not include the black incomes that these people generate. If that were to be included, their share of incomes would shoot up to almost 50% of the national income.

India has been experiencing 'marginalising growth' for a long time and this process is only accelerating with the pro-business stance of the NDA government. It is creating two circles of growth in the economy with the organised sectors growing and the unorganised sectors in retreat. This has been the aggravated by the twin shocks to the Indian economy since November 2016. So, even if the growth rates rise, the situation of the marginalised does not improve.

India embarked on a 'growth at any cost' strategy with the New Economic Policies in 1991. The burden of this growth has been borne by the workers, farmers and the environment. This has meant that the growth has been based on

the prosperity of a narrow section of the population and not the entire population. The worsening income distribution has led to an unstable economic climate which has also translated into an unstable political and social situation.

Rising disparities mean that the mass demand from the bulk of the population rises slowly and growth depends more and more on investment and the consumption of the well-off sections. The stock market boom and the rising wealth effect for the well-off spurs their consumption. Post 2007–08 global economic crisis, both these stimuli weakened and growth rates fell. The NDA in its four years has not been able to revive demand and investment since disparities have continued to rise and the twin shocks of demonetisation and GST have aggravated the disparities as discussed below.

In India, investment and especially private corporate investment has been much less than what it was in 2007–08. This is due to lack of broad based demand. RBI data shows that capacity utilisation has been hovering at around 70–75%. No wonder private investment is tepid at best.

3. Analysis of Some Key Aspects of the Economy

i) NPAs of the Banks

The massive buildup of non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking system of the country and especially in the public sector banks (PSBs) has further crippled their capacity to lend. According to the latest Economic Survey, the Gross Non Performing Advances (GNPA) "ratio rose marginally from 12.5% to 13.5% between March and

September 2017. Stressed advances ratio of PSBs rose from 15.6% to 16.2% during the period." In March 2014, these were 4.4% according to the Economic Survey of 2014. It was 2.09% in 2008–09. So, there has been quite a sharp increase in NPAs since 2008–09 but most of the increase has been in the period after 2014. What are the reasons?

Most of the NPAs relate to the sickness in the infrastructure sector, steel, mining, aviation and textiles. India has gone in for high cost infrastructure which the poor can ill afford. For instance, the government is going in for a bullet train between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Its viability is in doubt since the ticket will cost as much as the airfare between these two cities, so that only the well-off can use it. When much of the railway infrastructure is woefully weak and in urgent need of improvement, to go in for such a project can only be for prestige (and ego) and not for sound economic reasons.

A package of investment in the banks to boost their capital has been announced but that will not resolve the problem since it emanates from default by industry.

ii) Black Economy Continues to Grow

A major part of the NPAs relate to corruption and widespread crony capitalism prevailing in the banking system. The appointment of the top brass of the PSBs is based on political and bureaucratic consideration. They are open to political pressures to oblige businessmen with connections. So, scrutiny for loans has often been cursory and without proper risk assessment. This has not changed after the NDA came to power in 2014.

The Nirav Modi scam is the biggest one to surface, but many other smaller ones are being unearthed with great regularity, like the Rotomac case. In 2015, a Rs 10,000 crore havala with Dubai and Hong Kong via a private bank in Surat was reported. In 2015, fraud was detected in the Bank of Baroda branch in Delhi wherein Rs 6,000 crore was illegally transferred to Hong Kong.

The problem of crony capitalism is not confined to the PSBs; as the recent ICICI case shows, this is also happening in private banks. In the case of these banks, there are favourites who get easy loans. Investigation is going on into the ICICI case which originated a decade back. Curiously, a whistleblower had flagged this case in 2016, but action has been initiated only recently. Even the media did not pick this up.

During the UPA II rule, massive cases of corruption came to light. The black economy continued to grow and aggravated the growing inequality. NDA came to power promising a clean-up and easing of the tax burden on everyone by bringing back the black money held abroad. It boldly promised that every family would be able to get Rs 15 lakh. The BJP President admitted that it was only a *chunavi jumla* (meant only for the elections). Not even Rs 5,000 crore has been declared under the Foreign Money Laws promulgated (with draconian provisions). If distributed to the 26 crore families in the country, each would get barely Rs 200. Of course, even this is not going to happen. This has been a huge disappointment for the many poor who opened a bank account under Jan Dhan Yojana in the hope that they were soon going to get free money.

Corruption and ‘black income generation’ have not declined if one is to go by the scams that are now coming to light. It takes a bit of time for the scams to get exposed. The Congress party is accusing the government of a scam in the huge Rafael deal. During UPA I, only a few major scams came to light; what was exposed during UPA II mainly related to the earlier UPA I regime. The reason is that in all major projects, there are corrupt deals, but it takes a while for them to be unearthed—usually when a whistleblower comes forward. (Now, even this is getting difficult as the whistleblowers are being threatened and many have even been killed. In the case of the huge VYAPAM scam, 48 people linked to it have died.) In this NDA regime, if the big bullet train project or the highway construction projects have any payoffs, they will come to light in due course of time. Till then the government may look clean.

Black economy is also linked to the flight of capital from the economy. As the Nirav Modi case shows and the revelations under the Paradise and Panama Papers scams indicate, flight of capital continues unabated. So, a poor country which is short of capital for investment in essentials like education and health is losing capital. The government has made no serious attempt to check this. The Supreme Court monitored SIT to unearth black money has been functioning for the last 4 years but it seems to have made little headway in denting black money generation or its flow abroad. It has submitted a few reports but they have not been made public.

The government claims that it has taken several major steps to check black income generation,

like the Income Declaration Scheme (IDS) and demonetisation, but as we have discussed elsewhere, these have not helped to check the black economy; in fact, demonetisation cannot really check black money generation. The government claims that GST will also help check black income generation, but reports indicate that a large part of the business is still going on in cash and not via the formal channels. Most importantly, the government has taken no action to check the most important source of black money generation, the corruption in the political process; it has made no attempt to clean it up.

iii) Challenges Regarding Employment

Given that investment is not very buoyant and black income generation continues apace, making the economy inefficient, employment generation remains weak.

The problem in India is that there is no social security, so that workers cannot afford to remain unemployed. People do whatever they can—sell a little of something on the road side, drive a rickshaw, do head load work and so on. These people get work for very few hours a day and earn very little in doing so. Thus, while there is massive underemployment, statistics show there is very little unemployment (the way it is officially measured), since everyone is counted as employed one way or the other. But it is clear that many in the work force do residual jobs.

In the Indian economy, the organised sector employs only about 7% of the workforce; the rest are employed in the unorganised sector doing mostly marginal jobs. Within the unorganised sector, the agricultural sector is the largest

employer, providing employment to around 46% of the work force. The second largest employment generator in the unorganised sector are the micro units, which are counted under the MSME sector. The micro units constitute between 95% and 99.5% of the MSME sector and employ 97% of the work force employed in this sector, with an average of 1.7 persons per unit. All of these workers work at very low wages.

If the organised sector employment had been expanding, it could have absorbed more and more of the workers from the unorganised sectors. But this is not happening since the organised sector is going in for massive automation. Further, since its share in GDP is rising, the unorganised sector is getting marginalised and so are its workers. Finally, to reduce its labour costs and maximise its profits, the organised sector is utilising more and more contract labour and making them work longer hours and without proper safety precautions. Contract labour is provided by contractors who keep them temporary and they are counted as unorganised sector workers.

Of late, the government has claimed that there is a massive increase in employment of between 7 million and 15 million new formal sector jobs. This argument is being put forth as employment is likely to be a major issue in the upcoming national elections in 2019. If there was such massive employment generation in the formal sectors, why would 23 million people apply for 90,000 low skill jobs in Railways or lakhs of young apply for a few hundred jobs of peons or scavengers in UP, Madhya Pradesh, etc. Youth with engineering, MBA and MCom degrees applied for these jobs—

totally incommensurate with their degrees and skills they are supposed to have acquired. The reason why they applied for these jobs is that they are presently also doing menial jobs, and wish to go for a government job which at least gives them some security. This is a reflection of the problem of underemployment.

The official claims of new jobs are based on two factors. First, they are counting the number of new registrants under the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and other formal sector pension (NPS) and insurance (ESIC) schemes. Secondly, they add the number of potential jobs that may have been created under the Mudra Scheme. It is said that about 11 crore people have taken loans under the scheme, and even if one third of them generate 1 additional job, then about 3.5 crore new jobs would have been created. Thus, the government is claiming that there is no employment problem and the issue is being highlighted by the opposition only for political gains.

Under the Mudra scheme, the average loan taken is about Rs 45,000. This investment is likely to have substituted the more expensive private loans that may have taken earlier. While this loan may lead to an increase in the productivity of the person taking the loan, like for example shifting from doing head load work to keeping a cow for milk, the amount of loan given under this scheme is too small to increase employment even in the micro units where the average employment is 1.7 per unit with an investment of up to Rs 5 lakh. So, this loan may have helped reduce underemployment, but it is unlikely to have led to more employment except at the margins—nowhere near the claimed 3 crore new jobs.

The government is also pointing to new taxi drivers under the taxi aggregators, new delivery boys due to e-commerce, and so on. The issue is how many of them are former taxi drivers at the taxi stands and how many small stores have retrenched staff due to fall in business consequent to increase in e-commerce. As always, the government claims that investment leads to an increase in employment, but does not tell how many jobs are lost due to some businesses closing down or downsizing.

The EPF data on new registrants is not a surprise since firms are registering employees whom they were not registering earlier. There are two policy changes that have led to a spurt in these registrations. First, after 2015, the definition of those required to register their employees has changed. Earlier firms with more than 20 employees were required to register. This was changed to more than 10 employees. So, a large number of firms and their employees came under the EPF. All these would be new registrants, but it does not mean new jobs.

Second, in the recent budgets a large number of concessions were announced for registration of new employees. A tax concession was announced. Further, the provident fund contribution of new employees was to be paid by the government. We need to know how many contract workers were registered as new employees due to these factors. So, those who were not counted earlier are now getting counted. This is not an increase in employment but simply a change of category.

The problem of underemployment remains as before with massive automation in the economy and a slackening of investment.

(to be concluded)

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**Four Years of Modi
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An Apology Overdue

Kuldip Nayar

Certain dates are so important in a nation's history that they cannot be forgotten. One such is June 25, when Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, switched off the lights of democracy. Instead of resigning from her office after the Allahabad High Court verdict for a poll offence, she suspended the Constitution and committed the worst kind of excesses. One hundred thousand people were detained without trial and many were killed because they were staunch critics of Mrs Gandhi.

Belatedly at least, the Congress Party, which Mrs Gandhi once headed, should have regretted the imposition of a rule where there was no personal freedom and the press was gagged. It has never done so. The apology to the nation is long overdue. Congress President Rahul Gandhi can make no amends for what happened 43 years ago, yet he can at least tell the nation that both his grandmother and the party were wrong.

What happened during the emergency is an affront to the freedom fighters and the Constitution framers who considered the basic structure of the Constitution beyond amendment. But Mrs Gandhi, armed with a Presidential decree,

suspended elections and civil liberties. All her political opponents imprisoned during the period were tortured in prison and thousands were eliminated or banished. Several other atrocities, including forced mass-sterilisation of millions of people spearheaded by her son Sanjay Gandhi, were committed.

Justice J.C.Shah, a former Chief Justice of India who subsequently went into the excesses of emergency soon after the Janata Party under Morarji Desai came to power, had pointed out the atrocities committed against the people, including Mrs Gandhi's political opponents. The Shah Commission, constituted to go into the excesses committed during the Emergency, submitted its report in three parts, the last one on August 6, 1978. If the sheer size of the report—it had 26 chapters and three appendices running to over 530 pages—reflected the enormity of the violence done to democratic institutions and ethics, it also expressed grave concern about the happenings and the damage they had inflicted on the system. The Shah Commission report is a precious document with several lessons to be learnt.

Justice Shah discussed police

actions and the role of Sanjay Gandhi in the Turkman Gate incident in which the police fired on a crowd of people protesting against demolition of their houses. In fact, when Mrs Gandhi came to power in 1980, she tried to recall copies of the report wherever possible. So damaging was the report that she tried all her tricks but could not succeed. So she banned the report.

However, Era Sezhan, one of the founding members of the DMK and then an MP, republished his copy of the report in a book form called Shah Commission Report – Lost and Regained, in which he has rightly said: “It is more than an investigative report; it is a magnificent historical document to serve as a warning for those coming to power in the future not to disturb the basic structure of a functioning democracy and also, for those suppressed under a despotic rule, a hopeful guide to redeem the freedom by spirited struggle.”

The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is in power at the Centre today. It suffered the most from the emergency, but it does not seem to have learnt the lesson which it should have. Mrs Indira Gandhi was overtaken by the mania of one-person rule. Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also riding the same horse at the command of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS). In fact, people today have started comparing the one-person rule of Mrs Gandhi with that of Modi’s. So much so that most newspapers and television channels have adapted themselves to his way of working, if not thinking, as they had done during Mrs Gandhi’s regime.

Veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani had remarked some time ago that the recurrence of emergency cannot

be ruled out. He further clarified that the arrogance of leaders leads to authoritarianism, taking a dig at Prime Minister Modi’s style of governance. Incidentally, Advani spent 18 months in jail for opposing the emergency. To snub Advani for his forthright comment, BJP did not invite him to an event where it honoured those who went to jail during the emergency.

What the nation went through during the 21 months of emergency should be a part of the curriculum of text books prescribed in schools and colleges. But instead of that, the phobia of Hindutva has overtaken most of the states in the country. The present lot of books is so prejudiced against Muslim rulers in India that

historians have voiced their criticism against them. The bureaucracy also seems to have got saffronised. The BJP-RSS combine is trying to change a pluralistic society into a Hindu Rashtra of sorts.

The Constitution is still a sacred document. But I am afraid that if in the 2019 elections, the BJP gets a two-thirds majority, the party would amend the Constitution itself. Article 370 which give a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and the spirit of pluralism which protects minorities could be the target. The party, which is the political wing of the RSS, may attempt to dilute if not abolish the concept of secularism.

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Shujaat Bukhari’s Notebook

Jawed Naqvi

Shujaat Bukhari was among the most informed and least exultant Kashmiri journalists I have met. He let his incorrigible smile and straight reporting do the talking. He was shot dead on Thursday evening outside the Srinagar office of the *Rising Kashmir* newspaper, of which he was editor.

There is predictable confusion about who may have killed him together with his two security guards. As is known to happen in the tense and fractious city that Srinagar has become, there will be more whispers than clear pointers to the crime. We can only surmise from his work, among other circumstantial factors, as to who may have been so annoyed with the much-admired media man so as to callously snuff out his life.

There was a time not too long ago

when journalists from Delhi would visit Srinagar and put their arms around their brave and courageous Kashmiri colleagues. The last four years have seen an equaliser of sorts. The shooting of Gauri Lankesh by suspected Hindutva killers underscored an atmosphere of terror and insecurity that the more upright Indian journalists in particular have been feeling quite palpably.

The once invincible Barkha Dutt has been speaking of efforts to silence her by stopping TV entrepreneurs from hiring her. Several of the best journalists are now working on news portals because the supposedly mainstream newspapers and TV channels are not allowed to hire them. The best women journalists are threatened on social media with rape and the men receive daily death

threats.

Teesta Setalvad and her husband Javed Anand, who exposed perhaps the worst crimes of the Gujarat pogroms, are facing legal cases and jail threats. Rana Ayyub, a courageous young woman, very reluctantly shares the mental torture she suffers from unspeakable palpable threats for her work in exposing the high and mighty in the field of communal violence. Anchor Ravish Kumar has worries about his family, but refuses to stand down as perhaps the boldest anchor in India today.

The threats extend to student activists like Umar Khalid and Kanhaiya Kumar and their teachers too are not spared.

What is happening with the Pakistani media is so identical that it is tempting to believe that tormentors on both sides perhaps exchange notes. All these fine journalists standing their ground on both sides are people who can be considered the most self-assured holders of free opinions and sharers of information and knowledge. But, like Shujaat Bukhari and Gauri Lankesh, they are all extremely vulnerable to galloping intolerance.

The main players in the troubled strife-torn Kashmir Valley are India and Pakistan. Both have vehemently condemned Bukhari's murder. Which reminds me of some of the better-known mysteries of our times. There was a film called *No One Killed Jessica* about a lovely girl who was shot dead at a party in Delhi. It was probably based on the storyline from Ayodhya: 'no one demolished the Babri mosque'! The Pakistani equivalent would be: 'no one killed Benazir Bhutto'.

Two or three images come to my mind as it scans the canvas of

memories and possibilities for clues. The murder took place on the day the UN Human Rights commission brought out its first-ever report on the abuses in Kashmir on both sides of the border. The murder thus became the story rather than the damning rights report, which incidentally was strongly rejected by India.

There are factors that point to one direction and then to the other. Bukhari's brother is a minister in the Mehbooba Mufti government of which the Bharatiya Janata Party is an ally. This fact can create one kind of narrative.

But Bukhari's newspaper was highlighting reports that pointed to an opposite reality. Take the story of the rape and murder of an eight-year-old tribal Muslim tribal girl in Jammu in January this year. Right-wing Hindus have actively rallied in support of the accused. A report in Bukhari's paper on April 4 nailed the lie that she was killed by someone in a land feud.

"Strands of hair found in a temple where eight-year-old Asifa Bano was held captive before being strangulated after rape have matched with the victim's (Asifa) hair on DNA analysis," Rising Kashmir reported in the first week of April. "Official sources said that the crime branch, probing the rape-and-murder, had found hair strands from Devistan temple in Hiranagar after one of the accused revealed during interrogation that Asifa was held captive inside the temple. The crime site was searched and the hair strands were found and sent to Forensic Laboratory (FSL), New Delhi. The report confirmed that they were that of Asifa, the sources said."

Whose side was Shujaat Bukhari on, according to his report?

Let's also read a report Bukhari wrote on May 25. Veteran journalist and peace activist Om Thanvi shared it as the last one from the Kashmiri journalist in his email account. The report raises the prospect of the stalled SAARC summit being revived in Islamabad with India's participation. Everyone knows who would oppose the move. Bukhari began the report by critiquing Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not addressing the Kashmir issue politically during his May 20 visit to Srinagar.

He then says that Modi was facing domestic pressure on many counts ahead of the 2019 elections. "He is preparing the ground to see that the SAARC summit takes place and instead of rhetoric, he might prefer 'peace' to be sold to the electorate. Relations with Nepal and Maldives are also indicating towards this thread. In order to get Pakistan on board for a successful SAARC, it is imperative to cool down tempers in and on Kashmir. In this backdrop next few months will be interesting to watch."

Sadly, Shujaat Bukhari will not be around with his notebook to jot down his astute reading of a complex and forbidding reality.

Courtesy: Dawn, June 19, 2018

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Obituary

Prof. Keshav Rao Jadhav: A Man of Courage, Conviction and Commitment

Prem Singh

Prof. Keshav Rao Jadhav, a prominent socialist thinker and leader, passed away on 16 June 2018 at a hospital in Hyderabad at the age of 86. Prof. Jadhav was running ill for a long time. His funeral took place the same day in Hyderabad in the presence of several leaders and activists associated with the Telangana movement and the socialist movement. His last rites were performed by his elder daughter according to Arya Samaj method. Senior socialist leader (now in Congress) Jaipal Reddy, former Supreme Court judge and one of the trustees of 'Ram Manohar Lohia Trust' Sudershan Reddy, revolutionary poet Varavara Rao, senior Congress leader K. Jana Reddy, Telangana Jana Samithi president Prof. M. Kodandaram, along with other leaders, writers, journalists and artists, were present at the time of the funeral.

A teacher by profession, Prof. Jadhav served as a professor of English in Osmania University till his retirement. Prof. Jadhav was a man of dreams and ideas who joined the socialist movement in his student days. He was deeply inspired by the philosophy of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He was elected to the post of president of Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS), the youth wing of the Socialist Party. He became a close associate of Dr. Lohia in the course of time and worked with him in Mankind and Jan. He published a series of booklets under the title *Lohia in his Words – A Collection of Quotations from the Writings of Dr.*

Lohia. Comrade Ravela Somayya is planning to compile these booklets into a book. Prof. Jadhav also brought out a magazine namely New Mankind, on the pattern of Mankind, which he kept publishing for 4–5 years. He also published another magazine named Olympus for almost for a decade. He kept himself engaged in holding and attending discussions/dialogues/workshops/seminars through various forums on issues/topics of social significance. He formed Lohia Vichar Manch with Kishan Patnayak. He was one of the trustees of 'Ram Manohar Lohia Trust'. He thus enriched the legacy of socialist philosophy and movement.

He played a major role in the movement for a separate Telangana state from late sixties to early seventies. He was arrested 17 times during the first phase of the movement and was jailed for two years. He led the Telangana Jana Samithi in order to achieve this goal. This was perhaps the reason that the Chief Minister of Telangana Mr. K. Chandrasekhar Rao condoled his demise.

Prof. Jadhav was a constant fighter for the rights of the marginalised sections. Simultaneously, he was a champion of civil liberties. He led the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in Andhra Pradesh and later in Telangana. Prof. Jadhav, a true democrat, was against violent methods to be used either by the state or by the ultra left groups called Maoists. He, however, was always in favour of a dialogue with the Maoists. He also constantly fought

against the communal forces and worked for peace, harmony and relief during spells of communal riots in the city of Hyderabad. Prof. Jadhav was jailed under MISA during the Emergency.

Prof. Jadhav took an active part in the political activities of Janata Party and then the Lok Dal. He contested the Lok Sabha election from Medak constituency against Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Subsequently he became disillusioned with mainstream politics and got associated with Samajwadi Jan Parishad (SJP) that was formed in 1995 by Kishan Patnayak and other senior and young socialists to counter the New Economic Policies imposed in 1991. He held the responsibility of vice president in SJP. But his mind was ever on a quest. He played a major role in the re-establishment of the original Socialist Party in 2011 in Hyderabad as Socialist Party (India). He remained associated with this new party till the end.

Prof. Jadhav will be remembered as a man of courage, conviction and commitment. The Socialist Party (India) has lost three of its stalwarts—Bhai Viadya, Justice Rajindar Sachar and now Prof. Jadhav—within the last three months. The demise of Prof. Jadhav is indeed a big loss to the socialist movement in general and to Socialist Party (India) in particular.

We pay our humble tributes to him with a pledge that the fight for socialism will go on uninterrupted.

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Food and Farming System To Feed the Hungry and Protect the Environment

Bharat Dogra

It is widely agreed that increasing land availability to the poorest peasants and reducing inequalities in the distribution of agricultural land are highly desirable for reducing hunger and malnutrition in the world. Despite this, inequality in the distribution of agricultural land remains at a high level in many countries, and is at extreme levels in some Latin American countries.

Inequality is often expressed by a statistical measure called the “Gini Coefficient”, which varies from zero (equal assets for everybody) to 1 (one person owns everything). In most Latin American countries, the Gini Coefficient for land distribution is around 0.8. The inequalities in distribution of agricultural land may be the most acute in Latin America, but these also exist to a significant extent in most other countries of the world.

In a widely quoted publication titled *World Agriculture: Towards 2000*, the Food and Agriculture Organisation has emphasised that more equal land distribution is likely to increase productivity of land, “It is important to stress here that yields per hectare are as high on small as on large farms or, under traditional agriculture, even higher. With a few notable exceptions, total output per hectare is higher on small farms, chiefly because their intensity of land use is higher. A more equal distribution of production inputs, including services, can only help to strengthen the role of the small farm in expanding production.

The fact that some attempts at radical redistribution of land have led initially to lower production does not invalidate the conclusion that after some years a more even distribution of farming resources and inputs should help rather than hinder growth of output.”

This view of the FAO is supported by a six-country study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which estimated that: “If land were equally distributed among all agricultural families (including the landless), and the new equal holdings achieved yields equal to present holdings of the same size and used a similar level of inputs, food output could potentially rise by anything from 10% (Pakistan) and 28% (Colombia and a rice-growing Malaysian region) to 80% in northeastern Brazil. Such a radical redistribution is, of course, rarely attempted—but the figures indicate the theoretical potential.”

Therefore the evidence in favor of small farms and for having a more equal distribution of agricultural land is quite strong. It is another matter that as vested interests opposing redistribution are quite strong, the land reform effort can face several obstacles due to which there can be temporary setbacks. Such resistance can come from large landowners as well as corporate interests promoting large-scale farming of commercial crops with a big share of export crops.

The distortions created by local inequalities and an unequal

international trade system in fact feed on each other. The local powerful elites are eager to get luxury consumer goods while foreign companies are only too happy to meet these demands while gaining access to the cheap land and labour of these countries. The ultimate victims are the marginal groups on whom all the pressure of meeting the unreasonable demands of local and foreign elites is passed on. So empowerment of these poor and marginalised groups in their struggles to save their livelihoods is the most important factor in fighting hunger and famine. They do not need emergency food aid shipments (which in any case will probably never reach them in time) as much as the support of solidarity groups to save their livelihood base from the onslaughts of selfish, powerful interests at home and abroad.

In Africa, in the wake of the growing concern over diminishing per capita production of food, some ambitious food production schemes were initiated with the support of international aid agencies but they failed to meet the needs of the worst affected, most needy, precariously placed groups. As Barbara Dinham and Colin Hines wrote in a critique of these schemes in the *Ecologist*, “Large-scale food producing bypasses the problems confronting peasant communities who have been moved into smaller and less fertile land, who are not paid a sufficient price for the crops they produce for the market, who are ill-served by

distribution of storage networks, and whose needs for investment in education, health and water supplies are ill-met.” The real concern should not be just to increase production but to increase it on such farms, in such ways as to meet the food needs of the most needy households. Otherwise we will face such cruel distortions as those seen at the time of the Sahelian famine when vegetables were being airlifted for exports from famine affected countries! The need is not just for more food but for food which reaches the hungry of the world.

In recent years as growing concern has been expressed about the hazards of excessive use of agri-chemicals, particularly chemical pesticides, there has been increasing interest in alternative technologies which reduce or even eliminate the use of agri-chemicals while relying more and more on various natural processes and organic materials to get good yields, thereby also maintaining long term fertility of land.

According to the *World Resources Report*, “When on-farm and off-farm soil and surface water resource cost were included, resource-conserving farming outperformed conventional approaches by almost a two-to-one margin in net economic value per hectare (including off-site environmental costs).”

In Indonesia, a very instructive effort was launched in 1986 to avoid excessive chemical sprays of rice crops and replace the heavy dependence on chemical pesticides with a many-sided effort called ‘integrated pest management’ which included many non-chemical methods of facing the threat of pests. As Peter Kenmore, a USA scientist closely involved in this

effort explained, less than 2 years after launching this effort the use of chemical pesticides declined steeply while the yields of rice increased to a significant extent.

According to case studies of successful vegetable and rice farms using ecological methods in Philippines, in the largest set of adjacent farms totalling 1,000 hectares using the bio-dynamic farming method, there was a yield increase of 50 to 100 per cent and an increase in net income by farmers of 200 to 270 percent, compared to the green revolution methods. Nicanor Perlas, a Filipino agricultural scientist, said while presenting these case studies that a rapid transition from chemical farming to sustainable agriculture is possible if correct technical principles are followed.

Growing a wide variety of indigenous crops should be encouraged. The richest knowledge of the biological diversity of a region is likely to be available only with local farmers. An eminent rice scientist of India, Dr. R.H. Richaria, identified nearly 17,000 rice cultivars and varieties in the Chattisgarh region of India with the help of farmers, particularly tribal farmers, and his co-workers. About the wisdom of the farmers he wrote, “Invariably I found in rice areas some rice growers taking keen interest in their local rice varieties as they are very much absorbed in them and they have all praise for them, so much so that they trace back the history of individual rice varieties to their ancestry with their utility . . . I also observed that some of them identify their rice varieties in their own way (not in terms of the modern knowledge of Botany) which amounts to thousands. This

inherent and intuitional facility of selection and maintenance of thousands of rice cultivars gradually being accumulated and descended upon for unknown centuries, ever since rice first originated must be preserved . . . Some of these varieties of rice were known for their high yield, some for their great cooking qualities, some for their aroma and some for other cherished qualities.”

In particular an effort should be made to support those locally useful crops and crop varieties which have been displaced thoughtlessly in recent years. Legume crops deserve special attention. Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, write in *Food First – Beyond the Myth of Scarcity* that “the beans and corn diet of Latin America, the lentils and rice of India, and the soyabean and rice diet of China appear to most Americans as starchy and nutrient poor. In fact they are not. Such diets evolved because they work. As basic dietetic staples, these combinations are, in fact, quite ingenious. In each case the two items together give more biologically usable protein than if each were eaten separately.” In view of this importance of mixing cereals and legumes to get a balanced diet, some experts have gone to the extent of referring to the diminishing production of pulses (or other legumes) as the divorce of agriculture from nutrition. This is particularly bad for the weaker sections who don’t have access to other, more expensive proteins. Therefore top priority should be given to increasing the production and availability of pulses.

An effort should be made to look at the entire agro-eco system instead of examining individual crops and grain yield in isolation. As an organic farmer of India G.R.

Iyengar said, “Few of us realise the havoc that modern agricultural practices are wreaking on our countryside. Farmers have forgotten the habits that supported a wide variety of wildlife and countless varieties of wild plants, flowers and trees that are essential for profitable and sustainable agriculture. What is happening in farming today is that the agriculture technology is acting in isolation, treating organisms in isolation, which leads to a disturbance of the natural system of checks and balances. It should be a sensitive balance of organisms in nature that should be allowed to spread. Few people realise today that there is a certain symbiosis between the various elements of nature like between flowers and pollen, soil and organisms. The role of the ecological balance in managing habitat has to grow.”

Reversing the degradation of land which has been continuing for so long will involve several bold initiatives, including some which can be expected to evoke a lot of resistance among strong vested interests. Yet there is no doubt that such initiatives have to be taken and cannot be delayed for too long. Protection of our precious cropland and soil is too important a task to be neglected any longer, particularly keeping in view the needs of the next few generations.

As a scientist B.Z. Rozanon has said so movingly: “The task of agriculture is thus not confined to obtaining the biological product but extends to constant maintenance and augmentation of soil fertility. Otherwise, we will very quickly consume what by right belongs to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to say nothing of more distant descendants. It is

this—that our generation lives to a certain extent at the expense of the coming generation, thoughtlessly drawing on the basic reserves of soil fertility accumulated in the millennia of the biospheric development, instead of living off the current annual increment—that causes the increasing concern of scientists dealing with the state of the planetary soil cover.”

The World Commission of Environment and Development had recommended, “The legislative, policy and research capacity for advancing non-chemical and less-chemical strategies must be established and sustained.” However, in practice, few countries have followed this advice. In principle, it is widely agreed that agricultural policies should be guided by the objectives of protection of environment and sustainability. But in the real world, are agricultural policies really guided by these noble objectives? There is a growing suspicion that narrow-minded, short-term profit considerations have a far more powerful influence in real life farm policy decisions.

The World Resources Report minces no words in making a firm statement on this issue: “Current farm practices in industrialised countries have created incentives for farmers to use environmentally damaging practices and in many cases, penalised farmers for switching to more sustainable practices.” For example, the report says, the system of farm program payments in the USA has worked against long-term rotations and reduction of chemical inputs. In the European Community, price policies have discouraged production of pulses. Although mixed crop-livestock systems can be the basis for environmentally

sustainable farming, distorted price structures have tended to push agriculture in the other direction.

Several developed country and Third World farming, consumer, organic, animal welfare and environmental groups have formed the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) alliance. According to SAFE’s campaign statement: “Agriculture is about more than simply producing food. It is a way of life and makes a vital contribution to the health of rural communities. SAFE seeks to switch farm subsidies away from price support towards payments for sustainable and environmentally enhancing farm management practices agreed on a whole farm basis. All the land on any one farm would be included in the scheme, and payments made would be tiered on an acreage basis.”

The effect of these whole farm management agreements, argues SAFE, would be “to put smaller family farms (the mainstay of many rural communities) back on a level playing-field with much larger farms, and to remove the present in built bias towards increased farm size.” Such agreements, argues SAFE, would both encourage participating farmers to modify their production methods to take full account of environmental factors, and also reward those, such as organic farmers, already practising environmentally-sensitive methods. The SAFE Alliance has tried to define the requirements of a good agricultural system:

- An agriculture that is supportive of rural communities, that halts the decline in full-time farm employment and provides a stable livelihood for farmers and farm workers;

- An agriculture that does not jeopardise the health of those who work or live on the land or the consumer through the use of polluting or toxic production methods;
- An agriculture that is capable of flexible response to national food and nutrition goals designed to improve public health;
- An agriculture that produces affordable food, of high nutritional quality and that minimises chemical and microbiological contaminants;
- An agriculture that does not lead to the reduction of soil fertility, that minimises reliance on non-renewable resources and that is sustainable;
- An agriculture that both conserves and enhances the countryside, not only in its visual aspect but also in terms of its resources and wildlife;
- An agriculture that respects the welfare needs of farm animals;
- An agriculture that does not threaten the development and maintenance of food security and sustainable agriculture in other countries, especially those in the Third World.

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Chavismo: Part V

The fifth part of a series of seven articles by Marco Teruggi on Chavismo, the ongoing socialist revolutionary project in Venezuela, that the Venezuelans fondly call Bolivarian revolution.

The Party of the Revolution

Marco Teruggi

The United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). It represents Chavismo in the neighbourhoods, Chavismo in the rural areas, Chavismo of the poor—in other words, it represents Chavismo, or the majority of the people, the supporters of the ongoing socialist revolutionary project in Venezuela. It is the party of Chavez. It was he who called for the formation of this new party at the end of 2006, proposed the name, and led the founding congress of the new party at the beginning of the year 2008. Speaking at the inaugural congress, with the defeat of the constitutional reform proposed by him in the referendum held just a few days ago on December 2, 2007 still fresh in his mind, Chavez called for a course correction in the political line, stated that it needed to be revised and rectified, and asserted that the new party was needed so that it could advance the revolution in the new direction.

The unfolding revolutionary process in Venezuela experimented with several political instruments before the founding of the PSUV. It began with the Bolivarian Movement-200, the political and social movement founded by Hugo Chávez in 1982. It planned and executed the failed February 4, 1992 coup attempt. After an intense debate within its ranks, the Bolivarian Movement-200

established the Fifth Republic Movement, a Socialist electoral party, in July 1997 to participate in the 1998 presidential elections. The Fifth Republic Movement, together with several other leftist parties, including the Communist Party of Venezuela, Homeland for All (Patria Para Todos—PPT) and Movement towards Socialism (MAS), formed a coalition known as the Patriotic Pole, and put up Chavez as the candidate for the Presidential elections. Chavez won a landslide victory in the elections, garnering more votes than any candidate in Venezuela's history.

Following the defeat in the December 2 referendum, on December 15, 2006, Chavez announced the proposal to set up a single, consolidated left wing party entitled the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Chavez encouraged all left-wing parties, representing the mass majority of the National Assembly, to dissolve into the PSUV. He stated that the biggest weakness of the Bolivarian revolution is the lack of a political instrument capable of confronting the challenges faced in the struggle to construct a new, socially just, Venezuela. And so he called for the formation of a new party, that would bring the currently fragmented social movements and political groups that back the revolution into a single organisation that

would determinedly advance the revolution forward: “Our forces are too disorganised, sometimes even work in opposition to one another, the various commanders lack coordination with other . . . the various parties supporting the revolution are fragmented, small, limited to certain areas, and instead of supporting the advance of the revolutionary process are sometimes more interested in furthering their narrow interests . . . such a divided movement cannot advance the Bolivarian revolution.”

Chavez warned that the future of the revolution was in danger. The people’s confidence in the revolutionary process had been undermined due to a range of problems with government programs, and the serious political weaknesses within the Chavista camp. Because of this, two million votes had been lost between his presidential election in 2006 and the constitutional reform of end-2007. For the revolution to survive and advance, it was necessary to win back the support of the people.

For this, it was of utmost importance to form a new political instrument to combat the major problems of bureaucracy and corruption affecting state institutions that were sabotaging government programs in favour of the poor and attempts to construct popular power. These weaknesses had also penetrated the Chavista camp, which had become home to many careerists and bureaucrats, including those who hold important positions. To fight the enemy within, Chavez stressed that the PSUV shall be governed primarily from the bottom up, focusing on mass-participation and democratic principles, and stated that the PSUV would be the

most democratic party in Venezuelan history. He said that such a bottom-up mobilisation of the Chavista ranks, wherein the activists at the bottom would mobilise in their communities and workplaces to fight for their interests—against both the capitalists and the new emerging political and economic elite that is attempting to consolidate itself at the grassroots level—and their organisation into a grassroots based party could be decisive in helping resolve the unfinished struggle for power between the oppressed (led by the Chavez government) and the oppressors.

The Party and Elections

A massive 5.7 million people signed up to become aspiring members of the PSUV over a six-week period between April and June 2008, a massive display of the deeply felt sentiment for political unity. Of these, more than half a million—whom Chavez called the socialist battalions or a frontline vanguard—began participating in meetings held every weekend from July onwards to discuss and debate issues of political program and structure, the proposed constitutional reforms, and issues related to how to increase mass participation of people in the revolutionary process and thereby advance the revolution. This gap between the massive numbers who showed their support for the new party by registering and the lesser number of people who turned up for the meetings—the cadre of the new party—was only to be expected, given the different levels of commitment, consciousness and time among the great mass of supporters of the revolution.

It is these socialist battalions who elected the 1,656 delegates to

the founding conference of the Party.

This party of cadres and masses had to perform the twin tasks of winning the elections on the one hand, and leading the advance towards socialism on the other. Both the tasks—one periodic, the other permanent—had to go hand in hand. Chavez believed that the task of winning the elections was in large part related to the development of the political consciousness of the people, their growing awareness about their rights, and their active participation in the various organs of grassroots political power that were being set up by the revolution.

Of course, despite Chavez’s attempt and intention to build a new party with radical new cadre from below, the whole process of building of the party has faced a number of problems. While many new cadre did come from the grassroots due to the radical politicisation of Chavismo, several cadre continued to be from among those very vested interests whom the revolution was aimed at. A key contradiction within the party is the struggle between the radical grassroots and what can be referred to as the “rightwing” of the Chavismo. Numerous organised groups, local power elites and the old bureaucracy attempted to ‘capture’ the battalions and influence the selection of delegates to the congress.

The imperative of winning elections further complicates the building of this revolutionary party. As Reinaldo Iturriza wrote in 2010, “It is necessary to win elections to advance the revolution. But sometimes, to win electoral victories, the party resorts to patronage or simply demagoguery to win the elections, but this produces a distancing between the party and

the people.” It produces a distaste for politics, depoliticises people, and reduces their enthusiasm for participation in the revolutionary process.

The Party and Government

The building of a party that on the one hand has to advance the revolution, and on the other hand is also the ruling party, produces its own complexities. Almost all the mayors, governors and ministers are from the party. The tactics, priorities and strategies decided by the PSU are also, to a large extent, the decisions of the government and the various institutions of the state, as the party controls the government. The direction taken by the party is also the direction taken by the government and the various institutions; it is in fact also the direction of the revolution. While the membership of the party overwhelmingly comprises of the ordinary people, including the people living in the slums in cities and the peasants in the villages, the leaders of the party are also the leaders of the government, including the mayors, governors, ministers, officials at various levels of the government, etc. For instance, the governor of a state is also the leader of the party in his state.

This produces several tensions. Thus, the party was created to advance a strategic objective: the building of socialism. In the long run, the achievement of this objective goes beyond (or against) the interests of the party, as a genuine development of socialism requires the party to gradually cede its space to the popular mobilisation of the people and the strengthening of their popular organisations, primarily the communes. This produces a

contradiction: those who lead the party, and at the same time are also in positions of power in the government, are often unwilling to gradually transfer power / control to popular organisations of people, and defend the authority of the state, to the detriment of the strategic objective of advancing towards socialism. The communes and the assertion of popular people’s power come to be seen as a threat by the mayors, the governors, by those in various positions of authority in government. They prefer forms of organisation of people which they can dictate as to what should they do, how they should do, when should they do, in other words, which they can control and direct.

The party has the advantage of being created by Chavez, and even after he is no longer there to lead it, his name and his immense authority benefits the party. It gives it immense advantage during the elections, as the people still love and remember Chavez. However, at the same time, the mistakes made by the party in advancing the revolution get amplified as it also the ruling party, and so the distance between the party and the people increases.

Thus, there are inherent contradictions in the very form of political organisation evolved by Chavismo to advance the revolution. These contradictions are inherent not just to Chavismo, but to the revolutionary process itself. On how the party and the people resolve these contradictions depends the future of the revolution.

If one examines the whole revolutionary process more closely, the contradictions inherent in PSU are in essence the contradictions within all of us.

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Four Years of Modi Government: Two Circles of Growth - II

Arun Kumar

iv) Crisis in the Farming Sector

Farmers have been protesting across the country from Tamil Nadu to UP and Punjab. They are committing suicides on a daily basis as they are falling into debt trap. Farmers mostly belong to the unorganised sector of the economy. The NDA government on coming to power promised doubling of their incomes by 2022. During the campaign for the 2014 elections, they were promised the implementation of the Swaminathan Committee Report. They were told that they would be given a price 50% above costs. However, the bone of contention has been which 'cost' and how to implement the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme across the country.

The farmers have faced drought and a fall in their incomes. They have also seen their incomes collapsing due to demonetisation and the consequent shortage of cash. Where the rains have been good, prices have collapsed, like, in the case of pulses, tomatoes and potatoes in 2017, while the government has not been willing to make the necessary investment to procure these crops at MSP. On the other hand, costs have risen all around. Farmers have been forced to borrow at higher cost due to lack of access to bank loans. Cash shortage meant that they had to buy inputs on credit from the traders and had to pay a higher price.

Due to cash shortage, the purchasing power of the people employed in the unorganised sector went down and that meant that they bought less of the higher value

agricultural produce. Prices of pulses, vegetables and fruits fell drastically after demonetisation and did not recover for some time. This hit the incomes of a large number of farmers. It also appears that the traders took advantage of this situation and the farmers are still in their grip one and a half year after demonetisation.

In effect the ongoing crisis in the farming sector has deepened during the NDA regime with farmers protesting and demanding justice. They are demanding loan waiver and remunerative prices but the NDA government is not able to fulfill their demand.

4. The Big Policy Decisions and the Shocks to the Economy

As argued in the Introduction to this essay above, the NDA regime administered two big shocks to the economy and brought down the growth rate of the economy. These shocks also deepened the crisis in agriculture, banking, trade and the unorganised sectors as a whole.

The first shock was the sudden demonetisation of the high denomination currency notes on November 8, 2016. Since they constituted 86% of the currency with the public, there was a huge shortage of cash in the economy which meant that businesses slowed down, especially in the unorganised sectors of the economy which have little access to banks and electronic means of conducting businesses.

The currency shortage persisted for months, way beyond the 50 days given for exchanging the

old currency for new. The entire currency is back with the RBI, as this author has pointed out and which was later confirmed by the RBI. So, no black money was caught, but a large number of people who had never generated any black money were put to a great deal of inconvenience. They could not even withdraw their own money, some died due to the stress, marriages got postponed, patients could not get proper treatment, etc. The slowdown in the economy turned into a recessionary phase with decline in output, employment and investment.

As if this was not enough, the government then introduced GST, and that too without proper planning as it was too busy coping with the fallout of demonetisation. This has created problems for businesses even in the organised sectors. It further set back the unorganised sectors because of the complexity of the new tax and its flawed design. Thus, the entire economy again slowed down.

Even though the tiny and the small sectors are largely exempt from GST, they have been adversely impacted by the faulty design implicit in input credit and the reverse charge systems. The e-way bill system is also creating complications for the GST. Further, on items of daily consumption, the tax rate is kept at zero, so that the prices of goods of common use do not rise. But all prices have risen. This is a result of the fact that the indirect taxes are felt at a point other than where they are levied. For example, if the price of

trucks rises due to higher GST, then the cost of transportation of wheat will go up and its price would rise even though there is no tax on wheat.

GST also undermines the federal structure of the country. There is one tax rate for a given good / service all across the country. However, India is a diverse nation with different needs of different states. What is required by Tamil Nadu may not be good for Himachal and what may apply in Gujarat may not be appropriate for Assam. India is a union of States, each with their own needs which they are supposed to take care of in their own way. That is why autonomy was enshrined in the Constitution. But it is now getting eroded. Finally, the third tier of government has been left high and dry. There is no mention of the local bodies. This runs counter to the idea of decentralisation which is so essential for democracy in India.

5. The Claimed and the Actual Growth Rate of the Economy

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. Some economists have stated that the rate of growth was artificially boosted by 2% due to change in methodology after 2012. 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 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 still one of the best in the world and there is no crisis. It is a healthy rate of growth by India's own historical yardstick. This should have produced a 'feel

good' in the economy. But that is not the case, with businesses complaining and NPAs continuing to rise. So, is the data hiding reality? Why is the government repeatedly talking about boosting the growth rate?

This author has been arguing for over a year that the current rate of growth is not more than 1%. What is the evidence that the actual rate of growth is around 1% and not 6%? This has to do with the erroneous methodology used to estimate quarterly rate of growth of the economy. The estimates given are advance estimates and provisional estimates that are repeatedly revised. They are largely based on projections from the past, which is not a correct methodology if there is a shock, and the Indian economy has had two of them as pointed out above.

The quarterly rate of growth of the economy is estimated by resorting to data largely from the organised sectors of the economy and that too from select corporate firms. Thus, at best, it represents only organised sector growth. The data for the unorganised sector constituting 45% of GDP comes with a time lag. It is based on surveys conducted in reference years once every few years. In between the reference years, the ratio of the organised and the unorganised sector is used to project the growth of the latter. In effect it only gives the growth of the organised sector. This methodology fails if there is a shock to the economy and the ratio between the two sectors changes. The method applicable till November 7, 2016 would not apply after November 9, 2016.

Since no comprehensive official survey has been done of the

unorganised sector during the initial months after demonetisation or in the first few months of implementation of GST, the impact of these two policies on this sector will never be captured in the official data.

According to private surveys done during the period of demonetisation, the impact was found to be consistently dramatic, showing an adverse impact of between 50 and 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 RBI, capacity utilisation in organised industry fell. Even before demonetisation, capacity utilisation was hovering at between 70 and 75%—a low figure. Demonetisation further adversely impacted investment, as data suggests. In turn, this slowed down the growth of the economy even after the note shortage ended.

Even if the unorganised non-agriculture sector output for the year declined by 10%, while the organised sector grew at the official rate of 6%, then the average rate of growth for the year would turn out to be less than 1%.

The introduction of a faulty GST and its poor implementation has led to a deep adverse impact on the unorganised sector from July 1, 2017. The organised sector which was expected to gain from GST has also been hit hard for the same reasons—poor design and poor implementation. Instead of 'ease of doing business', business became more difficult. There was utter confusion, massive increase in paper work and increase in compliance costs. This has adversely impacted the climate of investment and led to a further slowdown in the economy.

In short, there is inadequate data 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, which 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.

The drastic slowdown in the economy is also indicated by the collapse in credit off-take by industry. 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 does not work when demand is short 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 can rise (due to a lower EMI) 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 invest 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 a 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 indeed were laundering their black money, 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.

If the actual rate of growth of GDP is close to 1%, then a small increase in the fiscal deficit to boost demand would not do. It would have to be raised 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 true, so a higher fiscal deficit is feasible to mitigate the economic crisis.

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 expenditure package on rural infrastructure. India escaped the recession and had a healthy rate of growth of 5% because of increased spending in rural areas based on a large increase in its fiscal deficit. The FRBM act was put on hold.

6. Two Circles of Growth

The government has presented data on the growth in the automobile sector and travel by air to argue that growth is robust. The moot point is that do the poor in India consume any of these? Further, a total view cannot emerge from citing growth of some sectors. If some sectors are growing fast in a slowing economy then other sectors must be declining. It is the poor belonging to the unorganised sectors that have been hit hard by both demonetisation and GST, as argued above.

Today there are two separate circles of growth, with one growing at the expense of the other and leading to widening disparities. It also enables the government to ignore the unorganised sectors.

The unorganised sectors are also hit hard by inflation. The wages of the people working in these sectors are not indexed and tend to lag behind inflation, so their purchasing power falls when prices rise.

Official data claims that inflation rate is low. Unfortunately, the inflation data does not give the true measure of price rise. Most of the services are not counted in the index of inflation. So, if school fees go up or health costs rise due to a deteriorating environment, they do not get counted. With privatisation, these costs have been shooting up

even for the marginal sections.

Should the decline of the unorganised sectors not have an impact on the organised sectors and reflect in their slowdown? Not if the latter is growing at the expense of the former. They are increasing their market share.

The government is also talking of financial inclusion and digitisation to help the unorganised sectors. The Jan Dhan Yojana and Mudra are supposed to give access to banks and to credit. However, those who do not have enough to eat and are in debt to private lenders are not going to put money in savings accounts. No wonder most of the Jan Dhan Accounts have zero balance. RTI revealed that many bankers put a few rupees into these accounts out of their contingency funds. And as already discussed, Mudra scheme is unlikely to have made any great impact on production and employment.

The government while pursuing a pro-business agenda needs a fig leaf of helping the poor as well. So, it keeps announcing marginal schemes for the poor and the farmers without impacting their status. But this is

nothing new, given that this has been the case since independence.

7. Conclusion

When it came to power in 2014, the NDA took over an economy that was recovering from the macroeconomic shock it had experienced in 2012–13. However, it administered two big shocks in the shape of demonetisation in November 2016 and introduction of GST in India in July 2017. Both of them led to a crisis in the economy, more particularly in the unorganised sector of the economy which produces 45% of the nation's output and employs 93% of the workforce. Consequently, an economy that the government claimed to be the fastest growing economy in the world in October 2016 collapsed and its rate of growth fell to less than 1%.

The official figures do not show this steep decline since the quarterly growth rates are based on corporate sector data. Even if this is taken at face value, as in the attached graph, the trend rate of growth has been declining since 2014 while for the few years before that, it was rising. This is partly a result of the twin

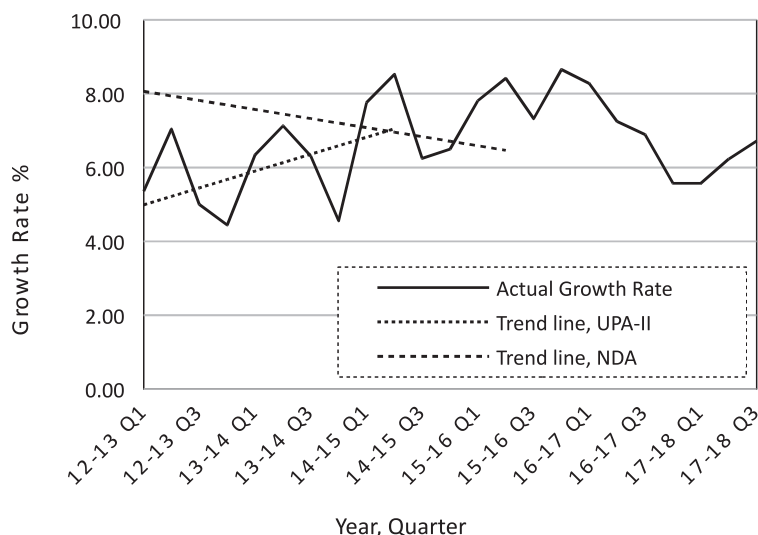
shocks.

The many promises made by the party in power and the government in the last four years remain unfulfilled, like, curbing the black economy. The government has been high on hype but weak on delivery. For instance, the PM stated that demonetisation was an attack on the black economy but data shows that all the money came back and the black economy continues to flourish. It only caused hardship to those who never generated any black incomes.

The ruling party has not been able to check the corruption of its own party people, like, those involved in iron ore mining scams, VYAPAM scam, DMAT scam, and so on. While spectrum was auctioned as required by the Supreme Court, many court cases have fallen through since the cases were not properly presented in the Courts. Big new scams are beginning to surface, like, Neerav Modi, Rotomac and Bank of Baroda cases. Many smaller scams are erupting on a daily basis, like, the question paper leakage, IDBI and other bank frauds.

It has been pointed out above that the impact of the two shocks and the pro-business policies has been felt largely in the unorganised sector. This has created two separate circles of growth. The organised sector is growing at the expense of the unorganised sector. Consequently, the majority is getting marginalised and that is aggravating the already high inequalities in the country. This is effecting demand in the economy and leading to low capacity utilisation in much of industry, especially the mass consumption items. The government data showing rising sales of automobiles and increase in air travel pertains to the

Quarterly Annual Growth Rate and Trend 2012-2018



consumption of the well-off. The low capacity utilisation results in reduced levels of investment in the economy.

The rate of inflation has moderated but that also represents a weakness of the economy—demand from the unorganised sectors has declined. Further, our inflation data does not take into account the rise in prices of services and they are the ones that have risen the most in the last few years due to rise in the tax on services. Thus, the actual rate of inflation is higher than that given out by the government. The farmers are the worst hit by the collapse of the prices of agriculture products. Thus, inflation rate being low has multiple impacts and is not an unmixed blessing. The government is unable to manage all these factors simultaneously.

The improvement in the current account deficit of the external sector is a result of relatively favourable international factors, especially the fall in crude oil prices. This may now be reversing. This has little to do with policies. In fact, experts have criticised the government for not managing the advantage it got earlier to provide long term stability to the economy.

Employment is the big problem today. The educated youth are facing a crisis because they are not getting the jobs appropriate to their skills. Artificial Intelligence, mechanisation and greater protectionism in the US are posing threats to employment generation. Farming continues to face a crisis and suicides are continuing. The Fiscal Deficit is declining under the pressure of international finance capital to the detriment of the poor and underemployed. The crisis of

NPAs in the banking sector has been growing, leading to the twin balance sheet problem and that is another reason that investment is not picking up.

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. The economy is facing the consequences of that denial now. With the government bowing to international finance pressure and not willing to take bold pro-poor steps, the situation is in all probability going to get worse, despite all the propaganda of the government about its achievements in its four years in power.

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(Concluded)

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