

# janata

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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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## The Unemployment Crisis: Reasons and Solutions

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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.

**Email: shetipannalal@gmail.com**

## 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.

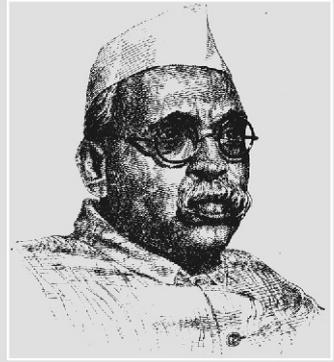
Let all parties sit together and work out concrete specific programmes and policies to meet this menace. If the parties will not show this adjustment, the public in India will never forgive the Opposition parties for failing to show that foresight, self-abnegation before the attack on secularism, the 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.”

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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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