

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



ESTABLISHED : APRIL 1937

(Formerly in the name of 'INDEPENDENT INDIA'
since April 1937 to March 1949)

Founder
M.N. ROY

Vol. 82 Number 4

JULY 2018

Rs. 15 / MONTH

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Shivam Shankar Singh

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580

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Vol. 82 Number 4, July 2018

Monthly journal of the Indian Renaissance Institute

Devoted to the development of the Renaissance Movement and to the promotion of human rights, scientific temper, rational thinking and a humanist view of life.

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CONTENTS:

Page No.

	Page No.
A Tribute to Justice Rajindar Sachar Chaman Lal	3
Event recalls struggle during the Emergency Bharbi Hazarika	6
An apology overdue; Kuldeep Nayar	7
Unlearnt lessons of the Emergency Subramanian Swamy	9
43rd Anniversary of Emergency: RSS Played Double-Game as Usual Shamsul Islam	12
Situation is like that of 1975; Emergency may re-emerge in another form! Gautam Thaker	15
Why I am resigning from the BJP: A Narendra Modi supporter and party campaign analyst explains Shivam Shankar Singh	16
VHP members vandalise Taj Mahal's west gate, say it blocks path to a 400-year-old Shiva temple	21
RTI: Bank With Amit Shah as Director Collected Highest Amount of Banned Notes Among Coop Banks	22
Can We Rely on Them? Jawaharlal Jasthi	25
Increasing Divisiveness: Modi Sarkar's Communal agenda Ram Puniyani	27
Form the Archives :	
Humanist Approach to Elections M.N. Roy	29
Human Rights Section :	
Citizens for Democracy Deplores the Killing of Shujaat Bukhari	36
Civil rights group cry foul over Gujarat govt's water conservation scheme Nandini Oza	37
Tuticorin Struggle: Madras High Court advocate Defending Jailed Protesters Arrested, Activists Cry Foul Newsclick Report	38
Citizens Come Together to Condemn Arrest of Five Accused in Bhima-Koregaon Case The Wire Staff	41

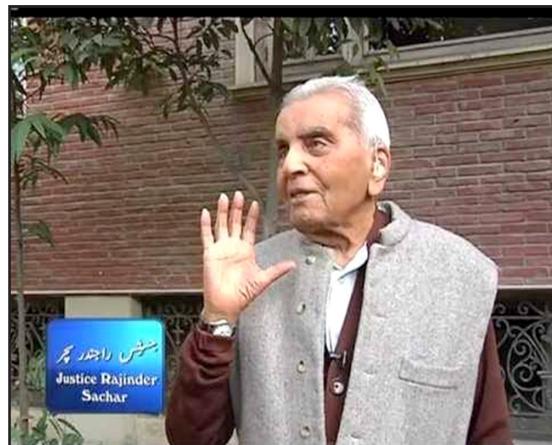
A Tribute to Justice Rajindar Sachar

Chaman Lal

The death of Justice Rajindar Sachar on April 20, 2018 marks the end of an era of the human rights movement in India. As a champion of the citizens' rights and in a class of his own Justice Sachar influenced a generation of social activists and his example will continue to inspire the courageous and endangered tribe of the advocates of Social Justice and defenders of human rights. He will be remembered particularly as the inspirational source behind the contribution of the PUCL towards the enrichment of the human rights jurisprudence through a series of PILs filed in the Supreme Court of India.

Although I had known Justice Sachar from his speeches and writings since 1970s, I was formally introduced to him a little after my retirement from the IPS in September 1996 by Dr. Yash Pal Chibbar, the PUCL General Secretary for years. In our very first meeting 'the young old man of 73' struck me as a fresh enthusiast full of ideas and ready with action plans. He reminded me of the other human dynamo, my mentor Shri K.F. Rustamji, the legendary Police Officer who raised the Border Security Force (BSF) in 1965.

I can legitimately claim a distinction that I did not get engaged with human rights only after my retirement. I had, while still in active service, practiced the not-so-easy professional 'Dharma' of working within the bounds of law, respecting the limitations of Police functions and powers and demonstrating that it is possible to provide a reasonably efficient and fair policing without violating human rights and ethical norms. I had, publicly questioned Mr. K.P.S. Gill's methods of combating terrorism in Punjab



(1986-88) and also defied the terrorist politics of the government. I had thus earned a short stint of celebrity status, or notoriety as many of my colleagues felt in the last decade of my career. I am sure this might have prompted the PUCL to accord me the honour of delivering the annual J.P. Memorial Lecture at Ahmedabad in November 1996. The text of my lecture was published in the PUCL Bulletin of May, 1997. I had, in my address, covered the issue of Fake Encounters (Extra-judicial Killings) which was the hot public issue those days and still persists in a much uglier and brazen form. I told the audience that my experience in Punjab and the North-east had taught me that fake encounters are not only legally prohibited and morally repugnant but also professionally counter-productive. Justice Sachar was very fond of quoting this portion of my lecture while speaking on terrorism. He would invariably emphasise the point by adding – 'This is not what I am saying as an activist or a former judge. This is the practical opinion of a Police Officer who has handled terrorism in challenging times and

difficult situations.'

I served as a Special Rapporteur on Pro-Bono basis in the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) from 1997 to 2007. The PUCL was actively engaged in spreading human rights awareness and facilitating submission of citizens' complaints about human rights violations to the Commission. Besides enjoying my intimacy with Dr. Chhibbar rooted in our college days in Dehra Dun, I came to know from close quarters the three wise elders of the PUCL family – Justice Sachar, legal luminary K.G. Kannabiran and the eminent journalist Kuldip Nayar. The PUCL, through the efforts of Dr. Chhibbar, under the guidance of Justice Sachar was playing a significant role in the evolution of the NHRC's relationship with the NGO sector and enhancement of its capacities. Dr. Chhibbar was nominated as a member of the NHRC Core Group of NGOs on my suggestion. He was extremely regular in attending the Group's meetings and was heard with respect. He used our personal equation to apprise me regularly about the important PUCL matters awaiting the Commission's attention. I would, most of the time, succeed in getting them expedited. I used to feel proud in being called by Dr. Chhibbar as 'Our man in the NHRC' for the small services.

I monitored the relief and rehabilitation work following the super cyclone of 1999 in Odisha. I visited all the affected districts (14) first to assess the extent of human and material loss and then every six months to monitor the implementation of NHRC's recommendations particularly the disbursement of cash compensation for the loss of life and destruction/damage of houses. I can say with pride that I had worked there with a rare kind of frenzy as a none-man team of the NHRC and earned all round appreciation for my passionate involvement

in the humanitarian intervention of the Commission to mitigate people's sufferings.

Justice Sachar was also visiting the cyclone affected areas around the same time together with PUCL workers and holding public hearings for the victims of the unprecedented disaster. He heard from the people about the Commission's intervention and my work at the grass-roots level. I was pleased to know that he had publicly praised my performance and mentioned this to Shri Surendra Mohan, the veteran Janata Dal leader and social activist. This helped in removing an unpleasant misunderstanding that had arisen in Shri Surendra Mohan's relationship with the Commission. Shri Surendra Mohan was angry with the NHRC and had, in an outburst on telephone, blamed Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, Chairman and me for lack of sensitivity and slow response to a matter relating to a tribal community of Betul (M.P.). It took me quite some time to recover from the hurt caused by the totally unjustified reprimand from Shri Surendra Mohan. After knowing about my work in Odisha from Justice Sachar, Shri Surendra Mohan was, surprisingly and contrary to his nature, demonstrably extra nice to me on one or two occasions, expressing in his own magnanimous way the regret for his hasty negative opinion about the Commission.

In his glorious career as a member of the higher judiciary, Justice Sachar headed a number of Commissions, Committees and Study groups including some UN assignments on important issues of public interest. He was highly respected in professional circles for his special talent and extraordinary flair for reviewing the current legislations in their adequacy to deal with the fast changing situations of a dynamic society of great complexity and multiple diversity like ours. I would, however, consider his report on the Status of Muslims in India as the single largest

contribution in service to the nation. In recognition of his enviable reputation as the champion of the rights of the vulnerable sections of society, the government appointed Justice Sachar as the head of a Committee constituted in 2005 to report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India. The Sachar Committee report submitted in 2006 is the first comprehensive study of the highly important long-neglected issue.

The report stirred the conscience of the secular sections of society by its startling revelation that the plight of Muslims in India is worse than that of S.C.s and S.T.s. After going through the Sachar Committee report, I feel myself closer to Justice Sachar in a certain way. Right from my school days, I have been a firm adherent of Jawaharlal Nehru's views on fundamentalism of majority and minority types. Nehru strongly felt that the minority fundamentalism arising essentially from fear and insecurity can be explained and dealt with effectively by an efficient and non-partisan law and order machinery. It is the majority fundamentalism that poses the greatest danger to our republic and its constitutional values that is far more difficult to handle and should therefore be totally unacceptable. As a police officer with experience of working in several states, I have observed the deprivations of the Muslim community in the matter of access to the basic needs of life such as food, housing, education, health care and livelihood. They are victims of discrimination in terms of arrests, prosecutions and convictions relating to communal riots, an ugly reality of post-1947 India. I may state, by way of a small example that Muslims constituting 14.2% of country's population account for 21% of the jail inmates (NCRB 2012 Report). The best tribute to Justice Sachar would, therefore, be to examine thoroughly the status of

implementation of the Sachar Committee report, upgrade its recommendations in the light of fresh inputs emerging after its submission and ensure its full implementation.

Justice Sachar was an extra-ordinary person who loved ordinariness in everything – his food, his dress and his habits of life. He was a noble soul, a superior intellect and a practitioner of high ethical norms who would never make the other person feel small in any way. Humility was the most striking feature of his personality. Under the influence of Dr. Chhibbar, he became a believer in the efficacy of homeopathy. He was a regular client of our common friend Dr. K.P.S. Dham and would visit his clinic (Pratap Pharmacy, Kotla) regularly for his common ailments. He would silently take his position on a bench in the small waiting lobby. Dr. and Mrs. Dham (also a doctor) would come out of their cabins to greet him and persuade him, never with success, to allow them to attend to him out of turn.

Justice Sachar was a rationally religious man of a perfectly secular outlook. It was touchingly reflected in the choice of hymns and *bhajans* sung at the prayer meetings organised by the family, particularly his favourite '*Shabad*' *Mitter Piare Noon....*

Justice Sachar had a philosopher's mind and a rebel's heart. His was the face of the Buddha radiating peace, harmony and equanimity. He was a saint in his thinking and a *Sufi* in his living. How can one not miss a gem of a person like Justice Sachar? But how can anyone among his admirers stop feeling his presence around despite his final departure?

Mr. Chaman Lal is a retired IPS Officer. He has also worked as Special Rapporteur for NHRC and is known for his tremendous work there. He is a great champion of civil liberties and democratic freedoms. 

Event recalls struggle during the Emergency

Activists call for fight for right **Bharbi Hazarika**

Several people gathered at the Gandhi Peace Foundation on Tuesday to commemorate the struggle for civil liberties during the 1975-77 Emergency and its repercussions.

The 42nd commemoration of the Emergency began with a condolence for slain journalist Shujaat Bukhari. It was followed by the launch of human rights lawyer Nandita Haksar's book *The Flavours of Nationalism*. Ms. Haskar, however, could not attend the event as she was unwell.

The event was hosted by three non-governmental organisations: Janhastakshep, People's Union for Civil Liberties and Citizens for Democracy (CFD) at the flagship building on Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg.

The opening speech was delivered by Shamsul Islam, a cultural activist, who elaborated on the agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Democratic rights

Veteran human rights activist Gautam Navalakha stressed on civil liberties and told the gathered audience that it needs to be a front-

row issue in the next year's election. "When our democratic rights are strong, that is when our voices will be heard," Mr. Navalakha said.

Noted journalist Kuldip Nayar, a frequenter at the panel, delivered the closing speech. Mr. Nayar elucidated his days at *The Indian Express* during the Emergency and the struggle for press freedom.

N.D. Pancholi, vice-president of People's Union for Civil Liberties, said the reality today is not very different from the days of the Emergency, adding that it is, in fact, "worsening".

Youth participation

Javed Ahmed Khan, a visitor at the event, said the Foundation should do a better job of promoting the event over social media to amass a younger crowd, which he said is required to thrust the organisation's agenda. "Today's youth need to know about these issues because they are the ones who can bring about the change," Javed, a PhD. student at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, said."

Courtesy **The Hindu**, 27 June, 2018. 

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An apology overdue

CERTAIN dates are so important in a nation's history that they cannot be forgotten. One such is June 25, when Mrs Indira Gandhi, then the Prime Minister, switched off the lights of democracy. Instead of resigning from her office after the Allahabad High Court verdict for a poll offence, she suspended the constitution and did the worst kind of excesses. One hundred thousand people were detained without trial and many were killed because they were the staunch critic of Mrs Gandhi.

Belatedly, the Congress Party which Mrs. Gandhi headed regretted the imposition of a rule where there was no personal freedom and the press was gagged. But the apology to the nation is long overdue. Congress President Rahul Gandhi can make no amends for what happened 43 years ago, yet he can at least tell the nation that both his grandmother and the party were wrong.

Justice J.C. Shah, a former Chief Justice of India who subsequently went into the excesses of emergency soon after the Janata Party under Morarji Desai came to power, had pointed out the atrocities committed against the people, including Mrs Gandhi's political opponents. The Shah Commission report is a precious document with several lessons to be learnt.

What the nation went through during the 21 months of emergency should be a part of the curriculum of text books prescribed in schools and colleges. But the present lot of books is so prejudiced against Muslim rulers in India that historians have voiced their criticism against them. In fact, the phobia of Hindutva has overtaken most of the states in the country. The bureaucracy seems to have got saffronized.

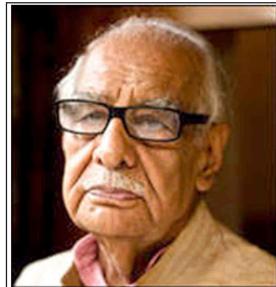
The constitution is still a sacred document. But, I am afraid, in the 2019 election BJP may try to get two-thirds of majority and if it does, the party would amend the constitution itself. Article 370

which give a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and the spirit of pluralism which protects minorities could be the target. The party, which is the political wing of the RSS, may attempt to dilute if not abolish the concept of secularism.

What happened during the emergency is an affront to the freedom fighters and constitution framers who considered the basic structure of the constitution beyond amendments. But Mrs Gandhi, armed with a Presidential decree, suspended elections and civil liberties. All her political opponents imprisoned during the period were tortured in prison and thousands were eliminated or banished. Several other atrocities, including forced mass-sterilization of millions of people, spearheaded by her son Sanjay Gandhi were committed.

The Shah Commission, constituted to go into the excesses committed during the Emergency, submitted its report in three parts, the last one on August 6, 1978. If the sheer size of the report — it had 26 chapters and three appendices running to over 530 pages — reflected the enormity of the violence done to democratic institutions and ethics, it also expressed grave concern about the happenings and the damage they had inflicted on the system.

Justice Shah discussed police actions and the role of Sanjay Gandhi at the Turkman Gate incident in which police fired on a crowd of people protesting against demolition of their houses. In fact, when Mrs Gandhi came to power in 1980, she tried to recall copies of the report wherever possible. So damaging was the report that she tried all her tricks but could not succeed. Yet, the



Kuldip Nayar

report was banned.

However, Era Sezhian, one of the founding members of the DMK and then an MP, republished his copy of the report in a book form called Shah Commission Report - Lost and Regained, in which he has rightly said: "...it is more than an investigative report; it is a magnificent historical document to serve as a warning for those coming to power in the future not to disturb the basic structure of a functioning democracy and also, for those suppressed under a despotic rule, a hopeful guide to redeem the freedom by spirited struggle."

But the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which suffered from the emergency most, does not seem to have learnt the lesson which it should have. Mrs Indira Gandhi was over taken by the mania of a one-person rule. Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also riding the same horse at the command of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and trying to change a pluralistic society, which gives purpose to the nation, into a Hindu Rashtra of sorts.

In fact, people today have started comparing the one-person rule of Mrs Gandhi with that of Modi's. So much so, most newspapers and television channels have adapted themselves to his way of working, if not thinking, as they had done during Mrs Gandhi's regime.

Veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani had remarked

some time ago that the recurrence of emergency cannot be ruled out. He further clarified that the arrogance of leaders leads to authoritarianism, taking a dig at Prime Minister Modi's style of governance. Incidentally, Advani spent 18 months in jail for opposing the emergency. To snub Advani for his forthright comment, BJP did not invite him to an event where it honoured those who went to jail during the emergency.

That the BJP is unpredictable is evident from the way it has jettisoned Mehbooba Mufti, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The party withdrew support to her without informing her, making President's rule in the state inevitable. Former chief minister Omar Abdullah has squarely blamed both the BJP and PDP for the current situation. In fact, most opposition leaders have felt that the coalition should not have taken place in the first place.

One expects that the 2019 Lok Sabha elections will give an absolute majority to a single party. But it doesn't look to be so on surface. At present, it is going to be a messy process. The democratic polity we have may be stretched beyond anybody's comprehension. One hopes that the situation would be avoided.

(Kuldeep Nayar is a veteran syndicated columnist catering to around 80 newspapers and journals in 14 languages in India & abroad. kuldeepnayar09@gmail.com) 

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- Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist

Unlearnt lessons of the Emergency

Subramanian Swamy

When attempts at seeking homogeneity of Indian society are carried beyond a point, it is dangerous for democracy... Those of us who can stand up, must do so now.

FOR TWO distinct reasons, it is ludicrous for the BJP to declare that it will hold meetings to remember the declaration of Emergency, whose 25th anniversary falls on June 26 this year. For one, during that 1975-77 period, most of the leaders of the BJP/RSS had betrayed the struggle against the Emergency. It is on the record in the Maharashtra Assembly proceedings that the then RSS chief, Balasaheb Deoras, wrote several apology letters to Indira Gandhi from inside the Yerawada jail in Pune disassociating the RSS from the JP-led movement and offering to work for the infamous 20-point programme. She did not reply to any of his letters. Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee also wrote apology letters to Indira Gandhi, and she had obliged him. In fact for most of the 20-month Emergency, Mr. Vajpayee was out on parole after having given a written assurance that he would not participate in any programmes against the Government. The vivid description of other erstwhile Jana Sangh worthies who chose to walk out of prison on promise of good behaviour is given in a book written by the Akali leader, Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala.

Some of us vigorously opposed the Emergency in our own ways. The full credit for inspiring the struggle must, however, first go to Morarji Desai, who was 78 years old and kept in solitary confinement, and to Jayaprakash Narayan who lay in Jaslok Hospital after both his kidneys were

mysteriously made to fail in Chandigarh jail. More significantly, JP's heart had been broken when he saw an India utterly passive to the death of democracy, while those who had earlier egged him on e.g., the RSS, were now repudiating him and offering to work for the nation's tormentors. But JP never gave up. He sent me a message where I was hiding just after he had reached the hospital in August 1975, that I should escape abroad and campaign from there. But he warned me that the struggle may be "life long". Morarji, however, was completely unyielding and sanguine. When Indira Gandhi offered him parole on promise of good behaviour, he told the emissary who had come to visit him in jail that no sooner was he out he would start the struggle again. His daughter-in-law, Padma, had wept copiously and implored him to agree because of his age but he told her that death was a better option.

I must add that not all in the RSS were in a surrender mode. The exceptions were Madhavrao Muley, Dattopant Thengadi and Moropant Pingle. Muley had taken a tremendous liking to me. He supported me fully while I was abroad, and while I was hiding in India. But a tearful Muley told me in early November 1976 that I had better escape abroad again since the RSS had finalised the document of surrender to be signed in end January of 1977, and that on Mr. Vajpayee's insistence I would be sacrificed to appease an irate Indira and a fulminating Sanjay whose names I had successfully blackened abroad by my campaign. I asked him about the struggle, and he said that in the country everyone had become reconciled to the 42nd Amendment,

and democracy as we had known it was over. Democracy was over for the RSS but not for all others. A few weeks later general elections to the Lok Sabha were declared. No one quite understood then what had made Indira Gandhi do that. But as a consequence, the RSS luckily did not need to sign the document of surrender.

It was an uncoordinated combination of forces that made Indira Gandhi declare elections, and the demise of the Emergency. My intensive campaign abroad and access to the American intellectuals had attracted the attention of the authorities, and especially the newly-elected President of the U.S., Mr. Jimmy Carter, who even before taking oath of office began to breathe down the Indian Government's neck about human rights, which quite unsettled Indira Gandhi. Then there was the unsung hero, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was motivating her to withdraw the Emergency and acknowledge to her inner self that she had done wrong in imposing it. More pain came to Indira Gandhi when she prostrated before Sri Chandrashekha Saraswati, the Kanchi Math Paramacharya, for 90 minutes but he had refused to even look at her, making it known that he thoroughly disapproved of the Emergency. And finally she had to contend with an unyielding Morarji Desai as head of the Lok Sangharsh Samiti who refused to withdraw the struggle or even acknowledge any good had come from the Emergency, which Indira Gandhi's emissaries implored him to say as a gesture. In other words, these moral and spiritual personages refused to legitimise the state of Emergency, the infamous 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, and accept a highly- shackled democracy as normal for India. Instead, they all held that the Emergency was subversion of the

Constitution and viewed Indira Gandhi as the usurper. It was thus the sustained non- violent and moral approach that won the day, and not a foreign- financed terror. A violent resistance suited the advocates of the Emergency for justifying it, but that resistance had mercifully fizzled out early.

When Indira Gandhi called for elections, those who had failed in their violent resistance wanted to boycott the polls on the grounds that the Opposition parties had no chance in the circumstances since the illiterate masses would not be moved by the issue of democracy, and thus the polls would legitimise the Emergency. But Morarji and Charan Singh would have none of it. Obviously they had more faith in the Indian people than those who demagogically spoke in the name of the people.

It was the plurality and heterogeneity of Indian society that made people revolt against the authoritarian order. This is the crux of the Indian democratic paradigm. India is a democratic society in form because of the mutual gravitational pull of disparate sections that make the whole. Therefore, the lesson to be learnt from the Emergency is that as long as the composite nature of Indian society survives, Indian democracy will survive. Hence, when attempts at seeking homogeneity of Indian society are carried beyond a point, it is dangerous for democracy, at least till we have reached a level of education when good men and women will dare to struggle for fundamental rights.

Edmund Burke had said: "For evil to triumph, good men must do nothing." India has to progress considerably before we can confront evil in our society head on. During the Emergency, those who were in a position to fight, with notable exceptions, did not. But,

today we do not even have giants like JP and Morarji to defend civil liberty. Mr. H. R. Khanna chose to forego his Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court rather than undermine judicially the concept of fundamental rights. Does anyone remember him? Further, luck too was on India's side then because Indira Gandhi decided to go for the polls. Had she not done so, it may have taken us a long time to unwind the Emergency.

Today, we are in a much weaker position than in 1975-77 to defend democracy. One reason is that the tall caste-neutral leaders of the Freedom Struggle are no more. Another reason is that a cadre-based fascist organisation is in control of the levers of power. This organisation has spawned lumpen front organisations, that do not hesitate to kill even defenceless missionaries of religion. Worse, there is every indication that institutions are

being undermined by a creeping Emergency. This is the second reason why the BJP plan to celebrate the struggle against the Emergency is ludicrous. The BJP has set into motion the overhaul of the Constitution not just a mere amendment to it. It has commenced the rewriting of history. Its sister front organisations such as the VHP and the Bajrang Dal are already unleashing eerie and shadowy terror at the micro level of society. How can the BJP then speak of defending democracy?

Thus, 25 years later we still cannot take democracy for granted nor put the challenge to it behind us. It is today invisibly under siege. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" said the American revolutionary Patrick Henry. Thus, those of us who can stand up, must do so now. That sums up the lesson of the Emergency in retrospect.

The Hindu, Tuesday, June 13, 2000 

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43rd Anniversary of Emergency: RSS Played Double-Game as Usual



Shamsul Islam

An internal Emergency was imposed on the country by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on June 25-26, 1975, and it lasted for 19 months. This period is considered as “dark times” for Indian democratic polity. Indira Gandhi claimed that due to Jaiprakash Narayan’s call to the armed forces to disobey the ‘illegal’ orders of Congress rulers had created a situation of anarchy and there was danger to the existence of Indian Republic so there was no alternative but to impose Emergency under article 352 of the Constitution.

RSS claims that it opposed Emergency promulgated by Indira Gandhi heroically and suffered immensely for resisting Emergency. But there are dozens of contemporary narratives which decry this claim of the RSS. We will be referring here to such two narratives by a veteran thinker and journalist of India, Prabhash Joshi and TV Rajeswar, former Intelligence Bureau [IB] chief who was the deputy chief of IB when Emergency was imposed. They recounted the days of Emergency (or state terrorism) when RSS surrendered to the repressive regime of Indira Gandhi, assured her and her son, Sanjay Gandhi to enforce faithfully the draconian 20-point programme announced by the Emergency regime. Large number of RSS cadres came out of jails by submitting MAAFINAMAAS (mercy petitions).

Despite all this betrayal thousands of RSS

cadres continue to get monthly pension for persecution during Emergency. The BJP ruled states like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra decided to award a monthly pension of Rs 10,000 to those who were jailed during the Emergency period for more than a month and Rs 5000 to those who were jailed for less than a month. This rule took care of the financial interest of those RSS cadres who might have submitted mercy letters completing only one or two months’ jail term. For securing such a fat pension there was no such condition that the beneficiary should have been in jail for the whole period of the Emergency.

Interestingly, in the case of anti-British freedom struggle there has not been even a single RSS cadre to claim the freedom fighter pension. It may be noted that nobody remembers hundreds of Communist youth, branded as Naxals who were killed in fake encounters during the Emergency. Interestingly, Shiv Sena, the Hindutva co-traveler of the RSS openly supported the Emergency.

The narrative by Prabhash Joshi appeared in the English weekly TEHELKA on the 25th anniversary of the Emergency.^[i] According to him even during the Emergency “there was always a lurking sense of suspicion, a distance, a discreet lack of trust” about RSS’ joining the anti-Emergency struggle. He went on to tell that “Balasaheb Deoras, then RSS chief, wrote a

letter to Indira Gandhi pledging to help implement the notorious 20-point programme of Sanjay Gandhi. This is the real character of the RSS... You can decipher a line of action, a pattern. Even during the Emergency, many among the RSS and Jana Sangh who came out of the jails, gave mafinamas (apologies). They were the first to apologise. Only their leaders remained in jail: Atal Behari Vajpayee, LK Advani, even Arun Jaitley. But the RSS did not fight the Emergency. So why is the BJP trying to appropriate that memory?"

Prabhash Joshi's conclusion was that "they are not a fighting force and they are never keen to fight. They are basically a compromising lot. They are never genuinely against the government".

TV Rajeswar, who served as Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim after his retirement from service, in his book, 'India: The Crucial Years' [Harper Collins] corroborated the fact that "Not only they (RSS) were supportive of this [Emergency], they wanted to establish contact apart from Mrs Gandhi, with Sanjay Gandhi also".^[ii] Rajeswar in an interview with Karan Thapar disclosed that Deoras "quietly established a link with the PM's house and expressed strong support for several steps taken to enforce order and discipline in the country. Deoras was keen to meet Mrs. Gandhi and Sanjay. But Mrs. Gandhi refused."^[iii]

According to Rajeswar's book, "RSS, a right-wing Hindu nationalist organisation, was banned in the wake of the Emergency. But its chief, Balasaheb Deoras, quietly established a link with the PM's house and expressed strong support to several steps taken to enforce order and discipline in the country. Sanjay Gandhi's concerted drive to enforce family planning, particularly among Muslims, had earned Deoras's approbation."^[iv]

Rajeswar also shared the fact that even after Emergency the "organization (RSS) had specifically conveyed its support to the Congress

in the post-emergency elections."^[v] It will be interesting to note that even according to **Subramanian Swamy** in the Emergency period, most of the senior leaders of RSS had betrayed the struggle against the Emergency.^[vi]

The contemporary documents in the RSS archives prove the narratives of Prabhash Joshi and Rajeswar truthful. The 3rd Supremo of RSS, Madhukar Dattatraya Deoras wrote the first letter to Indira Gandhi within two months of the imposition of Emergency. It was the time when state terror was running amok. In letter dated, August 22, 1975 he began with this praise of Indira:

"I heard your address to the nation which you delivered on August 15, 1975 from Red Fort on radio in jail [Yervada jail] with attention. your address was timely and balanced so I decided to write to you".^[vii]

Indira Gandhi did not respond to it. So Deoras wrote another letter to Indira on November 10, 1975. He began his letter with congratulating her on being cleared by the Supreme Court of disqualification which was ordered by the Allahabad High Court, "All the five Justices of the Supreme Court have declared your election constitutional, heartiest greetings for it." It is to be noted that opposition was firmly of the opinion that this judgment was 'managed' by Congress. In the course of the letter he declared that "RSS has been named in context of Jaiprakash Narayan's movement. The government has also connected RSS with Gujarat movement and Bihar movement without any reason... Sangh has no relation with these movements..."^[viii]

Since Indira Gandhi did not respond to this letter also, RSS chief got hold of Vinoba Bhave who supported the Emergency religiously and was a favourite of Indira Gandhi. In a letter dated January 12, 1976, he begged that Acharya should suggest the way that ban on RSS was removed.^[ix] Since Acharya too did not respond to Deoras letter, the latter in another letter without date wrote in desperation,

“According to press reports respected PM [Indira Gandhi] is going to meet you at Pavnar Ashram on January 24. At that time there will be discussion about the present condition of the country. I beg you to try to remove the wrong assumptions of PM about RSS so that ban on RSS is lifted and RSS members are released from jails. We are looking forward for the times when RSS and its members are able to contribute to the plans of progress which are being run in all the fields under the leadership of PM.”[x]

Riding the juggernaut of the rulers, specially the autocratic ones has been an old practice in RSS. It was the reason that no leader and cadre of RSS participated in the anti-colonial freedom struggle. In fact, the RSS worships brute force and totalitarianism. The most prominent

ideologue of the RSS, 2nd boss of the organization, Golwalkar decreed as back as 1940 that “The RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land.”[xi]

Recently, the former President of the Indian Republic, Pranab Mukherjee was invited by the RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat to be the chief guest at its graduation ceremony for the new recruits. Pranab Mukherjee was indicted as one of the top leaders of Congress for Emergency excesses. The tragedy of RSS is that India continues to be run under a democratic polity so its love for brazen power has to be balanced by double-game.

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Courtesy [Countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org), June 25, 2018 

The Radical Humanist on Website

‘The Radical Humanist’ is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India. Some of Roy’s important books are also available at that site.

- Mahi Pal Singh

Situation is like that of 1975 ; Emergency may re-emerge in another form! Let People be awake to preserve the civil liberties!

Gautam Thaker

Human Rights are the privileges and liberties of the citizens which is a distinct part or organ of human life. Those are the birth rights of a human being and cannot be construed as if it is conferred by the constitution of the country. Government often indulges into a swoop upon such rights. On the strength of its powers and authority it makes both, use and misuse of police force. Many such incidents have come to light after 1947 when attempts were made to violate human rights, freedom of thoughts, speech and the press. Be it 1975 or 2018, ruling regimes have endangered the civil liberties and human rights.

Since 25-06-1975, a spell of 43 years has elapsed since Emergency was clamped but its memories cannot be erased even to-day. At that time, under the leadership of Lok Nayak Jay Prakash Narayan, people had energetically fought against the emergency. Mistakes committed by Indira Gandhi and unrealistic economic policy adopted by her ultimately resulted into intolerable shortages of articles and inflation. In the decade of the 70's the Govt. had strangulated our economy by imposing various kinds of checks and controls. This had benefitted black-marketeers and corrupt people. The ruling party – Congress – had chocked the people by clamping emergency after seizing or capturing absolute and rampant powers. The condition of the common men had worsened so much due to fast rising inflation and unemployment that law and order situation had worsened to the point of collapse. Constant attacks were waged on the judiciary. Farmers, workers unions, civic societies had no freedom of expression. On the pretext of and in the name

of 'Emergency', leaders like Jay Prakash Narayan, Morarajee Desai and Atal Bihari Bajpayee were arrested and detained in the jail. Freedom of speech and personal liberty of leaders battling for civil liberties and human rights were snatched away and strategy was hedged to impose autocratic and authoritarian rule by chocking voice of dissent. Amendments in acts and constitution, including use of 'MISA' were effected to cow down political opponents and others.

Above situation is prevailing to-day in the year 2018 as though 'Undeclared Emergency' has been imposed in the shadowy form of the former Emergency. To-day, the ideology of autocratic rule and fascist forces has begun to establish its hold. Efforts for establishing autocratic rule have been made by taking recourse to military regime and by violation of personal freedom of individual and speech. Arbitrary, anti-people and autocratic approach of the Govt. is distressing pro-democracy citizens. Everywhere, freedom of speech, writing and expression are being infringed. Nowhere freedom is tangible, where the people can express their voice. In the democratic country, it appears as though atmosphere of fear and terror has become dominant. On the economic front, vacuum has emerged on account of demonetization and imposition of GST.

Systematic efforts are being made for harassing the activists struggling for defending, preserving and promotion of human rights. Activists working for human rights by risking their lives are being branded as guilty of treason. Systematic attacks are being made by the Police

on the whistle blower, peaceful demonstrators and Human Rights activists. Any voice of protest or dissent is termed as anti-national and perilous. Negative treatment is being meted out towards poor people, farmers, have-nots and all the classes battling for their legitimate rights. Attempts by activists to voice the problems facing the different classes of the society are being mercilessly crushed. Our stalwart colleague and Senior Advocate Girishbhai Patel has rightly pronounced that “Modi’s model is of joblessness, ruthlessness, voiceless and futureless.”

For the sake of freedom of our future generation, its esteem, security and for defense

of democracy, prudent, educated, foresighted, practicable and reality minded citizens need to shake off their differences and should unite together irrespective of any party affiliations. There is a need for all-out efforts by all the democratically minded citizens to get united to forestall any kind of dictatorship. There is a strong need on the part of non-partisan and concerned citizens to take up the task of keeping at bay emergency by educating our illiterate masses, awakening and uniting them, in the coming days.

Gautam Thaker is National President, Indian Radical Humanist Association and General Secretary, PUCL Gujarat 

Why I am resigning from the BJP: A Narendra Modi supporter and party campaign analyst explains

Shivam Shankar Singh

‘The real negative of this government is how it has affected the national discourse with a well considered strategy. This isn’t a failure, it’s the plan.’

Political discourse is at its lowest point in the country, at least in my lifetime. The partisanship bias is unbelievable and people continue to support their side no matter what the evidence, there is no remorse even when they are proved to have been spreading fake news. This is something that everyone – the parties and the voters and supporters are to be blamed for.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has done a great job at spreading some specific messages with incredibly effective propaganda, and these messages are the primary reason that I can not support the party anymore. But before we get into any of that, I would like everyone to understand that no party is totally bad, and no party is totally good. All governments have done some good and messed up on some fronts. This government is no different.

The Good

1. **Road construction** is faster than it was earlier. There has been a change in methodology of counting road length, but even factoring that in, it seems to be faster.
2. **Electricity connections increased** . All villages are electrified and people getting electricity for more hours. (The Congress did electrify over five lakh villages and Modi government finished the job by connecting the last 18,000 – so, you can weigh the achievement as you like. Similarly the number of hours people get electricity has increased ever since independence, but it might be a larger increase during the BJP).
3. **Upper level corruption** is

reduced. No huge cases at the ministerial level as of now (but the same was true of UPA I). Lower level seems to be about the same with increased amounts, no one seems to be able to control the thanedar, patwari et al.

4. **Swachh Bharat Mission is a definite success.** More toilets built than before and Swachhta or cleanliness is something embedded in people's minds now.
5. **The UJJWALA Yojana is a great initiative.** Even though it remains to be seen how many people buy the second cylinder. The first one and a stove was free, but now people need to pay for additional cylinders. The cost of cylinders has almost doubled since the government took over and now one costs more than Rs 800.
6. **Connectivity for the North East** has undoubtedly increased. More trains, roads, flights and, most importantly, the region is now discussed in the mainstream news channels.
7. **Law and order** is reportedly better than it was under regional parties.

Feel free to add other achievements you can think of in your responses. Also, achievements necessarily have caveats, while failures are absolute.

The Bad

It takes decades and centuries to build systems and nations, the biggest failure I see in the BJP is that it has destroyed some great things on very flimsy grounds.

1. **Electoral Bonds.** They basically legalise corruption and allow corporates and foreign powers to simply buy over our political parties. The bonds are anonymous so if a corporate promises to give an electoral bond of Rs 1,000 crore for passing a specific policy, there can be no prosecution. There just is no way to establish quid pro quo with an

anonymous instrument. This also explains how corruption is reduced at the ministerial level – it is not per file or order, it is now like the USA – at the policy level.

2. **Planning Commission Reports**. They used to be a major source for data. They audited government schemes and stated how things were going. With that gone, there just is no choice but to believe whatever data the government gives you (The Comptroller and Auditor General of India audits come out after a long time). The NITI Aayog doesn't have this mandate and is basically a think tank and public relations agency. Plan/Non-Plan distinction could have been removed without removing the planning commission audit reports.
3. **Misuse of Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate.** These are being used for political purposes as far as I can see. But even if they are not, the fear that these institutions will be unleashed if anyone speaks up against anything related to Narendra Modi or Amit Shah is real. This is enough to kill dissent, an integral component of democracy.
4. **Failure to investigate** Kalikho Pul's suicide note, Judge Loya's death, Sohrabuddin murder and the defence of an MLA accused of rape whose relative is accused of killing the girl's father and a first information report was not registered for over a year.
5. **Demonetisation.** It failed, but worse is the BJP's inability to accept that it failed. All propaganda of it cutting terror funding, reducing cash, eliminating corruption is just absurd. It also killed off businesses.
6. **Goods and services tax implementation.** It was implemented in

a hurry and harmed business. Complicated structure, multiple rates on different items, complex filing... Hopefully it will stabilise in time, but it did cause harm. Failure to acknowledge that from the BJP is extremely arrogant.

7. **The messed up foreign policy with pure grandstanding.** China has a port in Sri Lanka and huge interests in Bangladesh and Pakistan – we are surrounded. The failure in Maldives (Indian workers not getting visas anymore because of India's foreign policy debacle) while Modiji goes out to foreign countries and keeps saying Indians had no respect in the world before 2014 and now they're supremely respected. (This is nonsense. Respect for Indians in foreign countries was a direct result of our growing economy and Information and Technology sector, it hasn't improved an ounce because of Modiji. It might even have declined due to beef-based lynchings, threats to journalists et cetera)
8. **Failure of schemes and failure to acknowledge/course correct.** Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, Make In India, Skill Development, Fasal Bima (look at reimbursements – the government is lining the pockets of insurance companies). Failure to acknowledge unemployment and farmers crisis – calling every real issue an opposition stunt.
9. **The high prices of Petrol and Diesel.** Modiji and all the BJP ministers plus supporters criticised the Congress for it heavily and now all of them justify the high prices even though crude is cheaper than it was then. Just unacceptable.
10. **Failure to engage with the most important basic issues.** Education and Healthcare. There is just nothing on education which is the nation's biggest failure. Quality of government schools has deteriorated over the decades (ASER reports) and no action. They did nothing on Healthcare for four years, then Ayushman Bharat was announced – that scheme scares me more than nothing being done. Insurance schemes have a terrible track record and this is going the US route, which is a terrible destination for healthcare (watch *Sicko* by Michael Moore)

You can add some and subtract some based on personal understanding of the issue, but this is my assessment. The Electoral Bonds thing is huge and hopefully the Supreme Court will strike it down. Every government has some failures and some bad decisions though, the bigger issue I have is more on morals than anything else.

The Ugly

The real negative of this government is how it has affected the national discourse with a well considered strategy. This isn't a failure, it's the plan.

1. **It has discredited the media,** so now every criticism is brushed off as a journalist who didn't get paid by the BJP or is on the payrolls of the Congress. I know several journalists for whom the allegation can't be true, but more importantly no one ever addresses the accusation or complaint –they just attack the person raising the issue and ignore the issue itself.
2. **It has peddled a narrative that nothing happened in India in 70 years.** This is patently false and the mentality is harmful to the nation. This government spent over Rs 4,000 crore of our taxpayer money on advertisements and now that will become the trend. Do small works and huge branding. He isn't the first one to build roads – some of the best roads I have travelled on were pet

projects of Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav. India became an IT powerhouse from the 1990s. It is easy to measure past performance and berate past leaders based on the circumstances of today – take just one example of that: **Why did the Congress not build toilets in 70 years? They couldn't even do something so basic.**

This argument sounds logical and I believed it too, until I started reading India's history. When we gained independence in 1947 we were an extremely poor country, we did not have the resources for even basic infrastructure – and no capital. To counteract this, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru went down the socialist path and created public sector undertakings. We had no capacity to build steel, so with the help of Russians the Heavy Engineering Corporation at Ranchi was set up that made machines to make steel in India – without this we would have no steel, and consequently no infrastructure. That was the agenda – basic industries and infrastructure. We had frequent droughts (famines or *aakaals* as they used to be called) every two-three years and a large number of people starved to death. The priority was to feed the people, toilets were a luxury no one cared about. The Green Revolution happened and the food shortages disappeared by the 1990s – now we have a surplus problem. The toilet situation is exactly like people asking 25 years from now why Modi could not make all houses in India air conditioned. That seems like a luxury today, toilets were also a luxury at some point of time. Maybe things could have happened sooner, maybe 10–15 years ago, but that nothing happened in 70 years is a horrible

lie to peddle.

3. **The spread of and reliance on Fake News.** There is some anti-BJP fake news too, but the pro-BJP and anti-opposition fake news outstrips that by miles in number and in reach. Some of it is from supporters, but a lot of it comes from the party. It is often hateful and polarising, which makes it even worse. The online news portals backed by this government are damaging society more than we know.
4. **Hindu khatre mein hai** . They have ingrained it into the minds of people that Hindus and Hinduism are in danger, and that Modi is the only option to save ourselves. In reality, the Hindus have been living the same lives much before this government and nothing has changed except people's mindset. Were we Hindus in danger in 2007? At least I didn't hear about it everyday and I see no improvement in the condition of Hindus, just more fear mongering and hatred.
5. **Speak against the government and you're anti-National and, more recently, anti-Hindu.** Legitimate criticism of the government is shut up with this labelling. Prove your nationalism, sing Vande Mataram everywhere (even though the BJP leaders don't know the words themselves, they will force you to sing it). I'm a proud nationalist and my nationalism won't allow me to let anyone force me to showcase it. I will sing the national anthem and national song with pride when the occasion calls for it, or when I feel like it, but I won't let anyone force me to sing it based on their whims.
6. **Running news channels that are owned by the BJP leaders** whose sole job is to debate Hindu-Muslim, National-Antinational, India-Pakistan and derail the public discourse from issues and logic into

polarising emotions. You all know exactly which ones, and you all even know the debaters who are being rewarded for spewing the vilest propaganda.

7. **The polarisation** . The message of development is gone. The BJP's strategy for the next election is polarisation and inciting pseudo-nationalism. Modiji has basically said it himself in speeches – Jinnah; Nehru; Congress leaders didn't meet Bhagat Singh in jail (fake news from the prime minister himself!); Congress leaders met leaders in Pakistan to defeat Modi in Gujarat; Yogi's speech on how Maharana Pratap was greater than Akbar; JNU students are anti-national they'll #TukdeTukdeChurChur India – this is all propaganda constructed for a very specific purpose – polarise and win elections – it isn't the stuff I want to be hearing from my leaders and I refuse to follow anyone who is willing to let the nation burn in riots for political gain.

These are just some of the instances of how the BJP is pushing the national discourse in a dark corner. This isn't something I signed up for and it totally isn't something I can support. That is why I am resigning from the BJP.

Post Script: I supported the BJP since 2013

because Narendra Modiji seemed like a ray of hope for India and I believed in his message of development . But that message and the hope are now both gone. The negatives of this Narendra Modi and Amit Shah government now outweigh the positives for me, but that is a decision that every voter needs to make individually. Just know that history and reality are complicated. Buying into simplistic propaganda and espousing cult-like unquestioning faith are the worst thing you can do – it is against the interests of democracy and of this nation.

You all have your own decisions to make as the elections approach. Best of luck with that. My only hope is that we can all live and work harmoniously together – and contribute towards making a better, stronger, poverty-free and developed India, no matter what party or ideology we support. Always remember that there are good people on both sides, the voter needs to support them and they need to support each other even when they are in different parties.

Shivam Shankar Singh was a senior research fellow at India Foundation and handled data analytics for the BJP's poll campaigns in the Northeast. This piece first appeared on medium.com and has been very lightly edited for style. 

Power Hedged by Safeguards

It is useless to trust in the virtue of some individual or set of individuals. There must be power, either that of governments, or even ordinary criminals. But if human life is to be, for the mass of mankind, anything better than a dull misery punctuated with moments of sharp horror, there must be as little naked power as possible. The exercise of power, if it is to be something better than the infliction of wanton torture, must be hedged round by safeguards of law and custom, permitted only after due deliberation, and entrusted to men who are closely supervised in the interests of those who are subjected to them.

Bertrand Russel in Power

VHP members vandalise Taj Mahal's west gate, say it blocks path to a 400-year-old Shiva temple

A video footage of the incident shows VHP workers with hammers and iron rods trying to vandalise the western entrance of the Taj Mahal (on Basai Ghat) even as they removed the turnstile gate installed by the ASI.



A group of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) members tried to vandalise the west gate of the Taj Mahal on Sunday alleging that the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) is blocking the way to a 400-year-old Shiva temple while constructing a closed area for the Taj Mahal.

A video footage of the incident shows VHP workers with hammers and iron rods trying to vandalise the western entrance of the Taj Mahal (on Basai Ghat) even as they removed the turnstile gate installed by the ASI. The right-wing activists were also raising slogans against them. However, police said there's an optional path to the Siddheshwar Mahadev Temple on the Basai Ghat, but the right-wing members weren't satisfied with the explanation.

Meanwhile, after the ASI lodged a complaint, an FIR was registered on the same day against five members of the VHP and the 20-25 of their unidentified associates for rioting, assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty and under the section 7 of Criminal Law Amendment Act and section of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

"On Sunday around 25-30 activists from the VHP came near the western gate of the Taj Mahal and started vandalizing the newly installed turnstile gate for ticket collection for Taj Mahal and Saheli ka Burj. The protesters had hammers and iron rods with them. They removed the gate and threw it some around 50 metres from there. Soon the Taj safety police team reached there and stopped them from vandalising more

property," Taj Safety circle officer (CO) Prabhat Kumar said.

The FIR was later registered against VHP members Ravi Dubey, Madan Verma, Mohit Sharma, Niranjan Singh Rathore and Gulla and 20-25 other unidentified VHP members. No arrests have been made so far.

Talking to the Indian Express, VHP *Brij Prant Vishesh Sampark Pramukh Ravi Dubey* said they took this step as the ASI is removing all things related to the Hindu culture in and around the UNESCO World Heritage monument.

"Till around 15 years ago, there used to be satsang at the Saheli ka Burj on the western gate but it was stopped. Dussehra fair was also stopped near Taj Mahal. Earlier people used to celebrate Amla Nawami here inside the Taj Mahal premises near an Amla tree. That tree was also cut down by the ASI. There were so many other things people used to do here, but it all ended around 14-15 years ago during the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party rule. We cannot let this happen," Dubey said.

He further added that while the ASI is claiming there's an optional way to the temple, there's only a narrow path on which people can't even walk properly. On their future course of action, Dubey said the district administration is in talks with the ASI and they're hoping that the issue would soon be sorted out.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**,
June 21, 2018. 

RTI: Bank With Amit Shah as Director Collected Highest Amount of Banned Notes Among Coop Banks

The Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank secured deposits of Rs 745.59 crore of the spiked notes – in just five days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the demonetisation announcement.

Mumbai: A district cooperative bank, which has Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Amit Shah as a director, netted the highest deposits among such banks of old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes that were abruptly demonetised on November 8, 2016, according to RTI replies received by a Mumbai activist.

The Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank (ADCB) secured deposits of Rs 745.59 crore of the spiked notes – in just five days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the demonetisation announcement. All the district cooperative banks were banned from accepting deposits of the banned currency notes from the public after November 14, 2016 – five days after demonetisation – on fears that black money would be laundered through this route.

According to the bank's website, Shah continues to be a director with the bank and has been in that position for several years. He was also the bank's chairman in 2000. ADCB's total deposits on March 31, 2017, were Rs 5,050 crore and its net profit for 2016-17 was Rs 14.31 crore.

Right behind ADCB, is the Rajkot District Cooperative Bank, whose chairman Jayeshbhai Vitthalbhai Radadiya is a cabinet minister in Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani's government. It got deposits of old currencies worth Rs 693.19 crore.

Interestingly, Rajkot is the hub of Gujarat BJP politics – Modi was first elected from there as a legislator in 2001.

Incidentally, the figures of Ahmedabad-Rajkot DCCBs are much higher than the apex Gujarat State Cooperative Bank Ltd, which got deposits

of a mere Rs 1.11 crore.

“The amount of deposits made in the State Cooperative Banks (SCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) – revealed under RTI for first time since demonetisation – are astounding,” Manoranjan S. Roy, the RTI activist who made the effort to get the information, told IANS.

The RTI information was given by the Chief General Manager and Appellate Authority, S. Saravanavel, of the National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD).

It has also come to light, through the RTI queries, that only seven public sector banks (PSBs), 32 SCBs, 370 DCCBs, and a little over three-dozen post offices across India collected Rs 7.91 lakh crore — more than half (52 per cent) of the total amount of old currencies of Rs 15.28 lakh crore deposited with the RBI.

The break-up of Rs 7.91 lakh crore mentioned in the RTI replies shows that the value of spiked notes deposited with the RBI by the seven PSBs was Rs 7.57 lakh crore, the 32 SCBs gave in Rs 6,407 crore and the 370 DCCBs brought in Rs 22,271 crore. Old notes deposited by 39 post offices were worth Rs 4,408 crore.

Information from all the SCBs and DCCBs across India were received through the replies. The seven PSBs account for around 29,000 branches – out of the over 92,500 branches of the 21 PSBs in India – according to data published by the RBI. The 14 other PSBs declined to give information on one ground or the other. There are around 155,000 post offices in the country.

Fifteen months after demonetisation, the

government had announced that Rs 15.28 Lakh crore – or 99% of the cancelled notes worth Rs 15.44 lakh crore – were returned to the RBI treasury.

Roy said it was a serious matter if only a few banks and their branches and a handful post offices, apart from SCBs and DCCBs, accounted for over half the old currency notes.

“At this rate, serious questions arise about the actual collection of spiked notes through the remaining 14 mega-PSBs, besides rural-urban banks, private banks (like ICICI, HDFC and others), local cooperatives, Jankalyan Banks and credit cooperatives and other entities with banking licenses, the figures of which are not made available under RTI,” he said.

The SCBs were allowed to exchange or take deposits of banned notes till December 30, 2016 — for a little over seven weeks, in contrast to district cooperative banks which were allowed only five days of transactions.

The prime minister during his demonetisation speech had said that Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes could be deposited in bank or post office accounts from November 10 till close of banking hours on December 30, 2016, without any limit. “Thus you will have 50 days to deposit your notes and there is no need for panic,” he had said.

After an uproar, mostly from BJP allies, the government also opened a small window in mid-2017, during the presidential elections, allowing the 32 SCBs and 370 DCCBs – largely owned, managed or controlled by politicians of various parties – to deposit their stocks of the spiked notes with the RBI. The move was strongly criticised by the Congress and other major Opposition parties.

Among the SCBs, the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank topped the list of depositors with Rs 1,128 crore from 55 branches and the smallest share of Rs 5.94 crore came from just five branches of Jharkhand State Cooperative Bank, according to the replies.

Surprisingly, the Andaman & Nicobar State Cooperative Bank’s share (from 29 branches) was Rs 85.76 crore.

While Maharashtra has a population of 12 crore, Jharkhand’s population is 3.6 crore. Andaman & Nicobar Islands have less than four lakh residents.

The poorest of all the cooperative banks in the country is Banki Central Cooperative Bank Ltd in Odisha, which admitted to receiving zero deposits of the spiked currency.

Of the total 21 PSBs, State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Bank of Maharashtra, Central Bank of India, Dena Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Punjab & Sindh Bank, Vijaya Bank, Andhra Bank, Syndicate Bank, UCO Bank, United Bank of India, Oriental Bank of Commerce, and IDBI Bank (14 banks) — with over 63,500 branches amongst them — did not give any information on deposits.

Nabard mounts defence of bank

In a spirited and curious defence of ADCB, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), India’s apex institution for rural economy credit, noted that all the bank accounts into which the demonetised notes were deposited were verified and checked to see if they had complied with ‘know-your-customer’ (KYC) regulations.

“NABARD conducted 100 % verification in Ahmedabad DCCB which revealed that the bank had complied with all the KYC Guidelines of the RBI while accepting the demonetised notes,” it said in a statement released on Friday afternoon.

“As per the verification report of NABARD, required under the extant guidelines, the bank had also submitted the required Cash Transaction Reports (CTR) and STRs to FIU-India wherever required,” it added.

The agricultural and rural institution also curiously makes two other points in defence of ADCB.

Firstly, it notes that district central cooperative

banks in Gujarat received less demonetised notes when compared to their counterparts in Kerala and Maharashtra.

Secondly, it notes that the amount of money that was deposited in the days after demonetisation in ADCB was in complete “proportion to the size and number of accounts in the bank”.

“Of the total 16 lakh accounts with the DCCB, deposits/ exchanges were made only by 1.60 lakh customers i.e. 9.37% of the total deposit accounts,” NABARD’s statement notes.

Out of these 1.60 lakh customers, less than Rs 2.5 lakh was deposited in 98.66% of the

accounts. Out of the bank’s total accounts, 0.09% of accounts saw deposits above Rs 2.5 lakh made.

“The average deposit amount in Ahmedabad DCCB was Rs. 46,795 which was lower than average per depositor in 18 DCCBs of Gujarat. During this intervening period 1.60 lakh customers of the bank deposited/ exchanged demonetised notes aggregating to Rs 746 crore which was only about 15 % of total deposits of the bank,” the statement emphasises.

Note: This article has been updated with NABARD’s response.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 22 June 2018. 

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Can We Rely on Them?

Jawaharlal Jasthi

When Mr. Yadyurappa took oath as Chief Minister of Karnataka all of us were worried that democracy is murdered in spite of the fact that he represents the party that has obtained highest number of seats in the Assembly. Of course, the number is less than half of the total number of members in the Assembly. He has to seek support of members from other parties to stay in power which is condemned as horse-trading as we consider it immoral. At the crucial moment the other two parties that occupy the second and third places in the Assembly by the number they got, announced joining hands to make majority and form a stable government without horse trading. The so-called democrats heaved a sigh of relief and supported the step wholeheartedly as they consider the government of BJP as a fascist government. Everybody is in a mood to ensure formation of coalition between all the other parties to defeat the fascist forces at national level as well.

But now it is nearly two weeks since the new Chief Minister took oath of office but could not form a government of his own. In normal situations the person named as Chief Minister has the prerogative to take persons of his choice to his cabinet. But this is a coalition and the Chief Minister will have to go in consultation with the partner in his government. In such cases we expect the partner parties to nominate the members of their party to join the cabinet. The Congress party has less than eighty members in the Assembly and entitled to name twenty members to the cabinet. In spite of it they are not able to finalise the names even after two weeks of discussions and consultations. It seems there is a lot of bargain going on proving that they are trying to share the spoils of power. That is the real attraction for the political parties to contest elections. That also forms the weakness of coalitions. But that is the lesser evil than going

into the hands of fascist parties. The delay in the process proves that the parties in coalition are not true to their allegiance to democracy. They are more particular about the share of power. There are also rumors that the other party wants Chief Ministership half way. It could make the coalition less effective if not ineffective. Those who supported the coalition enthusiastically, are now worried they may have to eat the humble pie.

There is reason to believe that the same scenario is going to be played even at national level. All the minor parties announce their intention to join hands to defeat the BJP. It is welcome if it happens. But again they find it difficult to find a leader to form the government ultimately. Joining hands to fight an identified enemy will not stand unless there is something positive between them to stay together. If that something is only to share the spoils of power, it is bound to fail early. There are indications that the leaders of those parties are interested more in sharing the loot than serving any ideology like democracy. Exploitation of the position for personal benefits is their nature as proved in the case of Chief Ministers of UP.

Whether it is a privilege or a statutory right the Chief Minister of any state is given a posh bungalow for his residence to occupy as long as he remains in that position. It is in recognition of some peculiar conditions that he has to face while in office. It is expected that he would leave the premises once he ceases to hold that office. But in the case of the state of Uttar Pradesh there are six Chief Ministers who are in occupation of their bungalows for decades after ceasing to be Chief Ministers. They claimed it as a matter of right for them. One NGO Lok Prahari took up the issue and had to go to the court to get the rules clarified. Even when the courts declared that they are in illegal occupation, they did not vacate.

They prevailed on the state government to

appeal to the Supreme Court to declare that the occupations are legal and a right on their part. But the Supreme Court did not agree. Even then they did not relent. They again prevailed on the state government to amend the state Act to provide for lifelong occupation of those buildings by the ex-Chief Ministers. But the Supreme Court again declared it illegal and gave fifteen days to vacate the buildings. At that stage two of the dignitaries read the writings on the wall and felt it better to vacate. They are no less persons than the Home Minister in the Central government Mr. Rajnath Singh and the governor of Rajasthan Mr. Kalyan Singh. Why did they stay in the government house so many decades after ceasing to be Chief Ministers? Don't they have a house of their own to go? Does it require two decisions of the Supreme Court to bring it to their senses? We must be thankful to them for obliging now at least.

There are two gentlemen of Samajwadi Party, father and son, who refuse to vacate even after the Supreme Court orders. They want time of two years to vacate. Don't they have houses of their own to go? Even if they do not have, does it take so much time to find a suitable house? Don't they have means to pay for the house? One of them claims that his own house will not accommodate his security staff and he has to stay in the government house for that purpose. It is not clear how long the government has to provide security to the occupants of political posts under the constitution. If the position is so risky it is not clear why they are so crazy to occupy those positions at all making herculean efforts and spending crores of rupees. The head of Bahujan Samaj Party declared the house occupied by her as a memorial to her mentor so that the state government should think twice before taking back the bungalow. By that she expects to have right of residing therein as long as she likes, which is forever. It is clear that by herself she has no right to make such appropriation.

The other prominent leader that wants to lead the national coalition is Mamata Banerjee of

Trinamul Congress now ruling the state of West Bengal. She attends the swearing in of the Chief Minister of Karnataka. Unfortunately there was heavy rain while she was on way to the venue in Bangalore and she was held up in a traffic jam. The hosts sent a person no less than the DGP of the state to look after her facility. The DGP humbly suggested that the traffic is likely to take some time and it may be considered whether to walk to the venue as it is not that far. In fact Mayavati and Kejriwal, who were in the same situation, did the same. But Miss Banerjee took offence to it and complained to the hosts. Naturally they have to take cognizance of the complaint by an honored guest and obliged to take action against the officer.

It shows that these political parties are groups of power mongers and consist of gangsters who join hands to share the benefits of controlling public property irrespective of rules and regulations. Instead of following rules they do not hesitate to change the rules to justify whatever they want to do. There were different parties in power during the period of illegal occupation of government houses by the ex-chief ministers. But all of them supported the occupation and amended the Act to make it legitimate. All said and done, it has to be accepted that among all the political parties that are now in India, it is only the Communist parties that have some scruples. You may not agree with their principles and with what they do and say. But you cannot deny they go by their principles, unlike the other parties that have no principle except self-aggrandizement.

The point is that we have to depend on these leaders to ensure democracy after the elections in 2019. Obviously democracy is in a desperate condition. The question is – whether we can rely on them to save it. Can we do anything else to help the situation?

Jawaharlal Jasthi

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30 May, 2018 

Increasing Divisiveness : Modi Sarkar's Communal agenda

Ram Puniyani

The coming to power of Modi in 2014 gave a signal to the so called fringe groups that now it is their Government and they can get away with their hate speeches and action with ease. It was a total uninhibited show by the RSS Combine as far as spreading hatred, the foundation of violence, is concerned. While even during previous UPA regime, RSS combines leader lead in Hate speech, now it is a total dominance of theirs' in matters of spreading hate. The NDTV report is very revealing on the matter.

"90% of hateful comments made during the NDA's current terms are by BJP politicians. During the NDA period, a total of 44 political leaders made hateful comments. Of them, 34 politicians, or 77%, are from the BJP. 10 leaders, or 23% of the offenders, are from other political parties, including the Congress, the Samajwadi Party and Lalu Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal." The communal issues were regularly thrown up. Vinay Katiyar of BJP said temple has to be built up in Ayodhya. He said this at a time when the matters are lying in the court. On similar lines RSS Supremo Mohan Bhagwat has been declaring that the temple will be built in his life time.

The incidents of mob lynching in the name of Cow, beef have been skyrocketing. While Mohammad Ikhlaq and Junaid are few names stuck in the memory; there are many, who have been attacked by hysterical mobs on the pretexts of skinning, killing, trading cows. The statistics of IndiaSpend@ shows these acts of violence have gone up with Modi sarkar. According to the data collected by IndiaSpend, based on the content analysis of media reporting, "Muslims were the target of 51% of violence centred on bovine issues over nearly eight years (2010 to 2017) and comprised 86% of 28 Indians killed

in 63 incidents. As many of 97 per cent of these attacks were reported after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in May 2014, and about half the cow-related violence — 32 of 63 cases — were from states governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), recorded until June 25, 2017."

The emotive issues related to Nationalism have been dominating the scene. Mohan Bhagwat of RSS said early March 2016 that "Now the time has come when we have to tell the new generation to chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' (Hail Mother India). There is no such slogan in our Constitution, while some prefer to follow the slogan, Jai Hind, without any reservation.

The issue of love jihad has been taking horrible turn. On December 6, 2017; gruesome murder of a poor Muslim laborer Ifrazul Khan, shook the nation. His killer Shambhul Regar not only hacked him to death, burnt him, got the whole incident videotaped and uploaded it. Killing of Afrazul by Shambhul Regar has been inspired by the social media propaganda about love jihad by divisive forces and shows the brutality to which hate created by this ideology can penetrate the vitals of society. Regar has support from sections of society and funds were raised for his family which shows that the degree of hate is not superficial. It is making deeper inroads with the all pervading Hindu nationalism. PUCL report on the incident says that Shambhul was "a clone of the RSS hate factory and indulged in the gruesome hate crime." Frightened by the crime many Bengali immigrants have left for their state.

In the case of conversions to Hinduism in Agra (10 December 2014) nearly 350 pavement dwellers-rag pickers and other destitute sections were promised that if they participate in the

religious function they will be given the ration card and BPL cards. This was done by the Bajrang Dal activist and the *Hindu Janjagriti Samiti* both outfits affiliated to RSS. The process is part of *Ghar Vapasi campaign*.

In a subtle encouragement to the criminals the Prime Minister has been generally keeping quiet for a long time on 'hate crimes' and then blurts bland statement which in a way does not reprimand the criminals, who are inspired by his own ideology. On completion of six months in power, Yogi Government brought out a brochure related to the tourism development. The booklet omits to mention the biggest tourist spot of UP Taj Mahal. Some leaders of BJP went on to label Taj Mahal as a symbol of foreign rule and a shame on Nation.

The issue of film Padmavati was very curious. Even before the film was released there were protests, even without seeing the film. It was said that film is an insult to Rajput honor. As such the film is based on a novel, a fiction, Padmavat. Padmavati is not a historical character she is creation of fiction. Fact is; the film distorts the presentation of Khilji, who is shown to be a barbarian, running after women and devoid of culture, while historical accounts tell us he was a cultured king, who not only built

Hauz Khas but also streamlined the market mechanism of trade in Delhi.

As hate speech and statements related to history, which demonize Muslims, is on the rise, the communal violence also went up, showing this in year 2017, which saw a rise of 17%, (from 703 incidences in 2016 to 822 in 2017). Kasganj violence came as a new pattern of instigating violence. A group of ABVP-VHP workers entered the Muslim locality armed with weapons, shouting 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and giving anti Pakistan slogans. They wanted the Muslims, who were celebrating Republic Day to make way for their rally to pass through that narrow lane and violence followed. Similarly the Kathua rape and murder will remain a matter of deep shame. Here in addition to the patriarchal notion, communalism was the factor.

The assertiveness of so called fringe groups, the increasing hate speech, is leading to an atmosphere where the sense of insecurity among the religious minorities has gone up. The appeal of Archbishop of Delhi Couto to observe fast is just a small reflection of the sense of helpless, which the minorities are perceiving with Modi Sarkar, which is pursuing its agenda of *Hindu Rashtra*. 

Reader's Comments :

Dear Varmaji & Mahi Palji,

Got the most recent RH (April 2018) and reading every page. Some very good articles. I wish I could contact some of those people. Good editorial. Good selections.

Tripura story is fascinating. How did they accomplish what the article says? Any mention of ROY and RH?

A few weeks ago, I read in NY Times, an eight year girl was raped and killed in Kashmir. Modi, apparently, did not say a word. What country are we living in?

*My warmest regards,
Kamesh Wali*

From the Archives :

Humanist Approach to Elections

M.N. Roy

Talk delivered by M.N. Roy at Guntur in the winter of 1949. It is a chapter from the book "Politics, Power and Parties" (Published by Indian Renaissance Institute). It has relevance today [Editor]

The fundamental principle of New Humanism is to revive the old idea of the sovereignty of the human individual. According to it, every political organisation or social and economic institution must be judged by its ability to help the development of the individual human personality of the people who live under those institutions. The freedom of any social system is to be judged by the actual degree of freedom that its individual members enjoy. A social philosophy which sets up any other standards to measure progress and freedom is misleading, and can be of no use to solve the crisis of our time.

During the last quarter of a century – a period exceptional in history because during that short time the world was plunged into two cataclysmic world wars and experienced other world-shaking events – political theories and social philosophies with their metaphysical sanction have been put to the acid test and failed to stand that test. The experience has led to a universal movement for a humanist revival, a movement which calls for a rebirth of man as the sovereign entity, as the measure of all things, as the root of mankind and the highest outcome of the entire history of evolution.

In order to see to what extent this humanist philosophy can be practised, we should apply the test in our own country. For a generation and more, India has been struggling to gain the opportunity for internal reconstruction in a way which would promote the progress and prosperity and ensure the freedom of its inhabitants. That struggle has at last resulted in success. National independence has been

attained. This is a historical event which opens a new chapter in the history of India. Having thus gained the opportunity of taking our destiny in our own hands and shaping it according to our own desire and needs, we must now see how we shall best accomplish this task imposed on us by history.

A Constitution of a Republic, of a parliamentary democracy has been framed. But to frame a Constitution is easy enough. That comparative easy part of the task having been accomplished, we shall now have to see whether this Constitution can be worked in our country.

Social institutions are made by the men constituting society, whereas a Constitution can be made by a few learned individuals. But any social institution, however good and idealistic it may be conceived, is brought down to the general cultural and intellectual level of the people of a country. A democratic Constitution can be worked in an atmosphere where the democratic way of life is appreciated. A conscious will to freedom, the desire to take destiny in your own hands, a sense of responsibility and ability to judge what is good and what is wrong and to examine critically the promises and programmes put before the people by parties and politicians – these are the preconditions for a successful democracy. If we take a realistic view of the situation in our country, then we must regretfully come to the conclusion that, whatever be the letter and the spirit of our new Constitution, the prevailing atmosphere is not conducive to a democratic society.

Confronted with the situation, what are we to do? There is a simple attitude, which is actually taken up by many people, trying to make a virtue of our handicaps. According to this attitude, the intellectual backwardness and cultural stagnation, the authoritarian mentality, blind faith and hero-worship, all these various features of our national psychological make-up, are interpreted as so many indications of a special Indian Genius. It is suggested that the western way of life, including parliamentary democracy, cannot and should not be attempted on the Indian soil, and India must have a government, a State, and a social system corresponding to her special "spiritual" genius.

A little analysis will reveal the real significance of this point of view. It is this: since the cultural atmosphere and mentality of India, or at least of the large bulk of the Indian population, have not risen to the level where democratic practice is possible, since it belongs rather to the 16th if not the 15th century of world history, it is quite natural that 20th century political institutions cannot be established in that atmosphere. Therefore, it is argued, the political institutions of by-gone days would be more suitable for India than those evolve in Europe in modern times.

In a way, that is right. But it is retrograde and reactionary to approve and glorify this deplorable state of affairs. For one reason or another, culturally and intellectually, the vast bulk of the Indian people has not progressed from the point where Europe found herself in the 15th and 16th century. Therefore, the advocates of India's "special genius" argue: don't try to introduce modern political institutions into this mediaeval atmosphere, but let us glorify medievalism and give India the equivalent of mediaeval institutions. This may be interpreted as love of tradition and patriotism, but is is certainly not a progressive ideal. It would take the Indian people farther away from the goal of freedom. Therefore,

we shall have to see if democracy cannot after all be worked in our country, because it is the only political philosophy based on individual freedom.

A critical attitude towards democracy, doubts and scepticism about the possibility of democracy, are not confined to our country, but are widespread also in Europe. The attack on democracy began already earlier in the 20th century. The attack on democracy began already earlier in the 20th century. Having pointed out the obvious faults and defects of parliamentary democracy, advocates of a new revolutionary social philosophy suggested dictatorship as the alternative to defective democracy. Democracy was criticised as the dictatorship of the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it was suggested, since parliamentary democracy is the dictatorship of one class, it should be replaced by the dictatorship of another class, and only then true democracy could be attained.

The suggestion was to replace one evil by another evil, and by some curious process of reasoning, good was expected to result from evil. But after the first World War, the cult of dictatorship was preached from et another quarter, not from the left but from the right, and the result was the rise of Fascism, which plunged the world into a ruinous war and might have completely destroyed modern civilisation had the war not ended in the defeat of Fascism.

Between these two schemes of dictatorship, democracy appeared discredited, and an opinion gained ground that democracy had proved to be a failure. Of course, there still exists a large bulk of democratic opinion, and several important countries still hold on to the faith in democracy and practise it in their own way, and consequently it cannot be said that the western world has rejected democracy. But what has happened is that a large volume of opinion has come to this depressing conclusion not because they prefer dictatorship, but

because they have not drawn the correct lesson from the defective practice of democracy in the last hundred years. The lesson should be not that democracy has failed, but that it has never been given a fair chance. People never had the opportunity to govern themselves. If anything has failed, it is representative government and not democracy. No taxation without representation was in its time certainly a democratic demand, but it was democracy at its primitive level, and it never rose much above it.

The lesson of this experience is that we should now try to find out if a government more directly controlled by the sovereign people is possible in our time. Obviously, there must be some government, and all the people cannot be responsible for the actual execution of governmental functions. It may be possible in some village communities, as it was done in the city states of antiquity. But in modern States, with their vast population and complicated social and economic institutions, direct participation of the whole people in the day to day administration of a big country as a whole is impossible.

This baffling problem is driving more and more people to the conclusion that democracy cannot be practised and must be supplanted by another form of government, and if it is not democracy it must be dictatorship. News Humanism offers a new approach to this problem. The approach is to renew the emphasis on individual man in society and to point out that every human being is naturally endowed with potentialities which can be developed; and if they are freely developed in the individuals from childhood, then an increasingly large number of the citizens of any country will be able to judge for themselves in all matters concerning their government and discriminate between propositions placed before them. Consequently, the present atmosphere in which politicians and parties can

sway people with big claims and promises will be changed and a different atmosphere created in which the citizens are capable of forming clear opinions on what they want and what is to be done, and how it can be done. There remains then only to provide the channels for the intelligent and responsible opinion of citizens to become effective.

Democracy recognises the sovereignty of the people, but no opportunity is provided to the sovereign people to exercise their sovereignty. The only choice granted to the sovereign people is to surrender their sovereignty to one or the other political party, and then they are ruled by this or that party on behalf of themselves, so to say, but it is the party which rules and the people have no say and no control in the matter till they may surrender their sovereignty in the next elections to some other party. Once a representative is elected, he is no longer under the control of his electors but that of his party. Party discipline is binding on every member of a party, and the party whip is the last appeal to his judgment. A member of a particular constituency may feel morally obliged to do certain things for the welfare of his electors, but as a member of his political party, he is guided by the party whip which may as often as not prevent him from doing what he feels morally obliged to do.

Therefore we find in most cases that popular representatives do not represent the people, but their own party. You may have noticed that during the debate on the Constitution in the Constituent Assembly, many members advocated in the beginning a point of view of their own which they suddenly abandoned simply because the party whip had cracked, and they voted against their conscience. To change this system, obviously, we have to find a way by which the popular representatives will remain constantly and at all times under the control of the people. They should always express the will of the people, always represent

the aspirations and needs of their electors. But that cannot be done unless the representative is free from this conflict of loyalties between the people and the party. So long as the sovereign people remain steeped in a psychological, intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which they can be easily swept off their feet, in which they lose their ability to discriminate and to judge intelligently, the people's representatives do not have to fear that the people who elected them once may not elect them again. But as soon as that atmosphere changes, as soon as the electors will be able to hold their representatives responsible for what they do, then the would-be parliamentarian will feel that party loyalty is not enough for them to be re-elected by the people and that he will have to represent more faithfully the intelligent will of the people if he wants to get the vote of the people of his constituency more than once.

There we come to the root of the problem. We shall have to remind ourselves again that without education democracy is not possible. Education is not merely meant to signify the ability to read and write. We know of people holding science degrees practising all sorts of religious rituals and behaving in a most unenlightened manner. Education for democracy means development of the natural distinctive attributes of all human individuals, development of the innate ability to think for oneself, to judge oneself and decide for oneself what is right and wrong. Even the attempt to change the atmosphere in that respect cannot be made unless our point of departure is the recognition of the fact that every human being is potentially rational, and therefore, potentially moral; every man is born as good as the other, and with the same potentialities. That idea is denied in formal democracy, under merely representative government, as much as under dictatorial regimes. Both believe in prerogatives given by God, or by birth or by environment; in

any case, given by an extraneous agency to some and not to others. This presupposes the view that there is no human equality on principle: some are born inferior to others, and those born superior, endowed with abilities not to be found in the common man, are naturally destined to be the rulers of a country; that is, they alone can conduct the affairs of society in all its departments on all levels.

New Humanism challenges this underlying idea of all those political theories and suggests that, if we are to come out of the present crisis, if democracy is ever to become a reality, if freedom is to be more than fraud or fiction, then we must begin from the fact indicated by modern scientific knowledge, that every man is endowed with basically identical potentialities which can be developed. The foundation of a free society will be laid by helping every single individual in society to develop his or her human potentialities.

As far as this, many are prepared to agree. But then the practical difficulties will be pointed out. This may be a *bona fide* doubt. But I am afraid, subconsciously, this question is again inspired by the doubt about the controversial equality of men. Unless we discard the old belief that men are born to be unequal, this question is bound to arise. What may be legitimately said is that everybody is potentially equal, but how long will it take to unfold the potentialities? The answer is that assuming that it will take a long time – what is the alternative? We have travelled the other way so long, and where has it led us? Since that other way has proved to lead into a blind-alley and some new say has to be travelled, even if it is a long way and an uphill path, we shall have to risk that. The only way is also the shortest way.

But ultimately it will turn out not to be so much longer than others. Everything depends on accepting a simple proposition, namely, the fundamental, because biological, equality of all human beings. We first ask: Is man by nature

rational and capable of thinking and enquiring? Or is his nature to believe and therefore the bulk of men must always accept and follow blindly something or somebody? Secondly, is it possible for man to be moral on his own, or can he always behave morally only under compulsion? If all members of society could behave intelligently and decently, we should have the best of societies. If the present society is so full of evil, the reason is that so few people behave intelligently and decently. They do not behave intelligently, but blindly follow something or somebody, leaders, traditions, or customs. They do not behave morally, because in the given atmosphere, moral sense has been destroyed: man's natural sense of what is decent and moral has been dulled by the generally accepted saying that ends justify means. And this has been said so often that it has become one of those traditions and habits which are blindly followed. This is true both in personal, and even more, in public life.

Public life in the political field is dominated by political parties. Their main object is to capture power, because it is believed that nothing can be done except by governments in power. If the best of programmes is ever to be realised, the first need is power. Once it is taken for granted that capture of power, by whatever methods, is the precondition of any good to be achieved, and without power nothing can be done, the logical conclusion is that anything and everything done for capturing political power is justifiable. Once popular mentality is dominated by the principle that anything done for a good end is right, morality disappears, and that is the main evil in the public life of all countries in the world today. All thinking people complain about this, and are looking for ways and means to introduce decency and morality in public life. Morality has disappeared because it is forgotten or ignored that only individuals can be moral. Morality is an attribute of men and men have

been lost in the masses. If you deal with men, ultimately you can appeal to their reason and deal with their conscience. But in the mass, men's reason and conscience are also submerged and suspended. Masses respond more easily to emotional appeals, because men merge into masses on their lowest common denominator. The level of the politicians then adjusts itself to this mentality. Elections do not ensure democracy but put a premium on demagogery.

To ensure that elections reflect an intelligent public opinion, there has to be an intelligent public opinion first. The only elections can become an instrument of democracy not sprung on unprepared electorates in a concerted effort to sweep them off their feet. Such an alternative approach to election begins with people in their localities meeting in local or regional conferences for serious discussions, not for public harangues, but for educative and enlightening propagation of these ideas. Through such informal regular meetings an intelligent public opinion is created. Having come to understand political questions and economic problems for themselves, the people will see that they need not vote for this or that party, leaving all judgment to them and rely on their promises. But that they can judge independently and elect candidates of their own choice, from amongst themselves. These will be independent candidates, that is to say they will not depend for their election on any political party, and therefore they can depend on their own conscience and be responsible to the people directly. That will do away with the evils of party politics and the scramble for power and its demagogery and corruption.

In the next elections we may not yet get rid of the bad effects of party politics. But we may already help in the appearance of a considerable number of independent candidates who in the assemblies, will not be subjected to the whip of the parties, whether

in power or in opposition, but who can raise the voice of the people inside the parliament. That voice may not yet be able to influence affairs very soon in a decisive manner, but even in the first parliament elected under the new Constitution it will be possible in this way to have at least a good number of independent candidates who can think for themselves and can have the courage of their conviction because they do not depend for their seats on any party machinery.

Thus, while the big parties may fight for power among themselves, there will be a few people to express the will of the people without reservations of fear or favour. Their voice, in its turn, will quicken the consciousness of the people outside who follow the proceedings in the assemblies. And what is more, after the elections, independent candidates, who depend directly on the people of their locality for their election, cannot forget their constituencies but must keep constantly in touch with them for their mandate and support. Also those Humanists who have stimulated this political awakening in the constituency will not leave the voters to relapse into apathy after elections, but constantly remind them of their rights and responsibilities. They work in the constituency not to be elected and then go away to the centres of power, but they remain there with the sole function of educating the people and helping them establish a democratic local democracy. In these local republics it is possible to have direct democracy, and their functions can be expanded as the citizens grow increasingly discriminating and conscious. In them, power and sovereignty will remain in the hands of the people themselves, and in this way the precondition for a government of the people and by the people will be created. Because ultimately the nature of the basic units will determine the structure of the whole State built upon them. A democratic State in a large country is possible only on the basis of such

small organised local democracies which can remove the sense of helplessness of the individual citizens, and through which alone individual votes can exercise control over the State by means of an intelligent active public opinion. To promote this is the most effective practice of New Humanism in the political field.

But New Humanism can be practised in other aspects also. Instead of making the government or the State responsible for everything and then complain if it does not discharge its responsibility, for instance in the field of education, people who are interested in actually doing something and not only talking and demanding, or blaming somebody else for all that is wrong, can take a similar initiative, as in the political field, and through mutual co-operation start educational institutions from the primary schools to the Universities by their own means and efforts. No State educational institutions can work in a vacuum. Before the demand for general education as a responsibility of the State arose in the 18th century in the French Revolution, the preconditions for its fulfilment had been created by the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment. That movement had laid the foundation for a secular education divorced from the Church, priestly domination and the blind faith of the religious mode of thought. The lessons of that movement can still serve in countries like India today. It dispelled the darkness of the Middle Ages in Europe. Its ideas were not very different from what we are proposing today in our effort to dispel the last vestiges of the darkness and stagnation of our own dark ages, from which we are only recently emerging.

The Enlightenment movement was carried on by great scientists. Their main activity consisted in writing that monumental work, the Encyclopaedia. History has proved that if the French Revolution were to be traced to one single cause, it is this book. Through this book Enlightenment is spread to the farthest corners

of France. The single biggest result of the Encyclopaedia was to destroy the prejudices and enslaving traditions of the old order, through the spread of scientific knowledge. Therefore, nobody need fear that the work of education and spread of ideas is merely theoretical or without practical value in public life and even in the political field. Other forms of political practice are necessary, but this change of outlook and atmosphere has to precede the building of any democratic institutions.

Since democratic politics thinks in terms of elections, New Humanism, if it wants to be accepted, will have to show whether it can be practised in elections also, and that is what I have tried to show. But greater importance should be attached for the time being to the other kind of work which aims at freeing the people from spiritual bondage, which appeals to their reason and compels them to think, and which also compels them to be guided in their behaviour by their own judgement and conscience. And not by any external authority, be it in heaven or on earth. Only when people will behave morally because they are consciously relying on their rationality will man appear as what in fact he is – the highest culmination of the entire process of evolution. This moral self-reliance will express itself in all fields of human life and activities, personal as well as social. It will dispel the paralysing influence of the belief in *karma*. If people believe that their suffering is due to their *karma*, they will think it is useless to try and shape their own fate. Thus, if we bring the light of science to the people, it is not merely a matter of building schools and indulging in theories. When people will understand what science has to say about the laws of *karma*, it will have a decisive effect on the creation of that self-confidence without which democracy is not possible.

To spread enlightenment in all the dark

corners of our social life, where superstitions lurk and prejudice breeds, is the most fundamental task of all. It is the precondition for any better society, particularly for a democratic society and for a higher cultural level. If authoritarian mentality is so prevalent, it is because of the cultural backwardness of the people. If we want to avoid the danger of totalitarianism, we must change that mentality of the people. That can be done only if those who are at least partially enlightened, conscious of their own responsibility to contribute to this effort. Everybody can search himself if he cannot by his own will and decision be decent, moral and rational; if he can, he will in consequence feel free himself. If you say that you cannot, I must doubt that freedom is your highest ideal. But once you say that you can, then you can also spread this certainty, this conviction and this attitude to others. Once there are a few people anywhere who have this spirit, you have founded the nucleus of a decent society in which men can be free. Once you have a hundred such nuclei, the progress of this movement will become very rapid and spread in geometrical progression.

But first you must have the conviction that it can be done. And then you must have the courage and the confidence to start doing it. If instead of only preaching and teaching, we act and live as Humanists, the practice of this New Humanism will spread more and more rapidly. Of course, before talking about practice, it is necessary that we must not only accept the ideas, but thoroughly understand them also. Otherwise, neither can we act according to them ourselves, nor carry conviction to others. When I hear somebody argue that New Humanism cannot be practised, I first ask whether he is convinced that the ideas themselves are right. Because if he is not yet convinced, no use arguing with him about practice. If you accept ideas merely because it is easy to practise them, you are

much more likely to accept bad ideas than good ideas because bad ideas are usually more easily practised. In any case, before we talk of practice, we must grasp the theory. Action presupposes thought. Unless the theory appeals to your reason, no use worrying about practising the theory. But once that theory has become part of me, of my whole mental outlook, and I am inspired by it, I must act according to it. I cannot help doing so. As long as a theory remains theory, and does not become part of my existence, there will be no action at all, at least not conscious and consistent action. But once the theory becomes a live and integral part of my existence, all my actions will still be *practical expressions* of that theory.

The appeal of New Humanism is addressed to all who are dissatisfied with the given state of things because it is they who feel the need of something new to give meaning to their lives. And if they are convinced that New Humanism offers a better and more satisfying way of life than the theories which have led to so much disillusionment and frustration, you

will not hear from them this doubt about the possibility of practising the ideas which they have made their own. To say that you would agree with our ideas if you thought they could be practised, is the wrong approach. Because when we spread our ideas, we don't ask anybody to join us or to vote for us or to go out of his way to perform any particular kind of discipline or activity. We only say: you agree with these ideas go and act according to them. New Humanism is a way of life. If you accept it, if you make it your own way of life, you cannot help acting up to it. Life consists in some form of activity all the time. And if you accept this way of life, it will find expression in everything that you do, in human relations, in social institutions, or political elections. That is the only way in which we can ensure that not only will India be an independent country, but the Indian people will also actually enjoy freedom. No amount of welfare and prosperity can bring happiness unless they are enjoyed in freedom.

Published in *The Radical Humanist*, September 1999. 

Human Rights Section:

Citizens for Democracy Deplores the Killing of Shujaat Bukhari

Citizens For Democracy deplores the cowardly killing of eminent Kashmiri journalist Shujaat Bukhari who was attacked in Srinagar along with his two security personnel on 14th June 2018. He had been fearlessly raising the issues of justice and peace in Jammu & Kashmir. He sincerely wanted a peaceful solution of the Kashmir problem and repeatedly emphasized that Kashmir problem was a political problem and could be solved with political approach, and not with militarily one. It is significant that in his last tweet, a few hours

before his death, he drew attention to the recent UN report on human rights violations in Kashmir calling for an international inquiry. His killing is a grave attack on freedom of expression and democratic voices. We hope that the State government would soon bring the culprits to book. Citizens For Democracy mourns the cowardly killing and conveys its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and friends of the slain journalist.

N.D. Pancholi, Anil Sinha,

Secretaries, Citizens For Democracy. 

Civil rights group cry foul over Gujarat govt's water conservation scheme

Nandini Oza

A few civil rights forums, including the Gujarat chapter of People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL), on Tuesday alleged that Gujarat government's ambitious 'Sujalam Sufalam Water Conservation Scheme 2018' was launched to cover up corruption in Gujarat Land Development Corporation (GLDC).

PUCL, Gujarat Social Watch, civil rights activist Gautam Thaker, and former Gujarat chief minister Suresh Mehta claimed that the scheme was announced immediately after cash, amounting to lakhs of rupees, was seized from top officers of GLDC in a raid.

Dubbing it institutionalised corruption at the government level, Mehta said such type of corruption was "unheard of".

In the wake of the raid, works related to water conservation schemes were shifted from GLDC to the Narmada and Water Resources Department.

Mahesh Pandya of Gujarat Social Watch alleged that the state government was fooling people by saying that such a programme to deepen lakes, tanks and reservoirs was being carried out for the first time. Pandya pointed out that under Sardar Patel Community Water Conservation Scheme in 2014-15, the number of check dams was increased from 1,65,560 to

1,68,895. There has also been an increase in the number of weirs in the following years. "How can you say that such a programme is being organised for the first time," he questioned.

If the expenses have been incurred under the water conservation scheme, how is it that 100 days of employment was provided under MGNREGA, asked economist Rohit Shukla. He also expressed shock over the fact that even teachers were involved in the work of deepening of ponds, and that too during peak summer.

The activists and Mehta rued that the state government had not come out clean over the scheme. Mehta said they waited for a few days for the government to come out with the details of expenses, but decided to go public as expenses have not been divulged.

Initially, the state government sources had said it was a Rs 345 crore project, but later the chief minister's office said it was a Rs 200 crore project. Pandya pointed out that the state government first said 527 JCB machines were to be used for the project, but later claimed that 4,600 machines were used. Besides, as against previous figure of deploying 27,000 people, a total of three lakh people worked for the project.

Courtesy *The Week*, June 12, 2018. 

Jawaharlal Nehru on M.N. Roy

I am attracted to him (M.N. Roy) by his remarkable intellectual capacity; I was also attracted to him because he seemed such a lonely figure deserted by everybody. The British Government was naturally after him; nationalist India was not yet interested in him and those who called themselves Communists in India condemned him as a traitor to the cause. I knew that after many years' residence in Russia and close cooperation with the Comintern, he had parted with them, or, perhaps, been made to part.

Jawaharlal Nehru (Nehru: An Autobiography – London: Bodley Head, 1955, p. 268)

Tuticorin Struggle : Madras High Court advocate Defending Jailed Protesters Arrested, Activists Cry Foul

His petition for anticipatory bail was rejected by the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court.

NewsClick Report

Advocate S Vanchinathan, an advocate at the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court – who was providing legal help and defending anti-Sterlite protest groups – was arrested last night by Tamil Nadu police on the charges of instigating violence during protests that took place on May 22 in Tuticorin. The protests were against the expansion of a copper smelting plant, which the locals had alleged, was causing air and water pollution. His petition for anticipatory bail in the Madurai Bench was dismissed by Justice GR Swaminathan.

A total of 13 people were killed in the southern port city in the “targeted” police firing last month, after the agitation turned violent. Owned by London-listed firm Vedanta, the smelter has been shut following the massive agitation.

Vanchinathan, state organiser of the Human Rights Protection Council, was arrested by the Tamil Nadu police at Chennai airport. He had just returned from New Delhi.

Vanchinathan has been very closely associated with the anti-Sterlite movement in Tuticorin, and has been undertaking a number of legal actions through his organisation, along with other lawyers concerned with human rights on a number of people’s issues.

He was appearing for anti-Sterlite protest groups in the Madurai Bench. He reportedly took up their case when they were not given permission to hold protest for three months before May 22 when the incident took place.

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place on May 22 in Tuticorin. The protests were against the expansion of a copper smelting plant, which the locals had alleged, was causing air and water pollution. His petition for anticipatory bail in the Madurai Bench was dismissed by Justice GR Swaminathan.

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He had also reportedly gone to Tuticorin once or twice to appear in local court for hearing of the bail appeal of those who have been arrested in connection with the May 22 protest. Those who know him say that he used to appear at the Madurai Bench or also in the subordinate court.

He has been charged under Section 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 506(2) (threat to cause death or grievous

hurt) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Section 3 of the Tamil Nadu Property Prevention of Damage and Loss (TNPPDL) Act, 1992, which is an explosives substances act, has also been slapped against him.

Reacting to the arrest, the rights activists and advocates termed the police action a “cowardice act of Tamil Nadu government”. “Killing the innocent unarmed people of Thoothukudi and putting blame on public spirited activist who helped people legally and morally is nothing but a cowardice act of the state government, which enjoys the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Centre,” they said in a statement.

“As part of his professional duty, he had gone to the local Tutikorin court to appear for a bail hearing and had met people there. Now, they (the police) have slapped cases against all of them who were supporting the protesters from outside. What the government wants to do is very clear: suppress any form of questioning and protest or opposition against the government functioning,” Advocate (Dr) V Suresh – national general secretary of rights body People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) – told Newsclick.

Talking about the anti-Sterlite protest, he said it was “very spontaneous” and was a “people’s movement”.

“They (people who were part of the agitation) rejected the support of established political party. They organised themselves around their own independent trusts. This is a very new thing, and it has not happened in North India in recent years. This is the new thing, which is happening in the past four-five years, in Tamil Nadu as well. The number of protesters were massive. The important part of the struggle is its principled position. This was a mass struggle in which young, educated, well aware and well-settled people – who cannot be easily scared – came together, keeping aside political parties. They are very articulate in technology and other thing, but yet they want to take open stand in favour

of social justice. Vanchinathan is a part of the set of such youth who have been offering legal help and human rights works,” he said.

Asked whether he smells any conspiracy behind the arrest, he said the coming together of youth is threatening to the police and the government because the latter used to bribe political parties and strike deals.

“By such a crackdown, the government is trying to give a chilling message: those who raise voice against those who have authorities will be put behind the bars and charged with serious offenses so that they have to languish in jails for a long time,” he alleged.

The outside world thinks – said Suresh – that Tamil Nadu is a state of highly educated and is a democratic state, but the reality is completely different. “The reality is Tamil Nadu is actually a police state in which the cops have control over state politics. The ruling party uses the police as striking force. They are – in writing – allowed to do whatever they want,” he alleged.

For the past three months – he added – permission for even a small activity such as holding a public meeting is being rejected, forcing people to approach the court. “Anytime you will have at least 10-15 writ petitions in the court, urging the court to direct the police to give permission for holding protests. It has been happening for a long time even before the death of the (former) Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, but it has gathered momentum in the present regime. It is because they don’t have mandate of the people. By accident of history, they are in power. Secondly, they have close relationship with the BJP, whose hand is visible everywhere – be it Jalli Kattu or protest against methane gas production. The BJP needs to have a puppet government here so that they can get easily 20 MPs from the state in 2019 (general elections),” said Suresh.

When asked about the impact of the arrest on the movement and its future, he said, “People are fighting. When you arrest people, throw them

behind the bars, launch a witch-hunt for them by raiding their houses and troubling the women and children, it obviously would have a dampening effect on them. It's quite natural. But what is not being realised is that it is creating a counter push and people, especially youth, are becoming very resolute to not give up the struggle. So, contrary to the feeling of fear and intimidation, what we are seeing now is growing determination in youngsters that they will fight it out, irrespective of its cost."

Another rights group People's Watch – a network towards human rights monitoring, intervention, campaign, research and documentation – has called up the National Human Rights Commission as well as the Tamil Nadu Human Rights Commission and the Justice Aruna Jagadesan Commission of Enquiry to "immediately and urgently intervene in this matter and ensure that the no preventive detention law is used against a practicing lawyer and human rights defender based on these frivolous cases pending against him".

"The charges against him carry the maximum punishment of less than seven years and hence these are not cases where one requires to be remanded – as per the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the Arnesh Kumar Vs State of Bihar (2014)," said Henry Tiphagne, executive director, People's Watch.

He said Vanchinathan is not only a lawyer, but a human rights defender engaging in different human rights issues, and enjoys the right to protest, dissent, criticise, associate, express and organise people as a lawyer and human rights defender.

"The police, who find such vocal lawyers an embarrassment to their functioning, will now obtain several PT warrants and register a number of the 239 criminal cases that they already have registered against and show him as an accused in several cases making his coming out on bail difficult," he feared.

According to the first affidavit filed by the

state in the Madras High Court on June 14, Vanchinathan had three criminal cases pending against him – all in Madurai before the Anna Nagar and Tallakulam police station and for offences under Section 143,188, & 341 of the IPC, which are all still in the investigation stage.

But the police say there are eight other cases against Vanchinathan, all in Thoothukudi North, Central, South, SIPCOT and Railway Protection Force, registered in the years 2012, 2015 and 2016. All these cases are in the FIR stage and none of them were chargesheeted till now.

"Even in all these cases, there is no offence for punishment of over seven years in any of the cases. It was only after receiving this additional counter affidavit that the Hon'ble Court was pleased to pronounce dismissal of the anticipatory bail petition but has not found time to deliver the order till now. These events in court speak volumes about the nature of delivery of justice in the state," he said.

"The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers of 1990 holds that lawyers have a right to protect citizens and establish their rights and to defend them in all stages of criminal proceedings; that they shall promote programmes to inform the public about their rights and duties under the law and assisting the poor and other disadvantaged persons so as to enable them to assert their rights. The declaration further states that governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics. Thus, this case is essentially proof of the Tamil Nadu government's scant respect to this UN Basic Principle in the arrest of Advocate Vanchinathan," he concluded.

Courtesy *NewsClick*, 21 June 2018. 

Citizens Come Together to Condemn Arrest of Five Accused in Bhima-Koregaon Case

The signatories to the statement have described the arrests as “a clear manifestation of state terror to crush the voices of dissent in this country”.

The Wire Staff

New Delhi: Over 200 intellectuals, artists, academicians, lawyers, journalists, and students have issued a statement condemning the arrests of five human rights activists, professors and lawyers in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon clashes. The signatories to the statement have described the arrests as “a clear manifestation of state terror to crush the voices of dissent in this country”. Criticising the misuse of the IPC and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to keep the accused in jail, the statement has pointed out that the accused worked ”for the assertion of oppressed and marginalised communities against majoritarian forces, spoke out against Brahmanical patriarchy.” And that while they are being shut in jail over outrageous charges, “the perpetrators of violence during the Bhima-Koregaon clashes enjoy the protection of the state”.

On June 6, the Pune police in collaboration with Nagpur, New Delhi and Mumbai police arrested five people in relation to the Bhima Koregaon case. The arrested include Mumbai-based Dalit rights activist, Sudhir Dhawale, a young displacement-issues activist, Mahesh Raut, Nagpur University professor, Shoma Sen and Rona Wilson, a core committee member of the Committee for Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) in Delhi. All the five suspects have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), and charged with having links to the outlawed Maoist party. In the meanwhile, Hindutva leader Sambhaji Bhide ‘Guruji’, a prime accused in the January 1 riots, remains free.

On January 1, Dalits gathered at the Bhima

Koregaon memorial for commemorating a historic battle fought against the British East India Company, in which 22 Mahar soldiers had died. The event however turned violent and led to the death of one person. According to the fact-finding committee set up under the Inspector-General of Police (Kolhapur Range), Vishwas Nangare Patil, “The violence was an orchestrated act by the radical Hindu leader Milind Ekbote and the followers of Sambhaji Bhide alias ‘Guruji’”. One youth was killed in the attack and many were left seriously injured. Many vehicles were set on fire that left thousands stranded on the streets. Six months later, the administration has now made five arrests in the incident.

The statement from the Citizens’ Solidarity with Voices of Democracy group is reproduced in full below.

§

We condemn the arrest of five human rights activists, professors and lawyers in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon clashes early this year. The alarming arrest of Advocate and General Secretary of Indian Association of Peoples’ Lawyers (IAPL) Surendra Gadling, Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) Public Relations Secretary Rona Wilson, Head of English Department Professor Shoma Sen of Nagpur University and member of Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS), cultural activist and founder of Republican Panthers Jaatiya Antachi Chalwal Sudhir Dhawale and anti-displacement activist and Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellow (PMRDF) Mahesh Raut is a clear manifestation of state terror to crush the voices of dissent in

this country. The intemperate use of sections of the IPC and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on all five reveals legal over-reach and exposes the desperation to foist extraordinary and excessive charges on all five to ensure they remain in the clutches of the Fadnavis-Maharashtra government. All the arrested have consistently worked for the assertion of oppressed and marginalised communities against majoritarian forces, spoken out against Brahmanical patriarchy, upheld peoples' rights to land, life and dignity, and have strived for the release of political prisoners. Today, after standing for the assertion of dalits, adivasis, Muslims, women, workers, farmers, marginalised sexualities, and oppressed communities, upholding the principles of democracy, and, consequently, being a thorn in the side of a vengeful police force, they are under the custody of impunity. Meanwhile, the perpetrators of violence during the Bhima-Koregaon clashes enjoy the protection of the state, patronage of the RSS and walk free. Now, with concerted efforts to implicate the arrested, egregious narratives of plots of assassinations is being weaved to defame and keep them in jail. These retributive

actions are intended to threaten anyone who speaks out for them and drive a wedge between all struggles for peoples' rights. In the last few years, wherever people have asserted their rights, the political establishment has clamped down on them with brutal force – be it in Saharanpur or Una, Bhima-Koregaon or Thoothkudi. The assault on the democratic fabric of this country, through the abuse of the legal and judicial process, the stage-managing of media for public trials, and deliberate efforts to build a climate of fear is blatant and pervasive. Today, more so than ever, it is crucial to reiterate unity in the face of divisive majoritarian politics that uses structural hierarchies to violently suppress different sections of people and communities. We strongly condemn the arrests of these voices of democracy, demand the immediate and unconditional release of all five human rights activists, professors and lawyers and stand united in our opposition to the onslaught of Brahmanical Hindutva fascism.

In Solidarity,

Signed by more than 227 Professors, intellectuals, human rights activists, etc.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 25.06.2018 

Human Rights

In the matter of Ram Deo Chauhan @ Rajnath Chauhan vs Bani Kant Das & Ors. [AIR 2011 SC 615] The Supreme Court opined as follows:

"53. Human rights are the basic, inherent, immutable and inalienable rights to which a person is entitled simply by virtue of his being born a human. They are such rights which are to be made available as a matter of right. Constitution and Legislations of civilized country recognise them since they are so quintessentially part of every human being. That is why every democratic country committed to rule of Law put into force mechanisms for their enforcement and protection. Human rights are universal in nature. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as UDHR) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1948 recognizes and requires the observance of certain universal rights, articulated therein, to be human rights, and these are acknowledged and accepted as equal and inalienable and necessary for the inherent dignity and development of an individual. Consequently, though the term 'human rights' itself has not been defined in UDHR, the nature and content of human rights can be understood from the rights enunciated there in."

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