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Secularism in India: The Inclusive Debate

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

Interpreting Bihar Elections

Mahi Pal Singh

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Interpreting Bihar Elections

Mahi Pal Singh

When the leads for the Bihar Legislative Assembly elections started pouring in with the BJP and its alliance partners showing a slight edge over the Mahagathbandhan (the Grand Alliance of the JDU, the RJD and the Congress) led by Nitish Kumar, the incumbent and projected Chief Minister of the alliance, the BJP spokespersons on the discussion panels of different TV channels started forecasting a 2/3 to 3/4 majority for their alliance exactly the way most pre-poll and exit-poll surveys had been forecasting. Crackers started bursting in the BJP's state office and sweets started being distributed among the party workers. But by the end of the day, it became clear that the BJP and its alliance had fallen flat with a total tally of 58 seats with 31 % votes, with the BJP's share coming down to merely 24.4 % as against the 31 % in the parliamentary elections, and the Grand Alliance with a tally of 178 seats with 41.9 % of votes had dashed all the hopes of an unprecedented victory for its leaders to project the poll results as a sign of things to come in the 2019 parliamentary elections. But after the results were out the same spokespersons and the BJP's top leaders started describing it only as a state election having no bearing on the parliamentary elections in 2019.

Whatever may the BJP's leaders say now, the fact remains that it was the total rejection of Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister, who himself spearheaded the election campaign, Amit Shah, the BJP President, the RSS and all that they stand for by the people of Bihar against the performing Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, as was earlier done by the people of Delhi giving the BJP only 3 seats out of a total of 70. But it is not unusual for the top leadership of political parties in India to disown and not take responsibility for poll debacles while taking all the credit for poll victories. Ascribing

the poll defeat only to the RSS Chief, Mohan Bhagwat's remark regarding the need for a review of the reservation policy will only mean passing on the blame when one of its leaders said, "We had an initial advantage as the EBCs, dalits and mahadalits were apprehensive about RJD chief Lalu Prasad. But Bhagwat's statement changed the people's perception about the BJP stand on reservations," though that could be one of the factors which contributed to the BJP's defeat. However, the BJP leaders even officially admit, and add the party could not come out of the Lok Sabha euphoria and believed PM Modi would deliver victory on the platter. The fact remains that in spite of the BJP having won a majority of the Lok Sabha seats in 2014, it was only 10 seats above the simple majority figure of 272 seats with 31 % of the total votes cast and only a little more than 50 % voters having turned out to vote, which means that 85 % of the total voters had neither voted for Modi and his party nor supported him. It was only media hype which showed as if something unprecedented had happened and the whole country had supported him then. It had been more the rejection of the corrupt Congress than the victory of the BJP.

In the Bihar election, the defeat of the BJP becomes even more pronounced because it is a defeat against the same discredited Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) of Lalu Prasad Yadav who was denounced by the BJP for his *jungle raj* (anarchy), and not wrongly so. It was also the defeat of Modi's non-performing development agenda, or poll slogan to call it correctly, against the performance backed developmental agenda of CM Nitish Kumar who maintained the sanctity of the poll campaign and did not utter a single objectionable word. On the other hand were the leaders of the BJP making all kinds of objectionable

remarks – Giriraj Singh exhorting those who did not vote for the BJP, meaning thereby the Muslims, to leave the country and go to Pakistan and the BJP President, himself declaring that crackers would be burst in Pakistan if the NDA and the BJP did not win the election, as if Nitish Kumar's grand alliance winning the elections would mean the victory of the Muslims making people happy in Pakistan. We know that nothing of the sort happened. But such communal remarks definitely pushed the Muslim voters further away from the BJP than they had been earlier and they voted against the BJP.

Terrorists, by definition, are people who kill a few people to terrorize others not to criticize or oppose them or their ideology through acts or written word or word of mouth. Earlier those involved in the Samjhauta train and Mecca Masjid blasts were doing exactly that – killing people to terrorize others. Now, Hindutva groups like the Sanathan Sanstha and Bajrang Dal have taken over and are killing people like Govind Pansare, Dabholkar, M.M. Kalburgi etc. to achieve the same goal – terrorize people. It is immaterial whether this happens in a Congress ruled state or in some other state. What is important to note is that it is the same people belonging to the Hindutva ideology with different names who are indulging in this terrorist violence. These self-appointed custodians of Hinduism and Hindu religious books are terrorists and anti-nationals. They are out to kill all dissent, the age old cultural integrity of the nation, the secular spirit of the Indian Constitution and to divide the nation on religious lines in the same manner as the RSS does so that the Bharatiya Janata Party gets the support of the majority Hindus in elections. They want to kill rationalist and scientific thinking and free expression of thoughts. It is an understatement to call them the fringe groups, they are the mainstay of the BJP's electoral support. That is the reason why the BJP has never condemned or even criticized them and their

activities. At best it dissociates itself from them when too much pressure it put on it to make a statement on their activities. BJP's inaction against these groups and against its MPs and state leaders who used foul language and made uncalled for remarks bringing down the election campaign to abuses and a new low must have contributed the defeat of the BJP.

The BJP's efforts to communalise the election in its favour failed miserably because not only the Muslims but also the majority of the Hindu voters rejected it because of its intolerance of dissent in the country. In spite of the fact that the BJP leaders and its strong supporters in the media and elsewhere made frantic efforts to downplay the return of Sahitya Academy and other Awards by recognized writers, scientists and intellectuals in protest against the Academy's silence against the killing of intellectuals and rationalists by the Hindutva activists and the tacit support such elements were receiving from the BJP's top leadership including cabinet ministers and MPs, the general public and the intellectuals of the country felt that their protest against the atmosphere of intolerance being promoted by the BJP and the central government was fully justified. These award returnees were actually voicing the concern of the people at large. In the Bihar election, these voiceless people asserted their right to live in a secular and democratic atmosphere and proved that they cannot be brushed aside and taken for granted by any political party. To protect their democratic rights from the onslaught of the BJP, they thought it better to vote for the lesser evil of the RJD and the Congress. They showed their faith in the leadership of Nitish Kumar and his ability to deliver in spite of his dependence of the RJD and the Congress. The voters of Bihar have shown that they are no fools, as the BJP had thought them to be, and that they know what is good for them and the country they love.

The Fall of the Tinsel God

Rajindar Sachar

How the mighty have fallen fits in completely with the rout of the BJP in the recently held elections to the Bihar Assembly! To any analyst it looked that it was going to be a close fight—it is no hidden secret that progressive forces in the country like academics, writers and social activists, who were passive at the start, were forced to be active as the real face of the BJP through its boss, the RSS, emerged threatening the very core values guaranteed by Indian Constitution, and thus posing a danger to the integrity of the country.

Jayaprakash Narayan, the Socialist leader, had as far back as 1965 given the warning. He said: “Some like the RSS might do it openly by identifying the Indian nation with *Hindu Rashtra*, others might do it more subtly.” JP warned that “those who attempt to equate India with Hindus.....are in reality enemies of Hinduism itself and Hindus, as they weaken and sunder the fabric of the nation”. He had also pointed out that the cow was never considered a sacred animal even during the early Vedic period of the Hindus.

The silence of the Prime Minister at the complicity of BJP members in participating and encouraging attacks on Muslims at Attali (Haryana) and Dadri (UP) created a massive revulsion against the BJP.

Such was the low level of falsehood and hypocrisy at projecting the issue of beef to target the Muslims when the reality was entirely different. This has been exposed by a study done by a research centre thus: “Muslims are earning peanuts as against the general perception about the trade, and it is actually the government and non-Muslims who are benefiting the most from the \$ 4.5 billion animal slaughter business. Except for direct consumption, in which case both

Muslims and non-Muslims are at par in terms of consuming beef, all associated business, including meat export, bone-crushing and powder industry, leather and horn processing industries, blood processing, animal fat and soap industry, are dominated entirely by non-Muslims.”

The BJP is trying to lower the impact of this defeat by saying that it will not in any way affect the position and popularity of its leader, Modi. How self-serving and false! Even a day before the counting, a senior Minister of the Central Cabinet was openly downgrading the exit polls and stating that they were absolutely sure that women have voted in large numbers because they have confidence in Prime Minister Modi’s leadership and promise of development.

Some BJP apologists may try to distinguish the voting pattern at the Centre and States as being influenced by different considerations. It is true that in earlier elections Prime Ministers may have participated in State elections; but no other Prime Minister had canvassed as Modi did whole time for the State as if he was competing to become the State Chief Minister. No, the public will not buy the party apologists’ plea that the blame, if any, is of the party, because this flies in the face of the BJP’s whole-time propaganda that was to ask for vote because of Prime Minister Modi’s alleged sweep of development plans which were supposedly for the masses but were unashamedly corporate-friendly.

As it is, Modi has not enhanced his stature by the way of functioning of the Central governance. Even pro-Modi enthusiasts now concede that the working of the Central Government in the matter of enunciating policies on important matters is nowhere to be seen. Decision-making is centralised in the PMO, with unpardonable delays.

Even the corporate sector, which was the strongest supporter of Modi, is having second thoughts at the functioning of the Modi Government due to its divisive policies—to cap it all, the Moody Rating Agency's public criticism of this communally surcharged atmosphere created by Modi's inaction in restraining his State satraps shows that the impact of the loss of the Bihar will further seriously cause damage to the credibility of the Modi Government.

In my view, immense thanks for the defeat of the BJP are due to the unexplainable conduct of Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS leader, pontifically declaring that the reservation policy needs to be reconsidered. It is still a mystery how such obviously damaging statement against the interest of the BJP could be made by the RSS chief—could it be the danger to Brahmanical supremacy being captured by a lower caste man that took precedence over everything else? Let us not forget that Modi is from a backward caste. I cannot find any other rational explanation for such a high blunder.

A slavish kind of excuse for the loss by the BJP is being forwarded by the loyalists of the party that the victory or loss of elections should be attributed to the party and not personally to Modi. This is the limit of hypocrisy. The landslide victory in Parliament and even in State elections was attributed to Modi both in Maharashtra and Haryana when no one can deny that in both States the BJP as a party was a poor third. If success in those States was legitimately given to Modi's image, how can different criteria be applied to the present loss in Bihar.

“The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything, that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing.” Justice K K Mathew, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, (1975)

The biggest self-inflicted damage to the BJP is its placing Modi on to the pedestal of a semi-god, who, it is imagined, will alone take the party into a march of victory. Such an approach is suicidal in a democracy as propounded in the impeccable warning given by Dr Ambedkar: “The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not ‘to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions’. There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered lifelong services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. For, in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or *hero-worship*, plays a part in its politics unlike in any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. *But, in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.*” (Emphasis added)

People have given an extraordinary opportunity to Nitish and Laloo. It is expected that they will continue their sagacity and mutual accommodation. This is the least they owe to the masses of Bihar, who have put their trust in them.

The author is a retired Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court. He was the Chairperson of the Prime Minister's high-level Committee on the Status of Muslims and the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing. A former President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), he is a tireless champion of human rights. He can be contacted at e-mail: rsachar1@vsnl.net and rsachar23@bol.net.in

The Sangh's Congenital Cowardish, Double Standard and Manufactured Islamofobia

Prabhakar Sinha

The Sangh's approach to the Muslim rulers of India baffles all Indians who love their mother land. The Sangh finds the Muslim rulers unacceptable because it considers them foreign invaders who occupied India even though they settled down here and made this land their home. It is unforgiving towards them because many of them committed atrocities on the Hindus and converted a large number of Hindus to Islam by force. It is possible to differ with it on facts, but one is not baffled by their different perception but by difference in their treatment of invaders who committed atrocities on Indians. It continues to be hostile to the Muslim rulers (who ruled centuries ago) and the Muslims, but when it was founded in 1925, it made it a point to make it clear that it was not concerned with the Independence Movement and its aim was to oppose the 'yavan-snakes (the Muslims)' who were spreading riots against the Hindus in the country. Had the RSS loved Bharat Mata, it could not have adopted a policy of abandoning her to be ruled and robbed by the British, who were foreign invaders come to loot her. Had they really loved Bharat Mata they would have fought against the British who were bleeding her and robbing her instead of choosing to aid them by deliberately keeping away from Independence Movement and condemning the Freedom Fighters as 'Traitors'. Golwalkar in his 'We or Our Nationhood Defined' says, "Only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at rebuilding, revitalising and emancipating from the present stupor, the Hindu Nation.....All others posing to be patriots and willfully indulging in a course of action detrimental to the Hindu Nation are traitors and enemies to the national cause, or to take a more charitable view if unintentionally, and led into

such a course as mere misguided ignorant fools." Thus to the RSS, those who fought the British rulers were traitors. Gandhi, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Patel, Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad were traitors while the members of the RSS who were rioting against the Muslims were patriots. The RSS's conduct in being dead against the conversion to Islam which happened centuries ago stands in a sharp contrast to its silence on the ongoing conversion to Christianity during the British rule. There is no other explanation for it except Cowardish. It is their cowardish, the desire to save their skin that kept them at a safe distance from the Independence Movement and made them meekly accept the conversion of Hindus to Christianity under the British rule. It began attacking the Christians only after independence when the British had left and it was quite safe to target them. Of all the organisations in the country, it is the Sangh, which is not qualified to speak of Patriotism and Love for Bharat Mata because it chose to leave her at the mercy of the British rulers to be ruled and robbed, and condemned those who fought the mighty British for her Independence. To the Sarsanghchalak M.S. Golwalkar the valiant freedom fighters, who suffered and made sacrifices, were 'traitors' or ignorant fools.

The Sangh's pathological hatred of the Muslims continues to lead it to pursue its anti-national goal of creating enmity between the Hindus and Muslims causing National Disintegration instead of national Integration. It continues to create disaffection against the Muslims on one pretext or the other. It raises a false alarm at a slight rise in the birth rate of the Muslims even though it would take 270 years

for the population of Hindus and Muslims to be equal. But the approach that the rise in the population of the Muslims is a threat is in violation of the letter and spirit of our Constitution and is also an anti-national act. Who has given the Sangh the right to portray and treat any community as inferior having lesser claim on Bharat Mata than them? They are giving a message to the Hindus that they are setting the wrongs done by the Muslim rulers right by demolishing the Babri Masjid, or changing the name of the road named after Aurangzeb or protesting against a celebration to honour Tipu Sultan. They justify it in the name of setting the wrongs of the past right. But is the Sangh pursuing this policy uniformly and honestly?

The suffering caused to the Hindus by the Muslim rulers is nothing compared to the unspeakable humiliation and suffering inflicted on them by the Hindus themselves. They introduced a system of caste to perpetually deny them equality as human beings, equality of opportunity to rise according to their talent and to even dream of a change of their status other than the one ordained for the caste in which they were born. It is the Hindus who condemned their own members as untouchables and treated them as worse than animals. The upper caste Hindus could touch animals without being polluted but kept away even from the shadow of their own so-called untouchable brethren.

Has the Sangh condemned those Hindus who inflicted this suffering on a section of Hindus for centuries? Has it tried to fix responsibility and condemn the guilty as it has been doing in the case of the Muslims rulers? Has it ever condemned them for creating an inhuman condition which impelled large number of Hindus to convert to Islam to escape from their inhuman existence? Has it ever undertaken to condemn and demolish this inhuman system in its 90 years of existence? Gandhiji, a devout

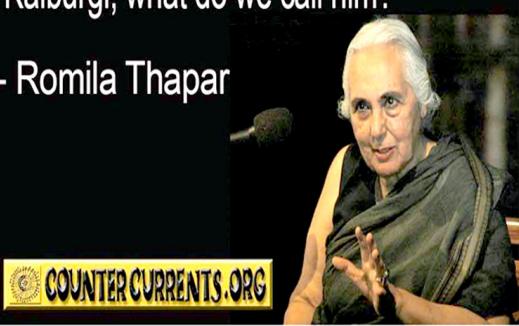
Hindu and politician, fought against untouchability but the Sangh never took any step to save 80% or more of Hindus, who were condemned to inferior status as human beings in the hierarchy of castes. Even in its own organisation, it has been preserving the stranglehold of Brahmins on the organizational posts. In the 90 years of its existence, barring one or two persons it is the Brahmins who have been its head. The top echelon of the organisation is the monopoly of Brahmins and other upper castes.

The conduct of the Sangh presents a tell-tale evidence of its double standard, hypocrisy, Islamofobia and anti-national conduct. Its anti-national acts may not be intentional to hurt Bharat Mata it professes to love, but is due to its blindness, characteristic of an organisation born in the sin of Hatred and incapable of introspection and change.

Prabhakar Sinha is the National President, PUCL.

"Who is a terrorist? He is someone who creates terror. If someone takes a gun and shoots at a Malala Yousafzai, we call him a terrorist. If someone takes a gun and shoots Kalburgi, what do we call him?"

- Romila Thapar



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Free to question India's imperfections

New Delhi 26 Nov 15

Never in my 68 years have I thought for even a milli-second of living anywhere else except India. Not even when, in the wake of the Ayodhya agitation, I received a stream of poisonous hate mails and a packet of turds (in a mithai box!!) I love the multilayered multiplicity of

India, its synergies & paradoxes, its many diverging & converging cultural streams, its colour & chaos, the hit-and-miss judaad of past and present, malls and mandirs, East and West; its unexpected but inherent certainties.... In any case, good or bad, it is MY country.

So it feels strange to be told, when I critically question any aspect, that I should go live somewhere else - Pakistan for instance. I am utterly amazed that Aamir Khan's confession of momentary vulnerability should be termed a "moral offence" by no less a person than MJ Akbar!

I used to so admire the reasoned clarity of his writing.

I have always over-used adjectives. My English teacher would red-pencil an acerbic commentary. A rebuke I secretly courted was "oxymoron". I loved its sound as well as its meaning - two adjectives contradicting each other.

These days I am being turned into an oxymoron myself! "Indian Muslim" is an identity increasingly open to suspicion by self-proclaimed 'patriots'; one's own patriotism needing constant justification plus a certificate that one doesn't eat beef or critique the nation. That a well-known Sadhvi can dub Shahrukh Khan a Pakistani agent

Laila Tyabji

and not be arrested for libel, instead accruing a trail of approving social media comments, or the Culture Minister awards A P J Abdul Kalam the accolade of being a good man "despite being a Muslim" is not exactly a

comfortable feeling. That someone can be lynched to death for having meat in his fridge is even more eery.

I love India and intend to live & die here, but I also want to be able to freely question its imperfections. Just as I have the freedom to say that Islam has been hijacked by a gang of demonic and utterly vile hoodlums and that the rest of us Muslims seem helpless to combat this

evil. One's religion should have absolutely nothing to do with freedom of speech. Nor should 'tolerance' play a part in this equation.

'Intolerance' is a horrible word, even more horrible in practice. But 'tolerance' is only marginally better. I don't want to be 'tolerated' in condescending, rather grudging acceptance - as if I (and other minorities) were something not very nice that won't go away! I want my being here to be taken for granted. I feel an integral part of this nation, and I want everyone else to think so too. 'Tolerance' implies you can just about exist as long as you don't step out of line. An attitude typified by the Haryana Chief Minister's comment that Muslims can stay in India as long as they don't eat beef! I think we need to do better for our minorities, be they Muslims, Christians, Dalits, transsexuals, tribals, women in mini skirts, people with same-sex partners, artists flying fanciful styrofoam cows in the sky.... None of us want to be 'tolerated'. We want to be ourselves. It's not a favour - its our constitutional right.

It's not that prejudice didn't exist before. Even in the sanitized bastions where Chetan Bhagat claims we phoney liberals are bred - boarding school, an English-speaking upper middle-class home, life as a design professional in Delhi, my work with craftspeople and DASTKAR,

there was the occasional blip - landlords reluctant to rent one a barsati, overheard jokes about the violence, randiness, and breeding capacity of Muslims, the aforesaid box of turds.... These occasional infelicities were counterbalanced by great warmth and acceptance by most. These days, such crude generalisations, generally born of ignorance, seem to have hardened into a dividing of lines. An 'us' and 'them', escalating into violence as well as words - and given full

licence. A tacit assumption that being a minority means being acquiescent and silent. There are new social media fatwas - youngschool kids sending chain WhatsApp messages urging their friends to boycott Shahrukh Khan films because he's a "Bad Man"; a lakh offered to slap Aamir Khan. Urdu writers being whitewashed from the curriculum.

In 1947, my father, then a serving member of the ICS, wrote in a letter to my grandfather:

"You will I am sure not be surprised to hear that I have elected to remain in India (Hindustan) & not to go over to Pakistan. I am

absolutely opposed to the Muslim League ideology & mentality & it would have been a gross betrayal of all my ideals & hopes if I threw them over for the tempting posts that they are offering to Muslim officers who propose to get themselves transferred there."

My father later told me that one of his abiding sadnesses was how few of his Hindu colleagues understood why he didn't opt for Pakistan - a country supposedly made for Muslims. For him, and the rest of our extended family, it was inconceivable they exchange the eclectic vibrance of India for the claustrophobia of an Islamic state.

68 years later, it still seems difficult for many to understand that, Christian or Muslim. Aamir Khan or Aam Admi, most of us are just thoroughly ordinary Indians, seeking happiness, sanity and security like everyone else. And wanting our own voice. Why can't we all simply 'adjust' to each other and the cultural baggage we each carry - just as we do in our over-crowded trains and buses; amicably negotiating awkward tin trunks, crying babies, and strangely wrapped parcels; miraculously bonding over our tiffins.

And please trolls, stop twittering every time we try to course-correct India - it's ours as well.

Laila Tyabji is founder of Dastkar and received a Padma Shri in 2012.

The Radical Humanist on Website

February 2015 onwards 'The Radical Humanist' is 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.

Previous issues of the magazine can be read at:

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Mahi Pal Singh

COMMON CIVIL CODE

K. Pratap Reddy

The controversy relating to “Common Civil Code” under Art.44 of the Constitution of India is once again being raised unnecessarily and without any justification after about 6 ½ decades of the commencement of the Constitution. In all humility and with due deference to ALL those who are raising the controversy, I submit that they are doing so either in ignorance of the concept of “Common Civil Code” or are doing so deliberately to keep the society divided for gaining their short-lived political gains.

In my humble opinion the concept of “Common Civil Code” was relevant in the context of existence and operation of several laws in the Indian sub-continent divided into several STATES ruled by different Rulers before the advent of the British rule. If the Ruler belonged to Muslim religion, the principles of Muslim law touching all aspects of life (i.e., Socio, Economic and Political) were enforced. Likewise, if the Ruler belonged to Hindu religion, the principles of Hindu law relating to all aspects of life (i.e., Socio, Economic and Political) were being enforced. This being a part of Indian history I need not go into those details. I only request the readers to have a glimpse at the historical back ground of our country, to have a picture of administration of laws in India before the advent of the British rule.

The British Rulers enacted a “Common Civil Code” or “Common Civil Law” viz., The Indian Penal Code of 1860 and The Indian Criminal Procedure Code, 1861, The Indian Contract Act, 1872, The Indian Transfer of Property Act, 1882 followed by the Code of Civil Procedure for the purpose of bringing the country under one common legal system of administration. The concept of “Common Civil Code” in respect of Socio, Economic and Commercial fields is totally

different from the concept or imposition of a barbaric military rule not being conforming to the civilized concept of Rule of law, uniformly applying to ALL people of the Country.

Having thus, codified several aspects of Socio, Economic and Political life of the citizens of India, the Britishers refrained from interfering with the Personal Laws of Hindus and Muslims in respect of Marriage, Succession, Adoption and Maintenance etc. They allowed the personal laws of Hindus and Muslims to be continued in respect of Marriage, Succession, Adoption and Maintenance etc. It was no doubt true that in enforcement of the principles of the personal law, the Britishers had for long time allowed the Hindus and Muslims to get their disputes decided by “Hindu Pandits” in respect of Hindus and Mallas or Quazies in respect of Muslims, but later on, at the request and with consent of the Hindus, the disputes relating to Marriage, Succession & Maintenance etc., in respect of Hindus were allowed to be decided by the courts established by the STATE, but in respect of Muslims they allowed to be continued to be decided by the Mallas or Quazies up to 1937. In the year 1937, the British administration passed an act known as “The Shariat Act, 1937” which mandated that all the disputes with regard to the Muslims relating to their personal laws i.e., Marriage, Succession and Maintenance etc., SHOULD ALSO be decided by the courts established by the State. The above narration reveals that both the BROADER and NARROWER CONCEPTS OF “COMMON CIVIL CODE” have been achieved and ARE in EXISTING in India both in British period and thereafter for the last about SEVEN DECADES safeguarding the primary constitutional GOAL OF INTEGRITY OF INDIA.

While it is so, some immature and ill-informed sections of the majority community are now raising the controversial issue of **UNIFICATION** of **ALL PERSONAL LAWS OF ALL COMMUNITIES OF ALL RELIGIONS** giving the campaign the name of “**COMMON CIVIL CODE**” purporting to take refuge to Article 44 of the Constitution, without even applying their minds to the serious consequences such a campaign will lead to constitutional chaos. In the first instance, the campaigners appear to be oblivious of the fact that Article 44 of the Constitution is subject to the **MANDATE** in Article 37 that the Provisions of Part IV of the Constitution (Article 44 being part thereof) **SHALL NOT BE ENFORCEABLE BY ANY COURT**.

The other question to be answered is: “which system of Personal Law will be allowed to prevail and which system of Personal Law will be done away with”. Will the Hindus agree for the Muslim law of Marriage, Inheritance, etc., to be applicable to all by abrogation of ALL forms of Hindu Law relating to Marriages, Succession, Adoption and Maintenance etc? Likewise, will the Muslims and Christians agree to give a go bye to their systems of Personal Law?

Now, even coming to the nature and character of the particular law relating to each religion or community (whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians), there is **NO UNIFORMITY** of Law, either among Hindus or Muslims, even after the so called **CODIFICATION** OF Hindu Law under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 or under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.

It is an acknowledged truth that before the enforcement of the above Acts, there were innumerable **SCHOOLS OF HINDU LAW**. In the Eastern part of India i.e., Bengal, Orissa and Assam etc., there was a system of Hindu Law known as “**Dayabaga**” attributed to be originated

by “**Jimutha Vahana**”; while in the Western and Southern parts of Country, there was a system of Hindu law known as “**Mitakshara Law**” attributed to be originated from the great saint “**Yagnavalkya**”. It is a matter of common knowledge that even in both these schools of Hindu Law, (Mitakshara and Dayabaga), there were further divisions depending on various interpretations from time to time.

It may also be noted that even under the so called **CODIFIED HINDU LAW** referred to above, there is no uniformity either in principle or in performance. Take the case of Hindu Marriages Act. Section 7 of the Hindu Marriages Act, 1955, declares:-

- i) A Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto.
- ii) Where such rites and ceremonies include the “**Saptapadi**” (that is, the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire), the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken.

This provision of law does not lay down any common procedure for solemnizing the marriage among Hindus. Instead, it leaves to be **“SOLEMNIZED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CUSTOMARY RITES AND CEREMONIES OF EITHER PARTY** (vide Sub section (i) of Sect.7). Sub section (ii) of Section 7 of the Hindu Marriages Act, 1955 creates a lot of confusion for the court to determine what are the customary rights and ceremonies relating to either “**Saptapadi**” or “**Invocation of Fire**” etc. We all know that the “**INVOCATION OF FIRE**” (AGNIHOTRA) is applicable to only certain groups of upper class. If one party of the marriage belongs to upper class e.g. Brahmin and the other party belongs to lower class the question is left at large whether the **CUSTOM** of “**Saptapadi**” or

“Invocation of Holy Fire” should have been performed.

Coming to the question of Divorce, it is no doubt true that while Sections 12 to 15 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 provide for the right and procedure for the divorce, but at the same time, A DIVORCE BY CUSTOM IS NOT ruled out. Similar anomalies are also found in the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which allows the continuation of “Coparcenary” system which has been creating several problems to the courts in administering the law of Succession among Hindus.

Now, coming to the Muslim law, it has also different concepts of application of Muslim law depending upon whether the parties or Sunnies or Shiyas. It is interesting to know that among one community of Shah, known as Bohra, the law relating to the Inheritance is the same as that of original (uncodified) Hindu law.

In the context of such complex nature of the society divided into different Religions, Races, Tribes, Faiths and castes etc., applying different sets of laws, either statutory or customary, as the case maybe, it is not advisable, much less necessary, to venture upon or make an attempt to codify the personal laws relating to Marriage, Succession, Adoption and Maintenance where different communities and religions are living i.e, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and parsis etc.

Now coming to the provision of Art.44 of Constitution of India, I submit that it must be read subject to the mandate in Art. 37 of the Constitution of India which declares that the provisions contained in Part IV of the Constitution of India (Art.44 therein) shall not be enforceable by any court. Basu, an eminent Author, in his SILVER JUBILEE EDITION of the Constitution of India (in Vol. E) had coated Nehru’s speech in Parliament, which I quote here: “I do not think that at the present movement

the time is ripe in India for me to try to push it through”. Basu, also said in 1961 (at the time of publication of the book) that the time is not ripe even after 26 years the average Muslim may not agree for such common codification of their Personal Law. He further apprehends that such time MAY NEVER COME AT ALL.

Dealing with the question, the Supreme Court of India in “Lily Thomas, etc., vs Union of India” (reported in AIR 2000 SC 1650), at paragraph 40, had clearly stated which I quote herein “I also agree with Brother Sethi, J. that any direction for the enforcement of Art.44 of the Constitution could not have been issued and the question was also not decided earlier by the Supreme Court”.

In the case of “John Vallamatto Vs. Union of India” (reported in AIR 2003 SC 504), Chief Justice Khare, while observing for that the enactment of a “Common Civil Code” might help the cause of national integration by removing the contradictions based on ideologies, had left it to the wisdom of the country and their representatives in the Parliament to take steps about Art. 44 of the Constitution of India.

In the latest Judgment delivered on 19.02.2014, the Supreme Court of India in “Shabnam Hashmi Vs. Union of India”, had observed:- “conflicting viewpoints prevailing between communities on the subject makes the vision contemplated in Art. 44 of the Constitution of India (unified Civil Code) is not advisable”. The court opined that in view of the above reasons “present is NOT appropriate time to impose the provisions of Art.44 of the Constitution of India”.

Ultimately, in my humble opinion that the matter must be left to the different religions and groups to AGREE UPON A COMMON CIVIL CODE relating to their Personal Laws affecting Marriages, Succession, Adoption and Maintenance etc.

The Truth about The Gita

By Late V R Narla*



V.R. Narla

(On 30th August 2015 Prof. M.M. Kalbргgi, a renowned rationalist scholar and former Vice-Chancellor of Hampi University, Karnataka was shot dead at his residence. Co-Convenor of the Bajrang Dal's Bantwal cell, Bhuvith Shetty, welcomed the assassination of M.M. Kalburgi. Earlier a leading rationalist and anti-superstition activist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar was murdered in Pune on 20th August 2013 and another left leader and outspoken critic of Hindutva, Govind Pansare was murdered in Kolhapur on 20th February 2015. All these had the courage to speak the unsavoury truth based on their research without fear of consequences. All of them are suspected to have been killed by right wing religious extremists. With the BJP government at the Centre providing tacit support, right wing Hindutva elements are emboldened and are increasingly coming out openly against persons who are merely critical of Hinduism.

Human rights activists have strongly condemned the killing of Kalburgi and earlier those of Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare. As a mark of respect to these scholars and rational thinkers, and our commitment to rationalist thinking and also upholding the cause of freedom of speech and expression as granted by the Indian Constitution, we are publishing some chapters from the book 'The Truth about the Gita' written by late V.R. Narla, also a great scholar and rationalist, beginning with the September issue of The Radical Humanist. – Editor)

Duel With Dates

The concept of a Kali Age is at once crude and primitive. It goes against anthropology, against archaeology, against common sense itself. In man's history, there are only three ages thus far; they are the Age of Savagery, the Age of Barbarism and the Age of Civilization. Like the earlier two ages, the last one also has its different phases. Neither the age nor its different phases end abruptly, giving place to the new, they merge imperceptibly into each other. Often they exist side by side. Though a fascinating subject, it is not pertinent to the present context. I will therefore confine myself to saying that the belief in the recurring cycle of four ages, the Krita, Treta Dwapara and Kali, with progressive decline in righteousness (dharma), peace and prosperity is either crenkish or knavish or

both. Yet, attempts to fix the chronology of the prehistory of India begin almost always with a discussion as to when exactly the Kali Age has stepped in.

If that is decided, says the orthodox school, the date of Kurukshetra War will be decided automatically. On this point, C.V. Vaidya was most unambiguous. 'The orthodox opinion', he observed, "is that the war took place in 3101 B.C.,"* calculating on the basis of the generally accepted belief in India that in 1899 A.D., five thousand years had elapsed since the beginning of the Kali - age". And he announced regally. "We agree with this orthodox opinion", ' The orthodox, here as elsewhere, now as always, believe that the higher they raise their voice, the louder they bang the table, the truer will be the

beliefs they profess. And they do get away with it, and that is the tragedy of India. Our nation seems to provide the most fertile soil for the growth of credulity, irrationality and superstition.

** Others push it back by one year 3102 B.C.*

A part of this state of mind is to maintain that the Krita-Kali cycle of time is specially designed by God in His greatness for His chosen land, Hindustan, and for His chosen people, the Hindus. It does not apply, the Old Guard shouts in unison, to the rest of the world. 2 This, in effect, means that we have nothing to do, absolutely nothing, with the rest of the world and its people and its life. Need we, then, wonder why for a thousand years or more, Hinduism put its foot down firmly on foreign travel? Need we be pained why we have come to live like a snail in its own shell?

Now to return to Vaidya and the orthodox school, pastoral nomads who rode in horse-drawn chariots, and adopted the axe with a shaft hole as their principal weapon of war, the nomads known to history as Aryans, were at the start of the Kali Age still either in their original home or just began to disperse in different directions. They were to take almost another 1500 years to make their first entry into the Sind Valley. For reaching the Ganga-Yamuna basin, they must have taken a further period of 500 years. How, then, could a war between well-settled Aryan tribes have taken place in the neighbourhood of what is now Delhi in 3102 or 3101 B.C. ? To the orthodox folk, it is an absurd question. To silence you, they have a hundred and one cogent and powerful arguments. The highest of them in cogency and power is the one advanced by that worthy, Abinas Chandra Das, and it asserts that the "original cradle" of the Aryans was India itself, or more specially, the Sapta Sindhu region. Crawling out of that "cradle", they reached the four corners of the

world to shed the light of their glorious culture. To elaborate his discoveries, to expatiate on his theories, Das wrote two fat volumes, fat like the Vedic bulls. They are 'Rigvedic India' and 'Rigvedic Culture'. His discoveries and theories are so jejune that they do not deserve even a derisive smile. Yet, they were gobbled up by many, including a so-called historian of Vijayawada writer. I wonder whether this is chauvinism at its highest point or cussedness at its lowest level.

Leaving Das and his admirers in their "Aryan cradle", let us take up just one argument that is advanced in support of the traditional date for the start of Kali Age. In addition to literary evidence, there is, we are told, irrefutable inscriptional evidence, to prove that the Kali Age did begin in 3102 B.C. Yes, there is inscriptional evidence, but it has one little snag in it. The earliest of such inscriptions is the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II of the Western Chalukya dynasty. It is dated A.D. 634. How on earth can any inscription that comes 3736 years after an event be taken as evidence of that event. It is a thing which only an orthodox mind can comprehend.

Another piece of no less irrefutable evidence is flaunted in our face. It is a calculation made by Aryabhatta, according to which the Kali Age started in 3102 B.C.5 But Aryabhatta lived in A.D., the fifth century, that is, about 3600 years after the event to which he testified on the basis of his astronomical calculations of dubious value. The validity of this evidence is, again, a thing which only an orthodox mind can appreciate.

The other calculations based on the puranic lists of kings and their reigns are so widely divergent as to leave us bewildered. To fix the date of the beginning of the Kali Age, the dynastic lists, originally given by the Bhavishya Purna and later copied by the Matsya , Vayu , Brahmanda and some other Puranas are relied

upon. 6 The Bhavishya rests on a big lie, a colossal pretense. It claims to peer into the future and to record the kingdoms that would rise and fall, the dynasties that would rule and fadeout and the history that would unroll in ages to come. On the mistrustful basis of the dynastic lists of that fraudulent Purana and the rest of the lying lot, efforts are made to work out the average length of the reign of each king, and using it as a unit, to travel backwards in time to the starts of the Kali Age.

As the dynastic lists in the Puranas vary as regards the number of kings, and as the total period of the reign of each dynasty also varies from Purana to Purana, the average, as is to be expected, necessarily varies. And it varies from 14 to 25 years. To give a few instances at random, according to Pargiter that average for reign at a "fair" and "liberal" estimate is 18 years; according to Vaidya, it is 20 years; 8 according to Basham, 19 years; according to P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, as 20 years for a reign is "a very low figure ... if the length be raised to 25", it will „not at all be an extravagant figure"; 10 according to Vincent Smith, it is just a wee bit above 25, that is, 25.2 years; according to A.D. Pusalkar, it is rightly 19 years, but as it is good to err on the side of caution, it can be reduced to 18 years; 12 according to P.L. Bhargava, the average is two years more, that is, 20 years; " according to two of the early Indologists, A.F.R. Hoernie and J.F. Fleet, as the lists of the Puranic dynasties are too long, it is advisable to fix the average at no more than 15 years; " according to A.S. Altekar, on the basis of the very learned and the very laborious calculation he made in 1939, the average is 16.5 years, and on the basis of an equally learned and laborious calculation he made in 1959, it is only 14.5 years; 15 according to B.B. Lal, it is 14 years; 16 according to S.N. Pradhan — well, if you are tired of this rigmarole, I am. And so, I stop here.

There are three points that are specially to be noted regarding these calculations and conclusion. First, except very rarely no two historians or Indologists or other specialists agree about the average length of a reign, for the material they rely on is mostly faulty, if not fraudulent. Secondly, when we are dealing with dynastic lists that are very long, a difference of even five in the average length of a reign, can make a difference of many centuries in the final figure we arrive at. Thirdly, we cannot be too sure as to which dynasty followed which, and how many kings actually figured in a dynasty.

To make myself clear I will summarize as best as I can an exercise in fixing chronology taken from Pargiter. It is fairly certain that Chandragupta Maurya started his reign in or about 332 B.C. And that happens to mark the end of the Nanda dynasty. In trying to go back from that dynasty, especially from the time of Mahapadma Nanda, to the time of the Kurukshetra War, we have to take into account 24 Ikshvakus, 27 Panchalas, 24 Kasis, 28 Haihayas, 32 Kalingas, 25 Asmakas, 26 Kurus (Pauravas), 28 Maithilis, 23 Surasenas and 20 Veetahotra.

After making allowance for the discrepancies in these dynastic lists as given in different Puranas, we are left with a total of 257 contemporary kings in ten kingdoms, giving an average of 26 kings for each dynasty. Now, if 18 years is taken as the average for the reign of each king, 18×26 will take us back by 468 years. As it is said that the Nanda dynasty ended in 382 B.C., this would land us in (468 plus 382) 850 B.C., as the rough starting point of each of the ten dynasties which we are taking into account. But that is not the end of our journey backwards. Between the Kurukshetra War and the starting point of each of these ten dynasties, there were a few more kings and dynasties. (I am avoiding their names and numbers not to make our jungle

path more thorny than what it is.) And so, we have to add 100 years more to 850 B.C., and conclude with a lusty shout that 950 B.C., was the starting point of the Kali Age. "But suppose the average is 14 years per reign, we land in 846 B.C.; and if it is 25, we alight in 1132 B.C.!"

Are there not too many assumptions, surmises, conjectures, suppositions, guesses, speculation, etc., in the whole process? As I have already pointed out, there is absolutely no agreement as to the average period of the reign of a king. Furthermore, according to the Puranas, the total duration of the Nanda dynasty, that is, of Mahapadma and his eight descendants, was 100 years. But the Jain accounts extend it to 155 years while the chronicles of Ceylon reduce it to a mere 22 years. That is not the end of the matter, either. How long did Mahapadma rule to extinguish completely the Kshatriya kings and the Kshatriya kingdoms? Some say that he ruled for 88 years, and some others bring down his reign to just a dozen years.

As if this confusion is not enough, some scholars do not accept the synchronism of the Kurukshetra War and the beginning of the Kali Age. On the authority of Vriddha Garga, Varahamihira of A.D., the sixth century (both of them were famous astronomers of their times) maintained that the Kurukshetra War took place 653 years after the advent of the Kali Age, that is, in 2449-48 B.C. Kalhana, the Kashmiri historian of A.D., the eighth century, gave his full support to this view.¹⁹ K.P. Jayaswal, a historian of the present century, held, on the other hand, that the Kali Age, in fact, made its bow in 1388 B.C., and that the Kurukshetra War took place 36 years earlier, that is, in 1424 B.C.²⁰

Is it not presumptuous, I almost said madness, to hope that on the basis of such material a definite date for the Kurukshetra War and the singing of the Song Celestial can be assigned? And yet, for about fifteen hundred years, an attempt

has been seriously made to decide when exactly that war was fought. As I do not wish to overburden this chapter with too many references, I will set down here the widely different dates assigned to the Kurukshetra War by the more prominent of the disputants during the past fifteen centuries or more. First I will give the date which they opt for and then give within brackets their names. So here we go: 3102 B.C. (Aryabhatta and Bhaskaracharya); 3101 B.C. (C.V. Vaidya); 2449-48 B.C. (Vriddha Garga, Varahamihira, Kalhana and D.C. Sen); 1922 B.C. (J.S. Karandikar); 15th Century B.C. (Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Dharendra Nath Paul); 1468 B.C. (M. Ran-gacharya); 1450 B.C. (P.T. Srinivas Iyengar); 14th Century B.C. (H.T Colebrooke, Lord Elphinstone, H.H. Wilson, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Seetanath Tattavabhusan, R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhuri, A. Basham and Paul Renou); between 1200 and 1042 B.C. (A.D. Pusalker); 1198 B.C. (K.G. Sankar); 1197 B.C. (K.L. Daftary); 1151 B.C. (S.N. Pradhan); about 1000 B.C. (E.J. Rapson and Vincent Smith); 950 B.C. (F.E. Pargiter); and finally 850 B.C. (H.C. Ray-chaudhuri who opted earlier for the fourteenth century B.C.).

More debate on the point will only add more dates to make us more confused, irritated and bewildered. And yet the Bhimas and the Jarasandhas, Indian and foreign, will wrestle on. Let them fight it out. It will be good for their health. Meanwhile, we cannot overlook one important fact. Of those who took part in this debate, the more sober have formed one firm conviction, and it is that the Kali Age was a fabrication. Who did it? J.F. Fleet pointed his accusing finger at Aryabhatta. K.P. Jayaswal was less specific; all he said was that someone did it before the close of the Andhra period A.D. 498. Indologist Winternitz was inclined to agree broadly with Fleet and Jayaswal. The start of the Kali Age, he thought, was based "on the artificial calculation of Indian astronomers, and the

association of this date with the conflict of Kauravas and Pandavas is, of course, quite arbitrary." I fully subscribe to this view. The very concept of the Kali Age is based not on reason but on faith. Faith and fabrication always go together, just as reason and truth march together.

+++

***Late V R Narla**, humanist, editor of Two Telugu dailies, twice Rajya Sabha member, dedicated his books to V M Tarkunde, Premnath

Bazaz, M N Roy etc

V.R. Narla's THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GITA has been published in the US and continents. Prometheus Books in Amherst, New York has brought out this critical writing of Narla Venkateswararao as a part of the Center for Inquiry India project about a critique of Hinduism. V R Narla wrote this book in the last days of his life (1980's). He died before it saw the light of the day. Dr N. Innaiah brought it out in Hyderabad, India.

"Where a society has chosen to accept democracy as its credal faith, it is elementary that the citizens ought to know what their government is doing." Justice P. N. Bhagwati, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, (1981)

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Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

Justice (Late) Raghvendra Anantancharya Jahagirdar who retired as a Judge of the Bombay High Court was a great Radical Humanist. His judgments had a humane angle. An ardent rationalist, he was Chairman, Indian Rationalist Association. The movement initiated by Rationalist Association of India began tapering off during the post independent era as the newly independent Indian society felt no need for rationalism per se any more. Justice Jahagirdar was one of those who realized the importance of rationalism. Unless reason is given the primacy of place in our mental attitude, we cannot get rid of these curses, he felt.

He was also President, Indian Radical Humanist Association and also Editor of 'The Radical Humanist'. He has written extensively on humanist issues and various aspects of rationalism and published pamphlets on these subjects. His well researched articles on Secularism, being published in The Radical Humanist, are a guide for readers who wish to understand the concept of Secularism, currently a topic of debate in the country. - Editor

Secularism in India The Inclusive Debate

(Since the BJP led government has taken over at the centre, the forces of Hindutva have started raising their communal agenda. On more than one occasion, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS supremo, has said that Hindustan (and not 'Bharat' as the Constitution calls us) means the land of the Hindus and all those living in it are Hindus. A few days after asking why all Hindustanis (Indians) should not be referred to as "Hindus," the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak again on 17th August 2014, minced no words in stating that "Hindutva is the identity of India and it has the capacity to swallow other identities." "We just need to restore those capacities," he added. More than one minister in various BJP governments in the States has said that the Modi government will lead the nation towards the formation of the 'Hindu Rashtra'. The forces of intolerance have become more aggressive and the secular fabric of our multi-cultural society has come under serious threat. Hence the debate on

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar the secular character of our country, as mandated by our Constitution, has again begun afresh. It has become all the more important for us to understand what secularism really means and how we can protect it.

Late Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, a leading Radical Humanist like Justice V.M. Tarkunde, both of whom valued secularism as an essential ingredient of a truly democratic society, gave three important lectures on Secularism. As part of the ongoing debate, we are publishing all the three lectures. The first one 'Secularism Revisited' has already been published in the February 2015 to May 2015 issues of The Radical Humanist and the second one 'The Road Behind and the Road Ahead' in the October issue. The following is the third one of the series. - Editor)

During the freedom struggle and during the deliberations of the sessions of the Indian National Congress, prior to independence, there

was little, if any, debate on secularism and on what character the State of India was to take. It was no doubt accepted that India, inhabited by many religions, will not discriminate against any religion and will allow freedom of religions to the followers of different religions.

Independent India was anointed in a bloodbath consequent to communal riots that rocked the sub-continent for nearly two years. The Muslim majority areas of the British India were constituted into Pakistan, a theocratic Islamic State – a concept that was duly incorporated later in the Constitution of Pakistan. It should be remembered that in the history of the world Pakistan is the first and the only Islamic (indeed a theocratic) State born or established as such. Other Islamic States were States already existing that came to acquire Islamic character. This development has certain political and social consequences that should form the subject of a separate study.

Because of the generally non-communal character of the political party that spearheaded the freedom struggle and the wise leadership that guided Indian polity at the initial stages, India fortunately did not become a religious or a theocratic State. The debates in the Constituent Assembly that framed the Constitution of India show that there was unanimity on the point that there would be no discrimination based on religion, though there was no common understanding what secularism meant. Surprisingly or otherwise, there was no discussion on this subject at least in the public till the sixties. Apparently there was no judgement either of a High Court or of the Supreme Court dealing with the subject – or else there would have been some debate among our alert academicians.

Studies in Indian Secularism

In 1963 there appeared what has been regarded as a pioneer study on secularism in

India. This was India as a Secular State¹ by Prof. Donald E. Smith of Princeton University, New Jersey. Around the same time there was another study on the subject made by Ved Prakash Luther^a of University of Delhi, India, which was awaiting publication. It was published in 1964 as The Concept of the Secular State in India². In the Preface to his book Luther^a mentions that when Donald Smith's '*India As a Secular State*' appeared, his study had gone to the press but Smith had read the manuscript of Luther^a's study. As will be mentioned later, the two authors take contrary views on the subject.

Thereafter, for reasons which are not clear, regular discussion and debates took place on this subject, namely, Secularism and India. It would be in order to take note of some of the earlier studies which were published. In November 1965 The Indian Law Institute, New Delhi, had organised a seminar on Secularism: Its Implications For Law and Life In India and the papers presented at the seminar along with the inaugural address by the then Chief Justice of India were published in a volume under the same title³.

Challenges to Secularism

Prof. A.B. Shah, the Founder-President of the Indian Secular Society, Poona, wrote some articles in a newspaper which brought forth some responses. A Muslim friend put some questions to Shah and he responded to them in his characteristically frank and outspoken manner. Then there was his correspondence with Shankaracharya of Puri. All this material has been published in 1968 in a book under the title Challenges to Secularism⁴. This book deserves much wider reading than it seems to have enjoyed. Sample the following headings: The Challenge from Hindu Obscurantism; The Challenge from Muslim Obscurantism; Dialogue with a Hindu Obscurantist (i.e.

Shankaracharya of Puri).

A collection of essays in the form of a symposium has been edited by Prof. V.K. Sinha and has been published under the title of Secularism In India⁵ on behalf of International Association For Cultural Freedom. The readers will be interested to note that this volume contains criticism of Prof. Smith's book by two other academicians viz. Prof. Marg Galanter of University of Chicago and Prof. John T. Flint at the State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, and Prof. Smith's rejoinder to the same.

During the forty years or so secularism has been a supremely debated, discussed and contested subject. In India everyone says he is a secularist. Hindutvavadis⁶ insist that they are the true secularists and the Congress is pseudo-secularist; some Muslim scholars – notable among them Dr. Rafiq Zacharia and Asghar Ali Engineer – propound a theory that Islam based upon the Holy Quran is secularist. Moreover so many topics and sub-topics related – directly or indirectly – with secularism have been the subject of secular discourse in India that it is not possible to survey it within the space permitted for this essay. I intend to cover the debate in so far as it deals with three questions, which I formulate as follows:-

What is the true meaning of secularism?

Is the Republic of India, as per the Constitution of India, a secular State?

Is secularism desirable or possible in India?

The Meaning of Secularism

To answer the first question, a survey – though very brief – of the origin of the concept and meaning of secularism is necessary. As a concept, secularism was the product of Renaissance in Europe though the word secularism was not then used. Secular attitude

arose as a reaction to the tendency displayed during the medieval ages to despise human affairs and to meditate upon God. If a beginning is to be made towards understanding the meaning of this word, one may turn to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED Vol.IX 1978)⁷, which states that secularism is the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life to the exclusion of all considerations drawn on belief in God or in a future State. OED further points out that it was George Holyoake (1817-1906) who gave this name to the definitely professed belief.

The next step is to find out what Holyoake meant by secularism. Unfortunately, primary sources in the nature of collection of Holyoak's own writings are not available – at least not easily. But, happily, wholly reliable material is available to show the unmistakable views of Holyoake and Bradlaugh. In 1851, a definite stage in the emergence of explicit secularism was reached by the founding of the Central Secular Society by Holyoake. The Society issued a statement of secularist doctrine proclaiming –

Science as the true guide of man,
morality as secular, not religious, in origin,
reason as the only authority,
freedom of thought and speech, and
that owing to the uncertainties of survival we
should direct our efforts to this life only.⁸

George Holyoake was no less an atheist than Charles Bradlaugh. Holyoake had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for making the blasphemous statement that God should be retired. It should be remembered that Holyoake published The Trial of Theism in 1858. It is also recognised that his coining of the word 'secularism' was an attempt to give atheism

some respectability. In March 1870 there was between Holyoake and Bradlaugh a debate on the proposition that “(t)he principles of secularism do not include atheism”⁹ Holyoake in support of the proposition canvassed that “... the secularist concerns himself with this world without denying or discussing any other world, either the origin of this, or the existence of that”.¹⁰ Bradlaugh, on the other hand, held “that the logical consequence of secularism is the denial, the absolute denial of Providence”.¹¹ In short, Holyoake said that ignoring God was enough; Bradlaugh insisted that God should be banished. This minor difference between them did not affect their common conviction that secularism demanded complete separation of the Church from the State and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organisations.

Wall of Separation

The theory of separation of the Church from the State had been earlier, in December 1791, incorporated in the U.S. Constitution by the First Amendment which stated that “Congress shall value no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free existence thereof; ...”. Two theories were originally competing regarding the true meaning of this amendment. One theory was that the amendment bans the preferential treatment of any particular religion or sect by the State. The other theory was contained in the famous letter which Thomas Jefferson wrote to a group of Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1802 wherein he opined that the purpose of the First Amendment was to build ‘a wall of separation between Church and State’. Seventy-seven years later i.e. in 1879, Chief Justice Waite, while giving the unanimous opinion of the Court, characterised this statement by Jefferson as “almost an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment”.¹²

The U.S. Supreme Court has from time to time

wrestled with this question but the long line of decisions till today have consistently taken the view that State-aided schools cannot allow the school time to be utilised for anything connected to religion, even non-denominational religion, nor can such schools permit their premises even outside the school time, to be used for any religious purposes. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever forms they adopt to teach or practice religion.¹³

I cannot resist the temptation of recalling one opinion of the Supreme Court viz. Engel v. Vitale¹⁴ which held that even optional prayers in aided schools were unconstitutional. The majority opinion was delivered by Justice Hugo Black who was a devout Baptist and Sunday School preacher. He was denounced as a Communist and an atheist. It was the wise counsel of the then President of U.S., John Kennedy, that the Americans should accept the decision which was a “welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home and attend our Churches with a good deal more fidelity and we can make the true meaning of prayer more important in the lives of all our children”.¹⁵

Incidentally, Justice Black was, in his younger days, a member of Ku Klux Klan and anti-Black. As a judge of the Supreme Court, he was a strong de-segregationist. Carl Sagan has pointed out that as a member of the Ku Klux Klan, Black wore white robes and intimidated the blacks; as a judge of the Supreme Court he wore black robes and intimidated the whites.¹⁶

Multi-religious Society

America, a secular State in concept and practice, was founded by Pilgrim Fathers. Immigrants, who have poured into this country for over two centuries, have been intensely religious people. Even today there are probably

more religious societies, groups, sects – incorporated or not – in America than in any other country. American society is not secular though the State is. The world's first fundamentalist movement was born in this country. It is for this reason, namely the existence of so many denominations of religion, amounting to plurality of religions, that it was thought to have a wall of separation between the Church and the State. This would, the Constitution-makers realised, prevent the dominance of any one particular denomination and secondly would prevent any one denomination members, if in power, from meddling into the affairs of another denomination. The American example demonstrates that in a multi-religious society it is not only necessary but also possible to build a secular State. This holds a valuable lesson to India.

Prior to the Revolution in 1789, France was a Catholic country, having a Catholic monarch, with the Roman Catholic Church as the Official Church and the Roman Catholic religion as the official religion. The Church commanded power, prestige and pelf. The Church controlled the educational system including the schools and enforced the civil law which was the religion-made law. This situation could be described as that when the State was in the Church and not the Church in the State.

M. Jean Banbarot, an authority on French laicite, the French equivalent of secularism, has, in an illuminating contribution to Secularism And Its Critics,¹⁷ traced the development of secularism in France through three stages over a period of two centuries. The French Republic has ultimately evolved into a wholly secular republic. Today the Church is in the State and not the State in the Church. The educational system has been completely freed from the thrall of the Church – “in the French

republican school, one does not learn to believe but to reason”.¹⁸

Remember, France was the most religious nation in the world, but by a cultural revolution was transformed into the most secular State. Today it is impossible to know the religious composition of the French society because census does not ask for nor records the religious affiliations of the French citizens.

Turkey

Turkey was the centre of the Ottoman Empire and the seat of Caliphate – the supreme religious and secular head of Musalmans all over the world. The religion was Islam, the most difficult religion confronting secularism. After Mustafa Kamal came into power he dethroned the Sultan and abolished the Caliphate much to the chagrin of the leaders of the Indian Muslims. A rigorous secularism was introduced by making it an offence to wear a fez cap (a symbol of Islam), abolishing all monasteries and religious houses and confiscating their properties, closing Muslim religious schools and starting State non-religious schools, replacing Shariat law by Swiss Civil Code, Italian Penal Code and German Commercial Code, abolishing polygamy and opening the professions to women who were prohibited from wearing purdah.¹⁹ Ataturk, the Father of Turks, with the submissive collaboration of the Turkish National Assembly, established a secular State and created a secular society which have survived till today though facing some challenge from Islamic revivalism.

The justification for the review of the evolution of secular States in the three countries made above is the need to emphasize the fact that in all these countries there were deeply religious societies. Yet secular States with obvious benefits have been established in these countries. Whether secularism is desirable in a multi-religious society like India is another matter. But

it is incorrect to say that in India where there are many religions, predominantly only two – Hindu and Muslim – a secular State cannot be established.

It would, I think, be appropriate at this stage to dispose of the views of two eminent scholars on secularism. The former President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, should not, with great respect, have been expected to pronounce authoritatively on secularism. However, in the discourse on secularism in India, some participants have quoted a passage from his *Recovery of Faith*.²⁰ I would refrain from reproducing in extenso Dr. Radhakrishnan's view of secularism.²¹ For the present purpose the following extract is enough to inform ourselves his views on the subject:-

No group of citizens shall arrogate to itself rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person should suffer any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike should be free to share to the fullest degree in the common life. This is the basic principle involved in the separation of Church and State. The religious impartiality of the Indian State is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as has been defined is in accordance with the ancient religious traditions of India.²² [Emphasis provided]

At best this means that in secular society everyone should be free to practice his or her religion. In my opinion, this is of very little use in the discussion on secular State.

Colour of Secularism

Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar, who, as the Chief Justice of India, had inaugurated the seminar on Secularism organised by the Indian Law Institute in New Delhi, delivered Kashinath Trimbak Telang Endowment Lectures in February 1970 when he was the Vice-Chancellor of University of Bombay. The subject of the

lectures was Secularism and the Constitution of India.²³ Gajendragadkar has in those lectures reviewed the development of secularism in Europe, America and Turkey and has also noticed the meaning of secularism as unfolded by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. After doing this he has proceeded to state as follows:

The word 'secular', like the word 'religious', is amongst the richest of all words in its range of meaning. It is full of subtle shades which involve internal contradictions, and of these contradictions the conventional dictionary meaning can scarcely give a correct view."²⁴

This, with great respect, is hardly the correct way to approach the subject and unfortunately this view has coloured much of the later discussion that took place in India.

'Oh, water, what is your colour?'

'The colour of whatever you mix me in!'²⁵

The meaning of secularism, it is believed, has emerged with sufficient clarity from the survey of historical development made earlier herein. The next question is whether India, as unfolded by the Constitution, is a secular State. What did the Constitution-makers intend it to be? The Constitution, till the 42nd Amendment in 1976, did not contain the word 'secular' except incidentally in Article 25(2)(b). Prof. K.T. Shah was the only member who made a valiant effort to get a provision regarding the secular character of India included in the Constitution. The following amendment, moved as Amendment No.366, was defeated on 3rd December 1948.²⁶

The State in India being secular shall have no concern with any religion, creed or profession of faith; and shall observe an attitude of absolute neutrality in all matters relating to the religion of any class of its citizens or other persons in

the Union.”

To be sure, neither this amendment nor the speech which Prof. Shah made in support²⁷ of the amendment would have brought about a situation of “a wall of separation between the State and the Church”. But it would have put a brake upon the State functionaries freely using the State finance and the machinery for pilgrimages and other religious activities. Prof. Shah’s amendment would have also prevented the State media, especially radio and television, from broadcasting bhajans,²⁸ prayers, religious discourses etc.

(To be Continued.....)

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18 *Ibid.* at 134

19 *Ataturk – The Rebirth of a Nation* by (Lord) Patrick Kinross, first published in 1964 and now available in a 1999 reprint in Phoenix Giant Paperback, is a delightfully readable account of Kamal’s life and times. More recently in 2000 what has been described as a credible and definitive book on Kamal is available in *Ataturk* by Andrew Young. (London: John Murray, 2000)

20 London: George Allen and Unwin, London, 1956

21 See, *Ibid.* at 202

22 *Ibid.*

23 These lectures were published under the same title by the University of Bombay in 1971 and distributed through Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., Bombay

24 *Ibid.* at 2

25 Translation of the lines of a popular Hindi film song

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28 Religious hymns.

Researchers' Section:

Women Empowerment in India: The Status Thus Far

Dr. Pravesh Kumari

Introduction

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in our in the eighties and to empowerment in the nineties. The most common explanation of "Women Empowerment" is the ability to exercise full control country. In India nearly half population consists of women. The government of India entered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as women empowerment year to focus on a vision. 'Where women are equal partners like man'. The last decades have witnessed same basic changes in the status and role of women in our society and nation. There has been shift in policy approaches from the concept of welfare in the seventies to development over one's actions. Empowerment is the means by which individuals, groups and communities take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and other to maximize the quality of their lives. Empowerment is exercising control over ones live, firstly our resources of financial, physical and human nature, and secondly, on beliefs, values and attitudes.

In short, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation to greater decision making power and control and further to transformative action.

Status of Indian Women

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennium. In early Vedic period women enjoyed complete equality with man in all fields of life. Daughter enjoyed as much freedom as

son. However, later the status of women began to deteriorate approximately from 500BC the situation worsened with invasion of Mughal period. Sati Pratha, polygamy and ban on widow remarriage become part of social life. The Indian society of the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the johar was practiced in some part of Indian society, the Devadasis of temple were sexually exploited, polygamy was widely practiced.

However, the British rule contributed a lot for emancipation and the revival of lost identity of Indian women. The empowerment idea manifests itself at all level of societal interaction. All most all Hindu temple openly or surreptitiously bounded Davadasis. The contact with western culture, tradition, literature and education influenced very deeply the minds of Indian leaders. The leaders and social reformers who were in the fore front of the struggle for women emancipation were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and many others some law were enacted such as "Abolition of Practice of Sati, Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 etc. But the real change came after independence from the framers of Indian constitution, keeping in view the importance of women as well as their place and position in our society, and they made clear provisions in the constitutions.

Women in Contemporary India

(i) Legal and Constitutional Provision: The constitution of India grants equality to women in various field of life. Part III of the constitution

specifies the fundamental right to equality of man and women in all spheres.

Article 14 The Fundamental Rights provides right to equality before the law and equal protection of law within the territory of India.

Article 15 Clause (I) says that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them. Clause (3) of Article 15 enables the state to make special provisions for women and children.

Article 16 provides equal opportunities to all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

Article 16(II) says no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex descent, place of birth, residence or any of them be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state.

Article 19 deals with right to freedom of speech and expression, right to form association, right to assemble peacefully and without arms and to move freely throughout the territory of India.

Part IV of the Constitution contains Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 39(a) says that the citizens-men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Clause (d) of Article 39 says that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women and holds clause (e) that the health and strength of workers-men and women and the tender age of children are not abused and the citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter an occupation unsuited to their age or strength.

Article 42 provisions for just and human condition of work and maternity relief.

Article 51(a)(e) imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce the practices

derogatory to the dignity of women.

But the Directive Principles are of the non-justiciable nature and it depends on the will of the state to follow them or not.

For the purpose of social welfare and betterment of the Indian society and for betterment of the conditions of Indian women there are some laws and acts which the Government of India has enacted.

They include (1) Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, Hindu Succession Act 1956, which provides that Indian women shall have a right to property they were formerly deprived of (2) Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, which provides for protection of Indian women against the oppressive demands of dowry (3) Hindu Marriage Act 1955 and (4) Special Marriage Act which provides for the maintenance of Indian married women in case of their divorce (5) Maternity Benefits Act 1961, (6) The recent introduction by the Union Government of special reservation in services for the Indian women in the matter of recruitment in various government services. The Government of India declared 2001 as the year of women empowerment. The National Policy for the empowerment of women came in 2001 and the protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 came into force on October 26, 2006 so that they may become aware of their position and participate in the development of the nation.

In the modern age women have played an important role in each and every respect. They have contributed in the field of education, literature, social activities, defence forces, journalism, film industry, hotel management, administration etc. Apart from these contributions they have also contributed in domestic field as mother, wives, sister, daughters, learners, workers, citizens and leaders. But they are not treated fairly and

equally. Are they empowered today in home, in office, in society and they getting there due share in the society? What is the actual position of women?

(ii) Actual Condition of Indian Women: The constitution of India grants equality to women in all fields of life. But it is still only on paper. Yet a large number of women are either ill equipped or not in a position to push themselves out of their traditionally unsatisfactory unequal socio-economic conditions.

In a country where great poet like 'Tulsidas' verse from Ramayana "Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Nari, ye sab tadan ke adikhari." Although it was written in different context, highlights the discrimination and deep rooted gender bias, which still exists in all aspects on the basis of caste, community, religious affiliation and class. All the males from all sections of society want reservation and preferential treatments are not extended to women, they all join together in denying these benefits to women. They are still poor. We are now entering in the twenty first century. But women have to face various type of violence the condition of women has not still changed in this regard. Every women with a streak of individuality suffer from the painful feeling that she is forced to depend on others in the life. They are second class citizens perceptibly behind their men in spite of their individual worth and while legislation and equality rights and status are guaranteed by the constitution.

Discrimination against the girl child starts the moment she enters in to the mother's womb. The child is exposed to gender differences since birth and in recent times even before birth, in the form of sex-determination tests leading to foeticide and female infanticide. The home which is supposed to be the most secure place, is where women are most exposed to violence, if a girl child open her eyes, she is killed after

the birth by different cruel method in some part of the country. Thus the very important "right to life" is denied to women.

Female infanticide continues to be very common. Statistics show that there is still a very high preference for a male child in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Jharkhand. The male-female ratio is very high in these states. In India there is incentive to have a son because they offer security of the family in old age and are able to conduct rituals for deceased parents and ancestors. In contrast daughters are considered to be a social and economic burden. An example of this is dowry. Continuing abuse of the dowry tradition has been one of the main reasons for the sex-selective abortions and female infanticides in India.

Domestic violence is also widespread, In Indian society it is widely accepted that within the family the man is the master and woman is the inferior and subordinate partner and societal pressure force women to maintain the status quo. Wife beating is the most prevalent form of domestic violence against women in the Indian society and it is viewed as a general problem of domestic discord.

The political status of women in India is very unsatisfactory. In recent years there have been open moves to increase women's political participation, the women's reservation policy bill is however a very sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in parliament. In the Panchayati Raj System, however, women have been given representation as a sign of political empowerment. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. However, there power is restricted, as practically, it is the men who wield all the authority. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leader, so that they can out a catalyst of change in their villages for conditions

of women. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go and may even have become more difficult in the recent year.

Education plays a very important role in overall development of women. It not only helps in the development of women, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women tend to promote education of their girl child but also can provide better guidance to all or their children. Education is the most heeded for women but the position of women's education in India is not at all satisfactory.

The economic condition of women in India is also very bad, most of them lack property, the main reason for this is the lack of possession of land and home in their names. In most Indian families women do not own any property in their own names, and do not get a share of parental property. Due to weak enforcement of law protecting them, women continue to have little access to land and property. In fact some of the laws discriminate against women, when it came to land and property right, land and property rights especially for women are considered an important way of addressing underlying economic, social and political inequalities. But the actual translation of this act in the real practice is worth nothing. Indian society in the context is a conservative society where only males have rights to succeed the paternal property. Women/daughter have been virtually deprived from this important right, the married daughters facing harassment have no residential rights in the ancestral home. The bad effect of educational backwardness and social inequality is visible more on employment scenario of women.

Conclusion

Indian women after 65 years of independence, the actual condition of women is not satisfactory,

the unfavourable condition of women is reflected in many social practices, ceremonies and beliefs which continue even today. The legal securities and educational facilities provided to women, however have not been able to change the traditional way of thinking, the implementation of law is tardy, domestic violence, female infanticide, lack of financial independence, discrimination in our society, the reasons are many such as the Indian society accepts a sharp distinction between men and women's spheres. We are now entering in the twenty first century but Indian women are still crying for social justice.

The following are some suggestions regarding the changes:

Today there are lots of things that are happening in the name of women empowerment in India and lot of resources are spent in this direction. Keeping this in mind it is crucial to have a reality check on what is happening on paper and what is the actual ground situation.

The most important step is to initiate ground level actions, however, small it might seem. The ground level actions should be focused towards changing the social attitude and practices prevalent in the society which are highly biased against women. This can be initiated by working with the women at the grassroots level and focusing on increasing women's access and control over resources and increasing their control over decision making.

A new movement in this direction is the need of the hour Radical change in value system, the principle of gender equality and re-establishing the principle of gender equality and gender justice will be able to achieve women equality and ensure honourable co-existence of women with men in society.

Parents must change their attitudes to their children and provide them the parenting that

reflects equality to daughters they must be given opportunities to develop their decision mapping skills and leading capacities and sons must be taught to respect their sisters as equal in particular, daughter must have equal access to the same quantity, quality and type to education.

Women empowerment in India is not possible unless violence against women is eradicated from the society. Apart from the laws and legislations the violence against women can be only tackled through attitudinal change that need to take place in the family, in the society and the female members of the society as well. Gender sensitization and gender training is primary need of the hour.

Although emancipation of women is not a simple matter Indian society, requires the attitudinal change of the husband, other family members and society as a whole of the women. Everyone who is committed to women's freedom and equality must join hands and the work together to promote awareness to mobilize action to draw the attention of decision makers, to break social barriers and ensure justice. Then only the Vedic verse (wherever women is respected, God resides there) would come true.

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From Party to Movement*

M.N. Roy

(M.N. Roy, a great visionary as he was, had visualised even before the country attained Independence the shape of things to come so far as the functioning of parliamentary democracy was going to take place in the country after Independence. He visualised how there was going to be mad scramble for power by politicians winning elections using money and muscle power, and how they were going to neglect the people who would vote for them; how the party leaders were going to be dictatorial in their approach and how elected representatives of the people were going to be more responsible and accountable to their respective political parties and not to their electors; how delegation of the sovereignty, which rightfully belongs to them, by the people to their parliamentarians was going to make them completely powerless and helpless, being denuded of their democratic freedoms and rights, before the so-called 'servants of the people' who were going to become their rulers and how democracy, 'the government of the people and by the people', was going to become 'the government for the people' run by modern Maharajas and their family members for their own benefits. Roy not only visualised the problem but also suggested the remedy of bringing in 'power to the people' or direct democracy, as defined by some political scientists, empowering the people at the grassroots: exercise of the people's sovereignty by themselves through 'People's Committees', putting up their own candidates for election and not voting for the candidates put up by various political parties.

In 'Politics, Power and Parties' Roy has given a realistic view of our politics and parties today. During the last 68 years of our independence, morality and idealism has completely disappeared from our politics, parties and our political leaders. Given the condition of our politics today, and for the betterment of our political life and democracy in our country Roy's views are insightful and worth considering. Therefore, in order to present a complete view of Roy's thoughts on all these issues facing our country, we have started the publication of his lectures/articles compiled in the book for the benefit of our readers. – Editor)

Karl Marx, in one of his more reckless moods, declared that man was the root of mankind, which is indeed less obvious than it sounds. Most probably, he hit on the strange formulation in an attempt to improve on Protagoras, who had said that man was the measure of all things. The ancient Sophist doctrine had gone into the making of the nineteenth century Utilitarianism of the Philosophical Radicals. Marx denounced them as ideologists of the bourgeoisie. But he could not be a powerful prophet of social justice, and yet disown the humanist tradition. In order to distinguish his spiritual heritage, or perhaps

to prove his immaculate conception, he tried to reject, by implication, the fallacious principle of ancient Humanism. He preferred Feuerbach's more modern Humanism, the just critique of which quasi-mystic doctrine was the point of departure of his journey towards Communism.

Over a century has passed since Marx began as a confused, Utopian Humanist. During this fateful century, modern civilisation broke away from its humanist tradition and pursued a variety of collectivist ideals, all of which have proved illusive. Of late, there has been a revival of the tendency to remember the root — man. There

is a movement for a humanist revival. India lives in the backwaters of modern civilisation. The echo of any new movement of thought reaches our country after a long time-lag. Therefore, the impact of the movement for a humanist revival is not yet felt in our country very keenly; but a faint echo has reached us, and has found a response in the ideas of New Humanism and the Radical Humanist movement.

In the post-war period, the demand for a humanist revival has become a distinctive feature of the intellectual life of Europe. The movement, however, suffers from some self-contradictions. At least some of its currents propose to resurrect Humanism on the basis of a religious revival. The French philosopher Jacques Maritain is the leader of this movement. He maintains that the movement for a humanist revival must seek inspiration in Christianity. This attitude contradicts the historical fact that the humanist tradition of the modern civilisation was born of the Renaissance, which was the revolt of man against God and against the church.

There are other advocates of a humanist revival who would not go to the extent of Maritain's neo-scholasticism. They propose to resurrect the spirit of the humanist natural religion of the eighteenth century—a religion without God, Christianity without Revelation. All great religions originally were in some sense humanist movements. But they all developed in the contrary direction, simply because their common point of departure was belief in the superhuman. Religion can be very sophisticated; it may do away with the anthropomorphic conception of God and reduce deity to a disembodied cosmic consciousness. Yet, religion is not religion unless it assumes some superhuman existence. The basic principle of Humanism is the primacy of man. Manhood is the beginning of human existence, and man is an end in himself. Evidently, Humanism cannot be based on the belief that

there is something higher than man.

That was the defect of Humanism in the past. Therefore, in course of time, it was discredited as a merely romantic doctrine. The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance was also ultimately defective. It represented man's conscious or unconscious revolt against God, yet could not explain man. The belief in 'God was replaced by a belief in man. Man became the object of belief, not an object of knowledge. God was dethroned, to be replaced by Man, conceived as a mystic entity, essentially not different from the metaphysical concept of Soul deduced from the belief in God.

The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance was certainly an advance on the religious Humanism of the earlier period. But because of its mystic implication, because human being and becoming could not as yet be placed in the context of the physical world, it also could not satisfy the human mind. Subjected to the searching scepticism of seventeenth century rationalism, it was again relegated to the lumber-room of history. Ultimately, the tradition of the naturalist yet mystic Humanism found a fresh expression in Feuerbach, the disciple of Hegel, who became the spiritual father of Karl Marx.

Feuerbach's critique of Christianity is equally valid for all religions. It is thoroughly devastating. It shows how God is a creation of human imagination, yet, even then, leaves man unexplained as simply given, an elementary undefinable, a mystic entity, fountain-head of a new faith.

But human efforts of centuries at last reached a point where only one thing remained to be done to complete the spiritual liberation of man: to explain, What is man? And modern science was promising a solution of the final problem. The venerable doctrine of special creation, expounded differently in different religions,

received the first mortal blow early in the nineteenth century, when geological discoveries showed that life had existed on the earth from time immemorial. That startling revelation gave birth to the modern science of biology, which within less than half a century led to the revolutionary discovery of Darwin about the origin of species and descent of man. The evolution of life having been traced into the depths of physical nature, and the animal ancestry of the human species established, man ceased to be a mystic and mysterious phenomenon specially created by God as a vehicle for the operation of the Providential Will.

At that moment, Karl Marx stepped in with his partially valid criticism of Feuerbach; but instead of improving upon him, he buried Humanism for a long time to come. Karl Marx seized on that defect of Feuerbach's philosophy and tried to set it right. He said that man was a social being, having his being and becoming in society. An effort to improve on Feuerbach ultimately led to the burial of the individual man, who was submerged in the collective being of society.

Yet, Marx began as a Humanist, pursuing the age-old idea towards a point where development of the individual would mean development for all. The humanist tradition of modern civilisation was too strong for a prophetic reformer to ignore. But a correct rejection of the mysticconception of man led him to a negation of his own ideal. Man is a social animal; he cannot have his being and becoming in isolation; ergo, argued the Hegelian, social reorganisation is the condition for the liberation of man. The perverted Utopia of Communism became a new religion; an imaginary collective ego—social interest or social progress—replaced the old God, to be propitiated by the sacrifice of the individual. Man must surrender his freedom as an individual to regain it in a collective existence.

That was a throwback. Modern political theories, developed in the seventeenth century, all started from the individual. The problem was regarding the origin of society; how was civil society founded? The creation of modern political institutions was to be guided by the knowledge of the origin of civil society. In the last analysis, the problem was about the nature of man. The origin of society was explained variously by the different thinkers who applied themselves to the problem. They all assumed, implicitly, the rationality of man. The doctrine of Social Contract ultimately became the Bible of democracy. Philosophically, it was interpreted differently. Rousseau's interpretation differed from that of Locke. Liberalism based on Locke's doctrine retained the humanist principle of the sovereignty of the individual. But Rousseau became the prophet of totalitarianism, which was heralded by his doctrine of the General Will, deduced from the hypothesis of an original contract.

Thus, a metaphysical concept of popular sovereignty replaced the mediaeval doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. If kings ruled by divine right, Rousseau's democracy also rested on a metaphysical sanction, which ultimately led to a situation in which the creation had greater importance than the creator, to the extent that it was entitled to claim the creator for its first victim.

Modern democracy was indeed an improvement on medievalism. But its individual units eventually became a constitutional fiction, which eclipsed the man of flesh and blood endowed with intelligence, will and emotion. In modern Liberalism, the individual became the "economic man". That degeneration of the humanist tradition of modern democracy culminated in the Philosophical Radicalism of the nineteenth century, which still held individual freedom as an article of faith. But in the context

of capitalist society, “the economic man” could only exist either as a slave or a slave-holder. That debasement of the individual discredited the liberal democratic doctrine of individual freedom, and gave rise to Marxist collectivism, which simply recognised the fact of the total eclipse of man by institutions and argued, with a measure of seeming plausibility, that reconstruction of society frankly as a totalitarian institution would restore human freedom.

Ultimately, democracy was threatened with destruction in a fierce clash of totalitarian dictatorships, and civilized mankind was overtaken by the crisis of our time, perhaps the greatest crisis in history, being not only political or economic, but moral and spiritual—a total crisis affecting the whole of human existence. The movement for a humanist revival is the reaction to this crisis; it represents a conscious human endeavour, as distinct from the mechanical action of political or economic automatic forces.

But to be revived, so as to rescue civilised society from the imminent danger of a complete breakdown or relapse into a modern barbarism, Humanism must be freed from the defect of its earlier history and the fallacies of the subsequent periods. It must discard the mystic and metaphysical notion about the essence of man, and place man, in his totality, in the context of the physical Universe. It must start from a clear understanding of the being and becoming of man, of the nature of man, such as will rule out all possibility of mystification and subordination of man to anything beyond his biological being, which includes intelligence, will, emotion, instincts and intuition.

Therefore we call it New Humanism; it is the old doctrine of human sovereignty and dignity informed by modern science. We did not have to discover anything new. The natural sciences have dispelled all mystery about the old question: What is Man? Tracing the origin of man in

physical nature, they have disrupted the venerable prejudice that there is something in man which is not physical; which is spiritual, in the sense of something beyond the reach of human understanding, and not of this world. Inherited from the days of blessed ignorance, it never allowed man to have full faith in himself. And a complete loss of that faith is the cause as well as the most characteristic feature of the crisis of our time. Therefore it is a moral, spiritual, crisis which cannot be overcome by any institutional makeshift.

Man must regain faith in himself if the civilised world is to get out of the crisis of our time. But he cannot be self-reliant unless he outgrows the time-honoured prejudice that, if he is ever to shine, he can do so only in the reflection of a Divine Light. New Humanism maintains that modern science, particularly the science of life and man, that is, biology, has destroyed the foundation of this prejudice. The foundation was ignorance. The light of scientific knowledge has revealed the truth about human nature. Man is essentially a rational being. His basic urge is not to believe, but to question and to know. He gropes in the darkness of ignorance, a helpless victim of blind faith in forces beyond his control, until the light of knowledge illuminates his path. The only truth accessible to man is the content of his knowledge. Anything beyond the reach of his knowledge is nothing—an illusion.

Religion itself was a creation of the primitive rationality of man in the state of ignorance. Super-natural forces were assumed as hypotheses without which he could not understand the world. When knowledge makes his innate rationality more manifest, he can discard the old hypotheses based on ignorance, because he no longer needs them. Man is not a static being; he grows continually and endlessly. Humanism, therefore, must keep pace with the growth of man—his knowledge about himself

and of nature. **Humanism informed by modern scientific knowledge is a new Integral Humanism. Going to the root of man's existence, it is a Radical Humanism. It proclaims the primacy of man because it can explain man without any super-human or supernatural hypothesis. It pursues the ideal of a rational and moral society, because it knows that man is rational by nature and therefore can be moral,**

not under compulsion, but spontaneously and voluntarily. Since a consciously rational man cannot but behave morally, man also is naturally moral. Morality is neither transcendental nor intuitive; it is a human attribute, which can be cultivated with growing enlightenment. These are the fundamental principles of the New Humanism which traces man's beginning in physical nature and declares himself to be his own end.

So long as Humanism was associated with a mystic concept of man—man engaged in self-contemplation, living in an ivory tower, having nothing to do with the world of other men—it

naturally could not be concerned with social problems, with politics and economics. **New Humanism is not a system of contemplative thought. It is a philosophy of life, and life combines thought, feeling and action. It proposes to give democracy a chance by laying a solid foundation of an intelligent public opinion formed by rational human beings. Politics, as it has been practised hitherto, has reduced the principle of popular sovereignty to a fiction. Humanist politics alone can make a reality of it.**

A country is not free unless it is inhabited by free men, by men who believe that they can make themselves free; who are good, moral and virtuous because it gives them pleasure to be so; who need no super-

human authority to compel them to be so. We do not want any heavenly policemen to keep us on the right road. Unless man can stand morally on his own legs, freedom remains an illusion; and no society can ever be free unless it is composed of free men. If history cannot strike out a new path guided by such principles, there is no hope for mankind.

A little knowledge of human history and modern science gives the conviction that there is hope; that mankind is capable of striking out a new way. Only, it cannot be shown by leaders who are as blind as their followers. The leaders of the contemporary world, democrats and dictators alike, are the victims of their own prejudices. Politicians have forgotten that they are men like others.

Those who believe themselves to be supermen have really sunk to the subhuman level. Because what is non-human is less than human. Democratic politicians and dictators equally believe that they can be powerful only if identified with powerful States; none of them can claim the adherence, affection, love and admiration of their fellow-citizens because he is what he is, but only as an ordained leader, a superman, the head of an all-powerful State. Such people, of course, can never strike out the new way which must be travelled if mankind is to come out of the crisis, and which must be a humanist way.

The vicious circle of party-politics has become such a tradition that anybody who would say anything against it, maintaining that politics can be practised in a different way, may be laughed out as a crank. Therefore, what we are saying today may be dismissed as unrealistic and impractical. But somebody must bell the cat. However, it is not after all such an impractical proposition. Leaving aside the philosophy, we can approach the problems of life pragmatically, empirically.

What is happening in India, for instance? There is a party in power. It is in power because the people have voted it to be there. By all accepted standards, it is a democratic party, and we have a popular government. The next election will be on universal suffrage. The Congress will come back to power with an even greater majority. Because there will be so many more voters to put slips of paper in the ballot box with the reverential spirit of worshipping at a shrine. In the given atmosphere of blind faith, religious mentality and hero-worship, the Congress cannot be kept out of power. As a party supported by the people, why should it be dislodged from power? Hence we may have a one-party State indefinitely, under a democratic system. Has not parliamentary democracy lost all meaning? There is talk of an opposition party. Does this kind of authoritarian democracy make room for an opposition party? In the given atmosphere of 'the country, the opposition party would have to produce two Mahatmas if it wants to beat the Congress, which has won the blind faith of the people thanks to its having had a Mahatma. By that standard, the Congress Mahatma having worn only a small loincloth, the opposition Mahatmas, to beat the opponent in the game of making political capital of the religiosity and prejudices of an ignorant people, should have to go naked.

Is that democracy? It will certainly not be anything like government of the people, by the people; it will be a rule by groups of politicians who can match each other in the game of fooling the demos. And what is still worse is that, given the supreme importance attached to power in

political practice, there is no other way for an opposition party to replace the Congress, not unless the mentality of the people is changed.

The general belief is that a political party must come to power in order to implement its programme. Therefore, power becomes

the sole concern for political practice. That being so, every means is adopted to capture power, the end justifying the means. That is why there is no morality in politics. The position cannot be changed by pious preachings. Politics must have a different purpose if it is ever to be moral. To win the franchise of the electorate, any party must make greater promises than its rival. That rule of the game opens it to the temptation of committing the dishonesty of making reckless promises—promising more than any government can do under the given conditions of a country. And a party is all the more open to the temptation of the dishonest practice when the vast bulk of the electorate is utterly incapable of understanding political and economic problems. In such an atmosphere, democracy necessarily degenerates into demagogery.

And what more can any leftist party promise? The Congress has declared that it stands for socialism and a classless society. Why should the electorate be impressed by the promise of that Utopia when made by new aspirants for power, when their trusted leaders, who have laid low mighty British Imperialism, will also take them there, or promise to do so?

What is the lesson? Either there is no hope for an opposition party, or an opposition party will have to do something even worse than the party in power, find ways and means for deceiving the people to an even greater extent. There remains the revolutionary alternative of denouncing parliamentary democracy as a swindle and calling the people to armed insurrection. But that too will not do. There is a powerful State which not only commands the confidence of the people, but has a modern army to defend itself. If the communists even succeeded in leading thousands on the road to

insurrection, nothing would happen but a mass slaughter; and the government will still remain a popular government for the majority of the people.

So, neither constitutionally nor through violent revolution is there any hope of changing the situation in the near future. I would go to the extent of saying that, if the cultural atmosphere of our country remains like this, there is no hope of changing the situation ever. **The only hope of changing it arises from the hope of changing that atmosphere, the outlook and mentality of the people. If there will be more and more people able to think for themselves, who will not be swayed by demagogic propaganda and blind faith, then the social foundation of the parties exploiting the backwardness of the people will be shaken, and India will be moving towards freedom.**

Can that be done by an organisation which remains one of the political parties? I may say that our party is different from other parties, that we do not want power. Who would believe us? And why should they believe us? They will retort: "Oh yes, but once you are in power, you will not behave any differently". Why should people think that we are more honest than others, when the others may be equally sincere in their opinions? We shall have to prove our bona fides; and we shall do that by getting out of the scramble for power. We must show in action that power is not the only incentive for political action. Unless the urge for freedom is wide awake in individual men and women, democracy is not possible.

What we propose to do today is the logical consequence of our thought developed over the last ten years, even when we were functioning, as a political party. Even then we postulated a philosophical revolution as the pre-condition for any great social and political change. Having

learned a lesson from the history of the world, we undertook to apply it to India. The European Renaissance created the conditions for the great political changes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. India has not yet undergone such a spiritual upsurge as experienced in Europe at the dawn of the modern time. She is still clinging to old traditions. Unless she overthrows the ballast of a dead past hanging round her neck like a loadstone, India cannot march ahead towards democratic freedom, social progress and cultural reawakening. Unless we can alter the cultural outlook of the country, unless we can make people feel that they are human beings, that they can be self-reliant and can make their own destiny, that they are not puppets in the hands of a cruel Providence, that it is not their karma which made them what they are today, but that they can alter their own fate—no great change will ever be possible.

The foundation of a democratic humanist culture has to be laid before any superstructure can be stable. The vast bulk of the Indian people believe that life in this world is only a bondage, a bad dream. They must first be freed from that paralysing belief which robs them of all incentive for creative action. What they have done in previous incarnations is supposed to determine their fate in this life. The very logic of this venerable doctrine of karma can be interpreted to mean that man is the creator of his own fate and hence of the world in which he lives! Then, he can also remake the world of his creation. Only the right conclusions must be drawn from the ancient beliefs. That is how we can draw from our cultural heritage the inspiration for a philosophical revolution which will change the outlook on life. That is the meaning of Renaissance. In this way, the Radical Humanist Movement will reevaluate ancient values and create the atmosphere of an

intellectual resurgence preparatory to the creation, by self-reliant men, of a free, happy and harmonious social order.

The Radical Humanist Movement will be based on individual initiative, individual endeavour and individual freedom. Such a movement cannot be tied by rules and regulations. Whoever agrees with us, we do not ask them to become members of any organisation; but we shall expect them to act according to their conviction. We are giving up a rigidly organised existence because we do not want to create a barrier around us, excluding anybody as outsiders. We do not want to monopolise the result of our efforts. Nor do we want any credit. But we are going to

remain ourselves, travelling the path of knowledge and truth as we see it, as we have done in the past. If our ideas have any sense, if what we say is true, all lovers of truth and knowledge will join the caravan moving towards a future of freedom, harmony and happiness. Let us have faith in ourselves, if we want to remake the world. Let us behave like free men if we ever want to see a free world.

** Concluding speech at the Fourth Conference of the Radical Democratic Party, Calcutta, December 29, 1948.*

Decentralization and a pluralist society

(i) *One need not go to people only to catch their votes; to help them cast their votes intelligently would be an immensely more important work. The electorate should be asked to examine the programmes of all the parties, to see if the promises can be fulfilled or, if fulfilled, will really improve matters. As the electorate gradually becomes critical and discriminating, the time will come when the voters of a locality will tell candidates of all parties to leave them alone; amongst themselves they will find men in whom they can have confidence and who will remain responsible to them between two elections. Once that happens, the end of the party system will begin, and with the parties, the main cause for concentration of power, will disappear. In the process, we shall already have laid down the foundation of a decentralized State of local republics, which combine all functions of the State as they effect the local life...Being thus reared upon a broad foundation of direct democracies, the State will be really democratic. Thus, a pluralist modern society can be built up, at the same time doing away with centralization of power in politics and economics.*

(ii) *“It is true that the common people are illiterate; they may not be able to govern the country. But at the same time, is it not a fact that left to themselves, even the most ignorant peasants can manage their affairs better than our present government? The distrust for the ability of the common people to think for themselves and take care of themselves is only a pretext for seizing power in their name and abusing that power to suppress their liberty.”*

- M.N. Roy

Human Rights Section:

UP's Bundelkhand staring at a famine-like situation: survey

Sayantan Bera

The main focus of the survey was to find out if the drought and adverse weather over the past few years is turning into a famine



Between 61% and 96% of households reported a total loss of their oilseed, coarse grain and pulse crops, the survey found.

New Delhi: Even as half of India is reeling under a second consecutive drought year, a survey of the chronically drought-striken Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh has unearthed grim details of crop loss, disputes over water, starvation, and deaths due to hunger and malnutrition.

The survey by the Swaraj Abhiyan, a political movement on farmers' issues, covered over 1,200 households in 108 villages spread across

seven districts in Bundelkhand. Conducted between 27 October and 9 November, it was designed by Yogendra Yadav, founder of Swaraj Abhiyan, and economist Jean Dreze.

Between 61% and 96% of households reported a total loss of their oilseed, coarse grain and pulse crops, the survey found. For 96% households, this was a second consecutive crop loss after their rabi (winter) crop was lost due to unseasonal rains in March and April this year.

On the drinking water situation, 65% households reported a decline in domestic water availability, and 66% said quarrels over water have increased in the past eight months.

Queries on household food consumption over a month preceding the survey revealed that on an average, households consumed pulses on 4 days (out of 30 days) and milk on 6 days. Worryingly, nearly 40% households did not consume any pulses and 60% did not consume any milk in the past month. Households that went hungry at least once in the last 30 days came in at 14%; for the poorest households, the number was 19%.

Over 86% and 84% of households reported cutting down on consumption of pulses and milk, respectively, while 79% said they were forced to eat *roti* (flat bread) with just salt and spices. Households that were “often or sometimes not sure of getting two square meals” in a day stood at 67%, and 17% of households had to eat “fikara”—a flat bread mixed with grass as a substitute for proper meals.

Shockingly, 38% villages reported at least one death due to hunger or malnutrition in the reference period of the past 8 months. However, the survey did not independently verify this and relied on village-level group discussions.

The grim situation of food scarcity and famine-like conditions gets clearer with additional household-level indicators. 24% of households had to send their children for wage labour and as many as 36% had to borrow food for survival. Nearly 40% households resorted to distress sale of cattle, 27% had to sell or

mortgage land, while 24% had to sell or mortgage ornaments. Additionally, 87% of households said they could not repay their debts.

And, in a country where cows are venerated, nearly half the villages reported more than 10 cattle deaths due to starvation.

The main focus of the survey was to find out if the drought and adverse weather over the past few years is turning into a famine and the details are alarming, said Yadav while presenting the survey findings.

“The response of the state government has been weak, and Bundelkhand is witnessing the worst fallout of this year’s drought that hit several states. Both the state and the centre need to wake up and take emergency measures,” Yadav said, adding, “while agriculture is a state subject and disaster relief falls on the concurrent list, a yearly drama plays out between the centre and states on the issue of relief.”

Last week, Uttar Pradesh declared a drought in 50 out of 75 districts in the state and sought central assistance of Rs.2,057 crore. So far, nine states have declared a drought and sought central funds totalling Rs.20,000 crore.

The year, the rain deficit during the June to September south-west monsoon is at 14% (last year, the deficit was 12%), aggravating farm distress across the country due to repeated crop failures as well as lower prices of crops like rice, wheat and cotton.

Courtesy: **Livemint**

“Information is the currency that every citizen requires to participate in the life and governance of society.” Justice A. P. Shah, former Chief Justice, Delhi and Madras High Courts, (2010).

INDIA: Where drought is just another ‘file noting’

Telangana, yesterday, finally acknowledged that 231 out of 443 of its rural mandals (sub-districts) are hit by drought. This was not a sudden realization by the state, the 9th Indian state to get hit by drought this year. Their agricultural department knew that a ‘drought like’ situation was prevailing in Mahabubnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Karimnagar and Ranga Reddy districts and a few parts of Nalgonda, Warangal and Adilabad districts since early September. It also knew that over 50 per cent of the rain-fed crops cultivated in the affected districts were affected badly. In all likelihood, the farmers would lose even the investment made on cultivation.

And yet, Telangana waited until now because it did not have a ‘detailed report’ which would only come after crop-cutting—if any crops reached that stage! One can compare the absurdity of the response with those made about market meltdowns. But then, that is a different debate for different times. State inaction is what matters here, despite being well aware of farm suicides that drought-induced crop failures and other hardships trigger. To add numbers to the argument—since its formation on June 2, 2014, Telangana had witnessed no less than 1,259 suicides by 24 September 2015 alone. These statistics came from the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, a Hyderabad based, voluntary organisation that monitors the situation on the ground.

What would the drought declaration mean for farmers on the ground? Not much more than a file noting would be the answer. To understand it through more numbers, the government of Telangana cannot deny the number of farmers’ suicide deaths as they are substantiated by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The NCRB data puts the number of

farmers’ suicides in the state in 2014 at a remarkable 898, second in the country after Maharashtra that saw 2,568 farmer suicide deaths. However, the government could always blame the deaths on other factors. And this is what it did in a debate in the state assembly, asserting that no more than 350 of these suicides could be attributed to financial crisis.

The government might actually be ‘correct’, statistically that is. This was brought out by studies in different states. Many of the farm suicides come from tenant farmers—a group that has repeatedly been taken out from “Self-employed (farming/agriculture)” category and put into the “Self-employed (Others)” category. This is an easy way for the governments to mask the numbers of farm suicides in their states. Once the government does this, the drought declaration means nothing to these farmers who, for the state, are not farmers anymore.

Sadly, the declaration would not mean much to the farmers whose existence governments cannot deny by playing crooked games either. For one, the centrally approved maximum compensation for crop loss in rain-fed areas is a mere Rs. 2,700 per acre. This would fail to cover even the cost of cultivation. Then the farmers would have to wait until the governments produced their ‘detailed reports’ and submit it to the union ministry. As farm suicides have repeatedly shown, this would be too long a wait for them to survive.

What the farmers need is an effective mechanism that operates in real time, which reaches them when they need it the most. What they got is one that operates like the monsoons that fail them in the first place, come seasonally

and often fail again.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) works towards the radical rethinking and fundamental redesigning of justice

institutions in order to protect and promote human rights in Asia. Established in 1984, the Hong Kong based organisation is a Laureate of the Right Livelihood Award, 2014.

An Appeal to the Readers

Indian Renaissance Institute has been receiving regular requests from readers, research scholars, Rationalists and Radical Humanists for complete sets of books written by M.N. Roy. It was not possible to fulfil their demands as most of Roy's writings are out of print. IRI has now decided to publish them but will need financial assistance from friends and well-wishers as the expenses will be enormous running into lakhs. IRI being a non-profit organization will not be able to meet the entire expenses on its own. Initially, following 15 books have ordered for print: New Humanism; Beyond Communism; Politics, Power and Parties; Historical Role of Islam; India's Message; Men I Met; New Orientation; Materialism; Science & Philosophy; Revolution and Counter-revolution in China; India in Transition; Reason, Romanticism and Revolution; Russian Revolution; Selected Works – Four Volumes; Memoirs (Covers period 1915-1923).

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1. **M N Roy - Selected Writings**
edited, compiled by N. Innaiah
2. **Forced into Faith**
by Innaiah Narisetti
3. **God Delusion**
by Richard Dawkins
4. **Living without Religion**
by Paul Kurtz
5. **Letter to Christian Nation**
by Sam Harris
6. **Why I am not a Muslim?**
by Ibn Warrack
7. **God is not great**
by Christopher Hitchens
8. **The Truth about the Gita**
by V. R. Narla

(Premetheus publication with introduction by Innaiah Narisetti)