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The Indo-China Baiting Game

Kuldip Nayar

This is a familiar exercise. China resents India's rule over Arunachal Pradesh. New Delhi, on the other hand, ignores the protests and treats the Northeast territory its own. Beijing has been irked by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitaraman's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. The noise was, however, louder when the Dalai Lama went there earlier.

China and India have seldom agreed on where the actual border line lies. Beijing attacked India in 1962 when New Delhi tried to get back its territory. However, this time India showed its muscles with the stand-off at Doklam. China had to withdraw its forces behind the present border. Prime Minister Narendra Modi for BRICS in September after the face-off, did reduce tension.

The positive side of the trip is the reiteration by the two countries to fight against terrorists. But here too Beijing elucidated its own. It has again renewed the proposed UN resolution which sought to put a ban on Azar Masood, a well known terrorist. He could not be punished. The friendship of China and

Pakistan is only getting stronger to the concern of New Delhi. Not long ago, Beijing had begun stapling visas of Indians visiting Arunachal. China wanted to indicate that it was a "separate territory" not part of India.

New Delhi bore the humiliation quietly. In the past was China had accepted without demur the maps showing Arunachal Pradesh as India's territory. To recall the dispute, is over a small territory lying between Arunachal and China's border. The status of Arunachal Pradesh has been seldom questioned.

Tibet for China is like India's Kashmir which too has raised the standard of independence. There is, however, one difference: the Dalai Lama is willing to accept an autonomous status within China. Kashmir today wants independence.

Maybe, the Kashmiris will come round to accept a similar status one day. The problem is so complicated that a minor change can lead to a major catastrophe. It is not worth risking.

I have visited Bomdila Pass from where the Dalai Lama entered India to seek asylum. His land, Tibet, had been occupied by China, which also has destroyed the Tibetans culture. The Chinese have imposed communism and shown no respect for either Dalai Lama or his monastery.

The Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh has brought back the memories of the days before the Chinese annexed Tibet. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, did not raise any objection at that time because he was on personal terms with Chinese Premier Chou-En Lai. It is another story that he betrayed Nehru and attacked India. It occupied thousands of kilometres of India. It has shown no intention to vacate it.

Tibet is another story of betrayal. True, it was under the suzerainty of Beijing but the autonomy of Tibet was considered unviable. Suzerainty means a government exercising political control over a dependent state. Suzerainty does not mean absorption. Tibet was not even a part of China when India agreed to its suzerainty of China. Beijing betrayed Nehru again when it made the Dalai Lama's stay at Lhasa impossible. The biggest betrayal was when China attacked India eight years later, in 1962.

The Dalai Lama's visit may not have raised doubts about Tibet but it renewed the debate of its annexation by Beijing once again. China called his visit a "provocation". It's warning to India that the Dalai Lama's visit would affect the normal relations between the two countries. It intensified with Doklam. Yet, India managed to hold its own.

In fact, China's problems with India have roots in the British demarcation of the India-China border. China refuses to acknowledge the MacMahon Line that demarcates Arunachal Pradesh to be a part of India. Any activity that takes place in this area is viewed by China skeptically.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to the "disputed" territory despite Chinese protest showed that New Delhi was prepared for hostilities if it comes to that pass. Then, the Indian soldiers did not have shoes for a mountain combat. India is now a power to reckon with.

It looks as if China would go on provoking India to exhaust its patience. When war is ruled out this is the only option China has. How to retaliate, without resorting to hostilities is the situation India faces.

Beijing is trying to revive the India-China Bhai Bhai scenario. New Delhi cannot trust Beijing,

particularly when it is trying to encircle India. China has given a big loan to Nepal. The port which Sri Lanka is building is at the behest of China.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is happy that China is trying to placate her. All should realize that India is no push over now. Apart from war, India has many options. Taiwan is a trump card. It can revive the debate on two Chinas.

The question of terrorism is always there. Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed with a Chinese leader that they share common concern over terrorism. A portion of Muslim population living in China is beginning to assert itself. The Chinese leaders are ignoring the uprising. But they should realize that what the Muslims in China are doing has the support of Muslims in other countries. Still China would be helped by non-Muslim countries because they see terrorism as heart of Muslim chauvinism.

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Love in the Times of Fundamentalist Politics: Case of Hadiya

Ram Puniyani

The politics of communal polarisation in Kerala is focusing on many identity issues, one being *Love Jihad*, where a Hindu girl married to a Muslim or Christian man is targeted, and is legally manipulated in a manner to ensure that she is forced to be sent to her parents or sent to 'anti-conversion clinics'. There is some public knowledge about Hadiya and the bogey of *Love Jihad*, spiced up with stories about recruitment for participating in *Jihad* in Syria. A lot has also been coming in the media about the alleged immaturity of the girl Akhila, who converted to Islam and married a Muslim man, who is a worker of Popular Front of India (PFI). Other cases, like that of Swetha, a Hindu woman confined in a Yoga Center, where she is being pressurised to abandon her marriage to a Christian man, are much less known. As per Swetha, the Yoga center is actually a re-conversion clinic for those women who have adopted Christianity or Islam and married non-Hindus.

In the case of Akhila, the total focus in the media on linking the case to PFI and the alleged attempt to join terrorist activity in Syria was brought in to give a different twist to the case. This became the pretext for the NIA to step in. This made the issue of conversion of Akhila as a sinister plan to woo Hindu girls, covert them to Islam and induct them into terror modules. Quite a fertile imagination of those in authority. In Hadiya's case, the

Court went to the extent of declaring that a 24-year old girl is of tender mind and is gullible. The judges have probably forgotten that in India the age of voting is 18 years, after which a person becomes an adult and is responsible for one's decisions and actions. Hadiya asserted in Court that her conversion and marriage to a Muslim man is out of her own volition. Later Court hearings did not call her for depositions. Even the latest Court verdict has given a month's time before hearing her in person (October 30, 2017). These are surprising times. If an adult, a Homeopathic student, is considered to be mature enough to take decisions about her life, then keeping her in her parents' custody away from her husband is unthinkable on moral and social grounds, grounds which should guide the interpretation of law and consequent decisions.

In the case of Swetha, the Yoga Center in Ernakulam, where she has been detained, turns out to be a place where emotional blackmail and even threats are being used to force girls to abandon their new faith or to force their spouse to convert to Hinduism. Another Hindu woman Sruthi Meledath also testified to a similar experience when she was asked to leave her Muslim husband Anees Hamid, whom she planned to marry. This was at Yogvidya Kendram. The similarity of the agenda of such centers is very clear.

This issue of *Love Jihad* did not exist a decade ago. This cleverly crafted campaign is based on patriarchal notions, which are one of the core ingredients of communal politics. As per this communal thinking, the notion of 'our women' vs. 'their women' guides them. A woman is regarded as the property of man and is considered a symbol of community honor. In precipitating communal violence, rumours based on threat to 'our women' are put at the forefront, the Mujaffarnagar violence being a prime example of the same. At the same time, violating the modesty of women of the 'other' community comes as a badge of honor in this scheme of things. The *Love Jihad* issue began in Coastal Karnataka, where inter-religious marriages were targeted, particularly when the girl was a Hindu and the boy was a Muslim or a Christian.

In an open society, social interaction among people of different religions provides the ground for inter-community marriages, and is something which can be a strong cementing factor in the concept of Fraternity in the triad of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. During the freedom movement, people like Gandhi and Ambedkar proactively talked about the role of intercommunity marriages in promoting abolition of caste, and extending this logic, inter-religion marriages are the ground on which communal harmony and national integration find deeper and solid base. This is what should be

the social orientation in a democratic society. With the clouds of communal divisiveness coming up on the horizon, patriarchal notions and attempts to control the lives of women have become stronger. In India, Hindu communalists in particular have been floating organisations to discourage such alliances and break them when such unions take place.

One recalls the notorious Babu Bajrangji whose prime role was to attack inter-community couples. In

West Bengal the case of Priyanka Todi and Rizwan Kausar is a painful reminder of the malady taking deep roots in society. While patriarchal values are there in other social ideologies also, in communalism and fundamentalism, these are very deeply ingrained. While there are glorious examples of marriages of a Hindu boy with a Muslim girl and vice versa, it seems the intimidations of the likes of Hadiya and Shruthi are being taken to absurd limits to set an example in society to dissuade

others. Yoga Centres as decoys for breaking inter-caste marriages is sad news. Here deceit is the tool to break the spirit of girls involved in the process. The torture of the spouse involved in these cases has not been much recorded. As such love knows no boundaries of caste, class, religion and nationality. One can say that inter-religious marriages can also be an index of communal harmony and transition to a society where gender equality is respected and striven for!

This is how Swachh Bharat Treats its Sanitation Workers

Sandeep Pandey

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia is a state government hospital in Vibhuti Khand, Lucknow. According to government policy most regular hiring at lower levels has been replaced by contractual workers or worse labour contractors supplying the staff. One such agency Apnatech Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd. was given the contract for supplying ward-boys, ward-ayas (maids), drivers and sanitation workers. Except for the fact that they are paid by the contractor, for practical purposes all these workers work as hospital staff. Twentyfour of these fortunate ones have been accommodated in proper housing on Hospital campus and while other 14, working in similar positions, have to live in temporary makeshift settlements on the campus itself. The contractor, on directions from district administration, has issued a notice to its own workers to vacate the campus soon

otherwise they have been warned that they will be bulldozed. It is noteworthy that while only one of the 24 accommodated in campus housing is a sanitation worker, 10 out of 14 facing eviction are sanitation workers all belonging to the Valmiki community, a Scheduled Caste which has traditionally been involved in sanitation and manual scavenging work in India. The elite society, dominated by upper caste, has always treated its manual workers, mostly dalits, like this - the elite extract work from them and when it comes to providing the workers basic facilities, the elite simply refuse to take any responsibility. With the district administration, hospital administration and the contractor not willing to take any responsibility for these workers, they face an uncertain future. They don't know whether they'll have their hutments and their work next week.

Children of these workers, including the sanitation workers, study in schools which are near the Hospital and if the families are expelled from the campus the studies of children will be affected. If the parents are forced to move quite far away from the campus, the children will not be admitted to any new school at this advanced stage of the academic year. They may even have to drop their year or studies. In such a scenario some of them may have to return to their traditional occupation rather than dream of doing something else to break the vicious cycle of manual work, which is more of a humiliation, even after the Prime Minister is running a high profile campaign focused on it. The plight of these workers has never been highlighted in the Clean India campaign and the current situation shows the even after this campaign India will continue to treat its sanitation workers the way they have been always treated and humiliated.

Massive Protest by Workers in Delhi, November 9-11, 2017

Nearly 100,000 workers gathered at Delhi's Parliament Street from 9 November 2017 to protest against the central government's policies that have adversely affected the working class of India. The protest – called 'mahapadav' or mega sit-in – continued till 11 November.

It is one of the biggest workers protests in recent times and was a culmination of a long campaign which covered practically all districts of the country. It was organised by 10 central trade unions and several workers' and employees federations representing about 10 million workers of the country.

But that's not "news" for the major media houses in India. Most newspapers and television channels did not carry any report on the protest or carried small items buried deep inside their advertisement filled pages. As far as one could make out, The Hindu, The Indian Express and The Hindustan Times had no report while there are small reports in The Times of India and The Business Line (which claimed the protest was by "hundreds of workers" - without pictures so that people don't get to know of the real size of the gathering).

These are the same newspapers that spare no column inches in reporting about Prime Minister Modi's smallest statements and activities. They are at the forefront in discussing what the CII or FICCI has said on this and that. They go gaga over Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai. But towards the suffering and anger of millions in this country, there is no ink to be spared.

This is not the first time this is happening, of course. Mass protests by the working class have either been ignored by the Indian media, or denigrated as nuisance which causes traffic jams. There were two massive all India strikes – first in 2015 involving about 150 million workers and the world's biggest industrial strike in 2016 involving 180 million workers. But the media just reported it as partial or even failed strike. On the other hand, protests of 40 people led by an Anna Hazare or some NGOs or what Modi's followers are saying on his own app tend to make it to the front pages of these newspapers and web portals.

Why did the media black out these protests?

Because the workers come in the way of the corporate-political nexus. This is the first reason why the huge rally that continued for three days, with the workers drawn from all segments of life—industrial, agrarian, mining—giving an insight into the India that seems to have been factored out of the headlines of the corporate driven media. Both suspicious and fearful of the organised trade union movement, with the massive mobilisation by the Left parties in particular, adding to the rich and powerful paranoia.

Media houses and corporate houses worked to destroy the trade unions in newspapers through the 19980-1990's to ensure that the press workers and the working journalists were contained and controlled. Television ensured a crippling blow with contracts

favouring the management replacing the daily wage board pay scales. And as the trade unions disappeared one by one in the newspaper industry, the management control over the workers intensified, with even editors now hired and fired at will with merit and capability hardly being the qualification.

Second, the workers are seen as anti-employers. Their demands thus increase the pressure on the business houses, and the governments that are resistant to conceding what the poor of India need and want. For instance on the last day Parliament street had turned into a sea of women asking for better wages, health and education care, all pretty low on the list of those who are in government and those who control government. Hence the media, that works under the employers, decided not to give space to over a lakh of workers and their demands. As pressure makes the 'employers' uncomfortable and thus is has become the duty of the owned and subservient media to ensure that comfort levels are not damaged.

Wages was a major issue. No revision of wages, low wages, undue cut of wages, and various methods used to ensure that the workers do not get what is their due.

"Jo hamse takrayega, choor choor ho jayega" shouted the workers as their leaders told the handful of reporters who were there representing alternative media that the central employees felt cheated, betrayed, over the 7th

Planning Commission. They spoke of how work had increased manifold, wages had not, as government jobs were not filled and vacancies continued. There has been no wage revisions for instance of postal employees working in the rural areas, no confirmations, no revision. Trade union facilities are being withdrawn instead, and the government-corporate nexus is working in unison to marginalise the workers.

Those who own the newspapers too feel vulnerable against workers unity, and hence are at one with the nexus to black out the poor of India.

Three, workers are India's toiling masses from coal mines, to anganwadis, to landless labour. They are not the consumer class, and bring no direct benefit to the advertising and TRP linked revenues of the big media. Giving them even a passing mention is thus worthless, as it brings no money and instead for the reasons cited above actually cuts into the revenue with the workers demanding a fair slice of the growth pie. By giving them space the big media does not want to justify or highlight their cause. Somehow the ostrich like approach has replaced conscientious and fair reportage, a belief that if the media ignores an event and buries its head in the sand, it will pass.

Little do the mass media outlets, today so indifferent and scornful of workers and their demands, realise that tomorrow, when this govt. turns against any one of them and starts arm-twisting them – then it is these trade unions only that will stand by them. But probably this is a lesson everyone has to learn the painful way.

Arms Race Too Costly For People of South Asia

Bharat Dogra

There have been several reports during the last two or three years or so about increase in acquisition of expensive weapons in various countries of South Asia, a region with some of the highest rates of poverty and deprivation in the world. These reports have appeared most in the context of Pakistan and India.

According to the cover-story titled *Brothers in Arms* by Ananth Krishnan published in *India Today*, October 24, 2016, "Pakistan and China are jointly producing JF-17 Thunder light Fighter aircraft, while talks for an export variant of China's new fifth generation stealth fighter are ongoing. In August both countries moved towards clinching China's biggest ever military deal - the \$ 5 billion sale of eight attack submarines likely to be deployed in the Arabian Sea." Further this report says that in 2015 Russia sold Pakistan four Mi-35 helicopter gunships while earlier Russia sold the RD-93 jet engines for the JF-17 fighter aircraft.

Further this report said about arms purchases by India that during the past three years the USA sold \$4.4 billion worth of aircraft and helicopters to India but this was exceeded by Russia's \$ 5 billion sales to India in the same period.

The Dawn reported on June 18 2015 that Pakistan and Russia are close to finalizing a deal for purchase of Mi-35 Hind E attack helicopters.

The same newspaper reported on April 5 that the US Navy has awarded a \$170 million contract for the manufacture of nine AH-1Z Viper helicopters which will be delivered to Pakistan. Quwa defence news and analysis group reported on August 4, 2016 that a contract regarding new generation submarines was signed by Pakistan with China for purchase of eight Chinese AIP submarines.

The *Indian Express* reported on March 15, 2016 quoting *Jane's Defence Weekly* that Pakistan is trying to get more F-16s from the US as well as discussing with countries like Russia and France for new aircraft to match India's defense purchases. In September 2015 Russia offered to sell SU-35 planes to Pakistan. While stating that the wide ranging collaboration with China gives them confidence, Pakistani officials said that India's defense purchases also influence them to acquire matching technology.

In the context of India, DNA webdesk reported on March 16, 2016 that India's Ministry of Defence signed 28 contracts worth Rs. 36,944 crore during the last six months with 28 vendors - 18 Indian vendors and 10 foreign firms. The *Livemint* reported on January 12, 2016, quoting the defence minister of India, that India has signed \$5 billion worth defence offset

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Demonetisation: One Year Later - II

Neeraj Jain

It has attempted to attack only a small part of the black economy—the black cash stored with the people. Even assuming that the government had succeeded in demobilising this Rs 3 lakh crore of black cash, black income is going to be generated in the year 2017-18 too, and the year after that, and so on. Be it narcotic drugs or charging capitation fees, or be it hiding of incomes by lawyers and doctors, or be it understating real estate deals or understating industry profits, or be it under-invoicing and over-invoicing in international trade, all this is going to continue in the coming years too.

Why the Government Failed to Eliminate Even Rs 3 Lakh Crore

The government permitted people to deposit Rs 2.5 lakh per person without questions being asked. Assuming that only the richest 3% people have black money, this means 3.6 crore people had black cash of totalling Rs 3 lakh crore. This works out to an average black money holding of less than Rs 1 lakh per person. Of course, not everyone in the richest 3% would have black income, and so many had black money more than the limit of Rs 2.5 lakh specified by the government. But they found innovative ways of converting their black money into white. Thus, on the day the demonetisation announcement was made, jewellery shops were reported to be open till 3 am, issuing backdated receipts for purchase of gold, jewellery, etc. People also resorted to stratagems

like employers paying employees salaries for several months in advance, or giving money to the poor to deposit in their Jan Dhan accounts, to be returned later as white money. Of the 25 crore Jan Dhan accounts opened by the poor, 3 crore accounts had seen a total of nearly Rs 29,000 crore in increased deposits.

This explains why the government was not able to demobilise even Rs 3 lakh crore; it was able to wipe out only 5% of this, or Rs 0.16 lakh crore.

Past Experience Too Proves This

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

IS GOVERNMENT SERIOUS ABOUT CURBING BLACK ECONOMY?

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

Even assuming this to be true and assuming that the government initially wanted to tackle black money only (and not black income generation), the method adopted, of demonetisation, was bizarre. To give an analogy, if there is a crime in a locality, this is like the police calling all the residents of the locality to the police station to investigate whose hands have bloodstains, or whose eyes are bloodshot, or who was where at the time of the crime, and so on. The correct way to pursue the case is to diligently investigate all the leads available, and then call in for questioning only those who are the suspects. Similar is the case with black money. If there is an honest tax administration that operates without interference, it can through painstaking efforts unearth substantial amount of black incomes and black wealth. Irrespective of how high and mighty a person is, if he/she is prosecuted and sent to jail for tax evasion/black activities, that will act as a deterrent to others. This is what is done in all countries that have taken some effective steps to curb the black economy, such as the US or UK—they have acted to curb the black

economy by serious investigation and prosecution.

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

For instance, black money is generated in election funding. It is estimated that probably nearly Rs 30,000 crore was spent by parties in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. A major part of this was spent by Narendra Modi for his high-voltage electioneering. If the BJP was indeed serious about curbing black money, it should have declared the sources from where it got its funding, and pressurised other parties to declare their sources of funding too. Instead of making funding of political parties more transparent, the Modi Government has made it more opaque. In March 2017, the government got the Lok Sabha to pass amendments to the Finance Bill 2017 wherein it eased norms for contributions made by corporates to political parties. The government removed the funding limit of 7.5% of the company's net profit for the past three years, thus allowing private companies to provide unlimited funding to their political benefactors. But what is far more worse is another provision approved by the Lok Sabha – the company no longer has to disclose the name of the political party to which it has made the donation!¹²

A large part of the black money

generated every year is parked in land and gold/jewellery. The government can easily monitor big land deals and gold-jewellery purchases, and put them under scrutiny. Then again, our intelligence agencies are tracking export deals on a daily basis. A *Hindustan Times* analysis of RBI data, gleaned from 1972 to 2015, shows that 1,88,605 export transactions were not remitted home, and involved exports worth Rs 17 lakh crore.³ This means that the government has the details of the deals through which money is being funnelled abroad. If the PM wants, he can easily stop this outflow. As discussed above, a known way of storing black incomes is by sending the money abroad, and then bringing it back to invest in securities through 'P-notes', which do not require the buyer to reveal his/her identity. Both the UPA and the supposedly anti-corruption BJP have been reluctant to impose curbs on P-notes. Even after the government recently amended the Indo-Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty, taxation of P-notes was left untouched.⁴

Another obvious step that the government can take is to go after those who have stashed their money abroad. In February 2012, the director of India's Central Bureau of Investigation stated that an estimated \$500 billion or Rs 24.50 lakh crore has been stashed away by Indians in foreign tax havens, more than any other country.⁵ Modi had in fact promised to bring this back in his election speeches, to the point that people had actually believed that the government was going to deposit Rs 15 lakh in each of their Jan Dhan accounts. But after winning the elections, the BJP Government made a complete U-turn on the issue and

has even gone to the extent of refusing to divulge the names of Indian having accounts in foreign banks in the Supreme Court. The BJP thus endorsed the previous UPA Government's position on this issue, that it had earlier criticised. Commenting on the application moved by the attorney general on behalf of the government in the Supreme Court, senior advocate Ram Jethmalani, who was the petitioner in the case, stated, "The government has made an application which should have been filed by the criminals. I am amazed."⁶

Actually, this is not surprising. Journalist Josy Joseph, author of the book *A Feast of Vultures*, writes that the biggest case of black money parked in offshore havens being investigated by Indian authorities is that of business tycoon Gautam Adani.⁷ Considering the close relations between Adani and Modi, and the fact that Adani grew from being a small time businessman to one of India's biggest business tycoons during just the decade when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, it is obvious that Adani will never be prosecuted.⁸

In 2016, 11 million documents held by the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca were leaked by an anonymous source, and obtained and made public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The documents show the myriad ways in which the world's rich exploit secretive tax havens to hide their wealth. The leak, that became known the world over as the Panama Papers scandal, contained the names of 500 Indians who have links to offshore firms, including politicians, businessmen and films stars. The names include those of Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai,

DLF owner K.P. Singh, Garware family, Nira Radia, Harish Salve, and Gautam Adani's elder brother Vinod Adani, to name a few.⁹ A year before that, in February 2015, *Indian Express* released the list of 1,195 Indian account holders and their balances for the year 2006–07 in HSBC's Geneva branch, in what has become infamous as the 'Swiss Leaks'. The names included several prominent Indian businessmen—Mukesh Ambani, Anil Ambani, Anand Chand Burman, Rajan Nanda, Yashovardhan Birla, Chandru Lachhmandas Raheja and Dattaraj Salgaocar—and the top diamond traders of the country—Russell Mehta, Anoop Mehta, Saunak Parikh, Chetan Mehta, Govindbhai Kakadia and Kunal Shah.¹⁰ The action so far? HSBC whistleblower Herve Falciani, talking to the media in November 2015, said the Indian government "had not used information on those illegally stashing away black money in foreign bank accounts, and still millions of crores were flowing out."¹¹

All this should not be surprising. Despite having come to power on the plank of anti-corruption and good governance, the Modi Government has actually been seeking to dilute anti-corruption legislations. Soon after coming to power, it made a U-turn on the issue of bringing political parties under the Right to Information (RTI) Act; it had earlier supported this. It has not been keen on operationalising the Lokpal Act despite it having been notified in the gazette in January 2014, and has not appointed a Lokpal even after two-and-a-half years in office, for which it was pulled up by the Supreme Court earlier this year (2016). Not only that, in July 2016, it diluted this Act and exempted bureaucrats from declaring assets and liabilities of their

spouses and dependent children. Similarly, it has not operationalised the Whistleblowers Protection Act (WBP Act), despite it too having been passed by Parliament. This Act provides a mechanism for protecting the identity of whistleblowers—a term given to people who expose corruption. Nearly 60 people have been killed in the last few years for exposing corruption and wrongdoing in the government; had the law been operationalised, the lives of many of them could have been saved.¹²

Clearly, all the chest thumping by PM Modi about fighting corruption is just a lot of hot air.

Modi Changes Narrative to Cashless Economy

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

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

reference to shifting to a cashless economy.

Just a month after this so-called 'war on black money' was launched, the government shifted its rhetoric to pushing for a cashless economy. In his *Mann Ki Baat* speech on November 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi shifted his focus from the drive against black money to exhorting the people to make the transition first to a 'less-cash economy' and then later a 'cashless' economy. He urged people to start using cash substitutes like debit cards and digital wallets. The RBI Governor, after maintaining a stoic silence for nearly 20 days after the note ban announcement, too shared his *mann ki baat* on the same day, and urged people to migrate to a cashless society.¹³ The government now began pushing its departments to shift from cash transactions to cashless transactions; for instance, the Urban Development Ministry has announced that people will have to make e-payments in matters of property tax, professional tax, utilities like water, power & gas, fee and licensing charges, etc. On December 8, the finance minister announced a slew of incentives to encourage people to move towards cashless transactions, including: waiver of service tax on digital payments of less than Rs 2,000; discounts on petrol and diesel purchases, suburban railway tickets and toll payments at Toll Plazas on National Highways if payment is made through digital means; and issuance of 'Rupay Kisan Cards' to farmers to enable them to make digital transactions, as well as installation of two PoS machines (swipe machines) free in 1 lakh villages with population of less than 10,000.¹⁴

According to the RBI, cash in

circulation (CIC) to GDP ratio in the economy has fallen from 12.2 per cent of India's GDP in March 2016 to 8.8 per cent by end-March 2017. The government has been touting this figure as one of the successes of demonetisation, claiming that a lower CIC to GDP ratio is indicative of lesser corruption.¹⁵

The government is lying again. There is no connection between a cashless economy and tax evasion and generation of black incomes. Currency notes are not necessary in generation of black money. Most of the black activities/tax evasion/corruption in an economy are indulged in by the rich or the big corporations. And they use all kinds of legal accounting gimmicks to do so, using banking channels.

Japan is supposed to be a less corrupt economy than India. Yet, its CIC to GDP ratio is much more than India, 19.4%.¹⁶

On the other hand, in the USA, according to the Federal Reserve, as much as \$1.48 trillion is in circulation as cash, which works out to approximately 8% of its GDP. This figure is less than India.¹⁷ Nevertheless, hundreds of the biggest US corporations have used all kinds of accounting gimmicks to show their profits as having being earned by subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, so as to avoid paying US taxes. According to one estimate, at least 303 of the Fortune 500 US corporations collectively hold a whopping \$2.4 trillion of profits offshore, and thus are avoiding paying up to \$695 billion in US federal income taxes.¹⁸

The situation in Europe is no different. In the Eurozone countries,

cash is 10.63% of GDP. Yet, tax evasion in Britain every year totals around 16 billion pounds, while the French Parliament says that tax evasion costs France between 40 and 60 billion euros a year.¹⁹

Therefore, the new drive of the Modi Government to push towards a less-cash economy will not affect tax evasion and will not affect the black economy one bit.

On the other hand, instead of cash transactions, as the number of online transactions increases, it increases the risk of online frauds. One study found that the value of global online fraudulent transactions is expected to reach \$25.6 billion by 2020, up from \$10.7 billion last year. Just a month before Modi announced the demonetisation drive, India's biggest internet banking security breach occurred. Over 3 million debit cards and their pin numbers were stolen by hackers, enabling the miscreants to steal personal information and do fraudulent transactions. Several banks, including State Bank of India, Yes Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank, were hit by the attack. Newsreports say that banks have reported total fraudulent withdrawals of Rs 1.3 crore because of the security breach. Considering India's huge illiteracy and poverty levels, if the poor are forced to shift to using debit/credit cards, it is going to be very easy for tricksters to defraud people of their hard-earned money.²⁰

Impact of Demonetisation on the Economy

While demonetisation has not achieved any of its announced objectives, it has had a devastating impact on the economy, especially

the unorganised sector, which is almost completely dependent on cash transactions. The three biggest components of India's vast unorganised sector are:²¹

- i) Agricultural sector, on which 53% of the population depend for their livelihoods;
- ii) Small-scale or unorganised retail sector, which accounts for around 9% of total employment;
- iii) Small-scale or unorganised manufacturing sector, which accounts for 7.5% of total employment.

All these sectors were already struggling for survival as a result of the economic reforms launched in India in the name of globalisation since 1991. These reforms have further accelerated under the Modi Government. Now, its demonetisation decision and drive towards a cashless economy has only further crippled these sectors. PM Modi expecting the pavement tea-seller or a roadside fish-seller to have a PoS machine with which to accept payment from the credit card of a daily wage worker, or expecting a street hawker to sell a dozen bananas and accept payment through Paytm, or expecting a small farmer to make payment to his labourers by cheques, or expecting the owners of India's tiny manufacturing units to pay their daily wage workers, who are paid daily on a piecemeal basis, by electronic transfer every day, is akin to Marie Antoinette asking Parisians to go eat cake.

We take a brief look at the impact of demonetisation on the three unorganised sectors mentioned above.

Impact on Agriculture

The majority of the Indian peasants are small farmers with landholdings of less than one hectare. The globalisation reforms have pushed the agricultural sector into deep crisis, so much so that they have driven more than 3 lakh farmers into committing suicide since the reforms began, the largest recorded wave of such deaths in history.²²

Now, demonetisation has further worsened this crisis. It was announced just when the kharif crop was being harvested and sowing for the rabi crop was about to begin. This pushed farmers into a difficult situation. Business at the mandis fell by anywhere from 25% to 70%, as there were no buyers—the cash crunch affected shopkeepers, hotels and restaurants, and even the small street vendors. And so, traders at the mandis did not have cash to pay to the farmers for their produce (or they forced farmers to sell at half the price); even if they paid in cheque, farmers were not able to encash them as banks faced a cash crunch. The other source of funding for farmers, disbursement of loans by village-level credit cooperative societies, was also affected due to restrictions imposed by the RBI on these institutions. And so, farmers did not have the money to buy seeds and fertilisers, and to hire tractors and other equipment, and pay their labourers—affecting their sowing for the next crop.²³

Because of the government's push towards a cashless economy, traders in mandis continue to be unwilling to pay for agricultural produce in cash, because of which the agricultural crisis has continued. It has resulted in falling farm prices, because of

which deflation has hit agriculture. The Central Statistics Office's (CSO) GDP data for April-June shows that the annual growth in gross value added from agriculture during the quarter was only 2.3% in real terms (i.e. at constant prices), as against 6.9 per cent for October-December. But farm prices fell by 2% during this quarter, due to which the value of agricultural production rose by only 0.3% in nominal terms (that is, at current prices unadjusted for inflation).²⁴ It is this worsening crisis, made worse by the government insistence on providing social sector benefits through Aadhar, that has led to an intensifying farmers' movement across the country in recent months.²⁵

Impact on Small-Scale Retail

India has more than 1.49 crore retail outlets, the highest in the world, of which the overwhelming number are small retailers. Small-scale retail was already under severe attack because of the gradual opening of the various branches of this sector to foreign direct investment as a part of the globalisation policies.²⁶ Demonetisation has had ruinous consequences for it. According to the Confederation of All India Traders—one of the largest trade associations in India—businesses in markets across the country reduced by a whopping 75% in the immediate months following the demonetisation announcement. The reason was simple—people simply didn't have the cash to buy even essentials; even if they had cash, it was a Rs 2,000 note that most small traders were unable to accept as they did not have enough change.²⁷

Impact on Unorganised Manufacturing Sector

Since India began globalisation in

1991, despite the massive entry of giant Western corporations into the economy, and despite the Indian economy having expanded at a rapid rate of 7.3% per annum during the decade 2000–10, it has not led to a generation of formal or organised sector manufacturing jobs. Two decades later, the total manufacturing sector employment in India in 2010 was only 50.7 million, or 11% of the total workforce; of this, barely 16 million were organised sector jobs, the remaining 34.5 million were unorganised sector jobs—that is, jobs in tiny units or home-based manufacturing (this includes jobs such as workers making papads or rolling bidis in their homes).²⁸

Even though the overwhelming number of jobs in the manufacturing sector continue to be in the unorganised sector, for the last two decades, this sector has been struggling for survival due to globalisation policies such as ending of reservations for small units and decline of low interest bank credit for the small sector.

Demonetisation simply devastated this already struggling sector. Nearly 80% of the micro/small enterprises in the country were badly hit. They are very small units, and have innumerable backward and forward linkages, all of which are in cash. The drying up of cash pushed these industries to the wall. To give an example, take the brass industry of Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh. The raw material for brass is supplied by people who deal in scrap. They buy scrap from various places in cash, and sell it to the consolidator who buys it in cash. The next stage is the melting of scrap; it is turned into brass slab or bar. After that comes the making of moulds—for instance,

of a flower vase or a tap. The brass is melted and poured into these moulds. After this stage, there are craftsmen who make designs on it, then comes the stage of polishing, then of lacquering. Each of these stages is based exclusively on cash. At each stage, the workers are paid in cash, daily, on a piecemeal basis. They earn, and spend it, on a daily basis. Demonetisation and the resulting cash crunch brought this thriving industry, which had a total turnover of Rs 6,000 crore, to a standstill. Likewise, the hosiery industry of Ludhiana, the bangle industry of Faridabad, the garment industry of Tirupur, the chikankari industry of Lucknow, and so many other industries, employing lakhs of workers, were also badly affected; thousands of units shut down, lakhs of workers were rendered unemployed, and forced to go back to their villages.²⁹

The gross impact? The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) recently estimated that roughly four million jobs were lost post-demonetisation during the four month period from January to April 2017³⁰—in an economy already suffering from a huge unemployment crisis.

Economy Slowing Down

The destructive effect of demonetisation on the informal sector caused demand to fall, production to decline in several sectors, and rise in unemployment. These adverse impacts continued for several months, as money supply was not restored for several months. The obvious consequence—the economy has been continuously slowing down. Official data show that the India's GDP or gross domestic product slowed down to

5.7% on a year-on-year basis during the April-June quarter of 2017-18. More significantly, this was the sixth consecutive quarter for which the GDP growth has slowed down. It had touched a high of 9.1% in January-March 2016 quarter. After that it has continuously slowed down, to 7.9%, 7.5%, 7.0% and 6.1% in the subsequent quarters, to 5.7% in Q1 of 2017-18.³¹

Prof. Arun Kumar in fact argues that this latest GDP growth rate figure is a huge over-estimate. He points out that this official estimate is largely based on data provided by the corporate sector and some other organised sectors of the economy. It does not include data from the unorganised sectors of the economy, whose non-agriculture component contributes to 31% of the GDP, and which was hit hard by demonetisation and now the government decision to roll-in GST. While there are no official surveys that capture the extent to which this sector was hit by demonetisation, private surveys indicate that that this sector was badly affected. Basing himself on data provided by these private surveys, Prof. Arun Kumar argues that it is possible that the GDP growth rate has actually fallen to way below 5.7%, and in all probability is near-zero.³²

Then Why Demonetisation?

If demonetisation is not going to lead to a reduction in the black economy—and the government obviously knows this—then what is the real motive behind the demonetisation exercise and now the push towards a less-cash economy?

After coming to power, the BJP made a complete U-turn on all the promises made by it during the

elections, and has continued with the same policies of globalisation–liberalisation–privatisation that have been implemented in the country for the last more than two decades. The only difference—Modi is implementing them at an accelerated speed. The sole aim of these policies is to run the economy solely for the naked profiteering of giant foreign corporations, and their junior partners, the big Indian business houses. These policies are being implemented at the behest of the governments of the developed countries led by the USA, and the international financial institutions controlled by them, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (or IMF). The reason why the Indian Government is dutifully implementing their dictates is because of our huge foreign debt, which under the Modi Government has now topped \$485 billion. (Discussing this issue in greater detail is beyond the scope of this booklet.³³)

As with the other important policies being implemented as a part of globalisation, Washington is behind Modi Government's demonetisation exercise too! This may sound incredible to our readers, especially the Modi bhakts, but there is enough evidence to substantiate this. All evidence points to the fact that PM Modi's demonetisation and cashless drive has been implemented at the behest of US Government's development agency USAID.

Ever since the Modi Government came to power, it has been bowing to US pressure and implementing policies to benefit US corporations, such as: amending the Land Acquisition Act (on which the government had to backtrack due to a countrywide protest movement); diluting India's nuclear liability law

so that US nuclear corporations can set up nuclear plants in India without having to worry about paying indemnities in case of design defects causing a nuclear accident; and amending insurance laws to permit increased inflow of foreign capital into India's insurance sector.³⁴ The push to demonetisation is a continuation of this surrender to US corporate interests.

In October 2016, the USAID and the Indian Finance Ministry entered into an agreement known as *Catalyst: Inclusive Cashless Payment Partnership* with the goal of effecting a quantum leap in cashless payments in India. The partnership was based on a report commissioned by USAID in 2015, and presented in January 2016, titled *Beyond Cash*. The study and subsequent plans were kept a secret³⁵—this explains Modi's statement that preparations for demonetisation had been going on for many months before the November 8 announcement.

Who are the real beneficiaries of this partnership and drive towards a cashless economy? This is revealed by USAID itself. In a press release following the release of the *Beyond Cash* report, it declared, "Over 35 key Indian, American and international organisations have partnered with the Ministry of Finance and USAID on this initiative."³⁶ These organisations are mostly IT companies and payment service providers who stand to benefit from the increased digital payments and from the associated data generation. They include Microsoft, credit card companies such as Mastercard and Visa, the internet services company eBay Inc., the financial services corporation Citigroup, among others.

India's digital payments industry is estimated to have the potential of growing to a whopping \$500 billion by 2020, but only if millions of Indians can be drawn into the digital payments net!³⁷

USAID and its partner corporations are well aware that this policy would likely spell disaster for India's small traders and producers, and people in remote regions; *Beyond Cash* had analysed the impact of demonetisation extensively.³⁸ But they are not bothered. In today's world dominated by big corporations, profit maximisation is all that matters, even if these profits come drenched in the blood of lakhs of poor and starving people.

There is no doubt. While one may have strong disagreements with the overall orientation and policy framework of the various governments that have come to power at the Centre since Independence, the present BJP Government led by Narendra Modi is undoubtedly the most anti-people of them all.

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(Continued from Page 6)

contracts, while \$10 billion worth of additional contracts are in the pipeline. The Diplomat reported on February 10, 2016, citing The Times of India and other sources, that India is close to signing a \$3 billion defence deal with Israel.

The Times of India reported on October 14 2016 that a Rs. 39,000 crore deal with Russia may help India to get a missile shield. This involves five new generation Russian S-400 Triumf air defense missile systems, which can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, stealth fighters, missiles and drones at ranges of up to 400 kms. In addition, this report said, India and Russia are in the process of a deal for the joint production of 200 light utility helicopters at a cost of \$ 1 billion. Negotiations for other mega defence projects with Russia like the joint development of the futuristic fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) and the \$1.5 billion lease of a second nuclear powered submarine are also on track.

Such reports indicate that South Asia is in the middle of an arms race which will prove prohibitively expensive for the people of this region who are already suffering from the denial of basic needs to

millions of them. Hence people of South Asia should strive to create a very strong peace movement which should decrease insecurity and

suspicious to such an extent that the extremely expensive and ever increasing arms race can be checked.

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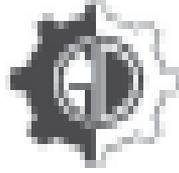
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