

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



Founder
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THE WOMEN - Born to bear children, look after the family and yet to be insulted and humiliated, thrashed and tortured, burnt and killed???

Should we still call Ourselves a Civilized Society?
Mahi Pal Singh

POLITICS OF FREEDOM: A word to young Indians
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Should we still call Ourselves a Civilized Society?

Mahi Pal Singh

Everyday the news papers are full of inhuman atrocities on the most vulnerable and defenseless of the poorest and the most marginalized section of our society, the girls, women and children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The headings in the news papers tell their tales themselves: Dalit girl who set herself on fire after rape dies; Dalit teen abducted, gang-raped, kept in cow-dung shed; Dalit boy of 11 years sodomized for many days, police don't file FIR; Dalit woman lodges complaint against RJD MLA for allegedly forcing her son to change his religion and torturing him when he refused to oblige; 13 Year Old Dalit Boy Beaten For Using Upper Caste Well. The details as published in the Times of India dated 10 April about the first case, as reported by Abhijay Jha are even more alarming:

"The girl, who had suffered 40% burn injuries, died on Thursday afternoon but the ordeal for her family is far from over.

They are being harassed by villagers from a dominant community who are telling them to withdraw the case against the accused, Babloo and Rancho.

Even as emotions ran high in Bamheta village, the Dalit community held a meeting on Saturday and has threatened to become Buddhists en bloc if the atrocities perpetuated against them by the Yadav community continue. "For years we have been silently bearing the harassment of the majority community in Bamheta," the dead girl's uncle said.

"Whenever we raised our voices against the killing of our men and the rape of our women, we have been threatened," the uncle said.

"Neither police nor the administration came to our rescue and if it continues like this will convert to Buddhism," he said.

"Our daughter has gone but we continue to be harassed by villagers who are pressuring us to withdraw the case," the rape victim's mother said.

"On Saturday a former village headman, Leela Pradhan, came to our house during a prayer meeting for our departed daughter and manhandled my brother-in-law and told us to withdraw the rape case," she said."

It is the same story repeated again and again in all the cases. Women, particularly from the lowest strata of society, are the softest targets in cases of revenge, social and caste strife, communal riots and times of war. In the recent Jat agitation for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) quota, in spite of their being the most powerful and dominant caste politically and economically in Haryana, so much so that most of the Chief Ministers and Ministers of the state have been from that caste alone (and a very powerful one is in jail for 10 years for corruption committed in the recruitment of teachers), the agitators not only burnt and destroyed houses, vehicles, factories and business establishments worth thousands of crores in several districts of Haryana, but also women travelling on the main highway No. 1 at Murthal were dragged out of cars and subjected to gang rapes. The police, which had been mute spectators to all the rioting and what happened there and elsewhere, did not take any action against the perpetrators of the crimes at the time the incidents took place or afterwards because of the caste affinity of a large number of them with the agitators.

Because of their clout and vote-power the state government hurriedly passed the legislation for granting them the demanded reservation in the state assembly although it is not likely to stand the test of judicial scrutiny. What is even more shameful is the fact that not only the senior police officers but also the state government has been ruling out the incidents of gang rapes at Mурthal, which stand it had to change when questioned by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, and admit that the incidents of gang rapes could have taken place. It was in spite of the crying evidence of under garments and other clothes of ladies strewn in the fields close to the road and also the statements of two truck drivers, which appeared on the TV channels, who had seen with their own eyes the ladies being dragged out of their cars and taken to the fields nearby by gangs of goons on the fateful night. Now several girls have come out and made statements that they were raped at Mурthal. Had the High Court not taken a suo motu cognizance of the incident on the basis of news paper reports and appointed an SIT to probe the case independently and advising the local police and other officials not to interfere with the investigation, the inhuman treatment meted out to the women by the agitating goons would have been suppressed by the Haryana police as it was itself complicit in the dastardly crime.

The dominance of the upper castes and a tendency to harass, rape and kill people belonging to the lower castes, particularly their womenfolk, is meant to keep them under subjugation as they have always done. Rape, which becomes a life-long trauma for young girls and also brings with it a social stigma on the victim instead of the male perpetrator of the crime, is resorted to suppress and terrify other members of the family also. It is because of this mentality to discriminate against and to

suppress them that M.N. Roy called the caste hierarchy an 'ugly relic of the past' which must be done away with if they are to get their rightful place as equal citizens as per the spirit of the Indian Constitution and as equal human beings, as they are born. To what extent it is possible in a country in which a senior political leader unhesitatingly and shamelessly reacted to cases of rape, when people in the streets were demanding capital punishment to the rapists, with the remark, 'Bacchon se aisi galti ho jati hai,' (Such mistakes do happen at the hands of boys.) thereby trivializing the serious crime of rape as not being a very serious thing?

When the liberation struggle was on in the then East Pakistan in 1971, the Pakistani army personnel not only killed about 3 million civilians but also raped 4 lakh women. Till date, no apologies have been offered, or even regrets expressed by the Pakistan army or the various governments there since 1971 for the inhuman and dastardly behaviour. No one has, of course, been punished. Women from the minority community also faced the same fate during the 1992-93 communal riots in Mumbai, during the pogrom of 2002 in Gujarat and the atrocities on the Muslims that took place in Muzaffar Nagar about two years ago – all at the hands of the right wing Hindutva communalists whose leaders incited and supervised the heinous crimes – when thousands were rendered homeless as their houses were burnt and they had to live in fear perpetually in the tents which were provided to them after a lot of hue and cry by the civil society. Women were not only raped but their bodies also torn into pieces most brutally in many cases in Mumbai and Gujarat. Srikrishna Commission of Inquiry into the Mumbai communal riots identified the political leaders who master-minded the riots and some of the other culprits but they were never punished in the same

manner as the masterminds of the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 in Delhi, whom the PUCL-PUDR inquiry report 'Who Are The Guilty?' identified as culprits, have still not been punished. If justice evades, and evades perpetually, the criminals get emboldened and if these criminals happen to be politically powerful people, they easily manipulate the administration and the justice administration machinery to remain intact and well saddled in their seats of power. This has happened too often in India but the people have still not lost faith, at least in the judiciary.

It was on the directive of the Bombay High Court that women were allowed entry into the Shani Shingnapur temple in Maharashtra breaking the 400 year old tradition which was discriminatory towards women. On April 1, the High Court held that it is the women's fundamental right to go into places of worship and the government is duty-bound to protect it. But for the judicial intervention, it would never have been possible because the self-appointed custodians of the religion, who even now ask in TV debates, 'What have they gained by entering the temple?' would have been happy to perpetuate the discriminatory tradition. Such people, with contempt for the right of the women to equality and the democratic values of the Constitution of India, would never ask themselves, "What has the temple lost because of the women's entry into the temple?" Shankaracharya Swaroopanand Saraswati of Dwarka Peeth, a senior Hindu religious leader, commenting on the entry of women into the Shani temple said that it will drive more rapes, perhaps unwittingly hinting at how those opposed to the entry of women into the temple can teach those women a lesson who dare to visit it, which has been described by women activists on 11 April as "outrageous and appalling". Taking cue immediately from the

Shankaracharya's remark, Trupti Desai, who has been spearheading the movement for women's entry into various temples, was actually attacked by some women, the priests of the temple and some other men, when she tried to enter the Mahalaxmi temple at Kolhapur with some other women on 13th April, just two days after the "seer's" remark, and had to be hospitalized with injuries. The reason given in this case was that she was not wearing a saree. Now the priests will also decide what a woman should wear or not wear. In any case, those opposed to women's right to equality and the fundamentalist priests and 'seers' will invent one reason or the other for stalling their entry whatever may the Court say. It is relevant to remember that it was not without reason that M.N. Roy called such priests and dharma gurus 'holy loafers'.

The argument of the Kerala government, put before the Apex court in the matter of entry of women into the Sabarimala shrine, that bar on entry of women was due to the biological phenomenon of menstruation and that the government was duty bound to protect the centuries-old tradition banning women from the temple, was frowned upon by the Supreme Court on 11 April 2016 and the Court observed that religious practice and tradition could not be allowed to dent constitutional principles and values as it was against the spirit of Article 25 which guarantees every citizen the right to practice and propagate religion. What women have gained through the entry into the temple is ensuring their right to equality in the matter of entry into a place of worship of their choice. But how far this right of women to equality with men will go in the male dominated society is difficult to judge from this victory alone. The discrimination is not there in the constitutional law of the country, not so much even in traditions and practices which are man-made

in any case, but in the mind-set of the people – not only males but the females also, who, under the influence of what they have been taught from childhood and which runs through their veins like blood, themselves discriminate between a male and a female child in their families.

It is again the mindset which makes us differentiate between 'us' and 'they' when it comes to religion, caste, gender, language, region, country etc. etc. Until we get ourselves rid of this mentality and see all other human beings as 'ours', merely as human beings who are born as equal to us in everything except the differences of birth in a different place or upbringing. That will unite us into one entity, one culture and one world. That will be possible only when we rise above our narrow-

mindedness of religion, caste, gender, language etc. That will be possible only when we adopt one culture – the humanist culture. If we do not start our march towards that goal, and continue to live as we have been living, under the influence of those – from the fields of politics, religion, society etc. – who have been exploiting our sentiments for their own selfish interests, we will not be able to live in peace with dignity as equals. But we must first ensure justice to the victims of gender and caste bias and also those who have suffered at the hands of communalists. Till we are able to deliver that, paving the way for a just society where nobody will suffer discrimination, intimidation, torture and killing, the question whether we should call ourselves a civilized society will continue to haunt us.

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B.D. SHARMA: EVERLASTING REMINISCENCES

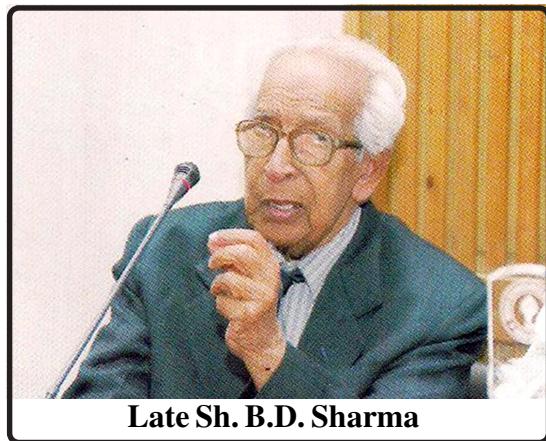
ON HIS 90TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

The assembly of grateful loyalists of Sh. B.D. Sharma, former Chairman of Indian Renaissance Institute (I.R.I.) paid their glowing tributes to Sh. B.D. Sharma in the Supreme Court of India, premises his work place till he breathed his last. It is common knowledge that Sh. B.D. Sharma followed Sh. M.N. Roy, a great visionary and freedom fighter with full devotion, dedication and commitment.

Born on 18.03.1926 in Pungalpara locality at Jodhpur, Rajasthan in a middle class Brahmin family, Sh. B.D. Sharma was 4th child among five children. (2 brothers, 3 sisters) – eldest of them was Sh. Narayan Dass Purohit, a Matriculate, employed as Guard in Indian Railways.

His early education was at Pushtikar High School, Jodhpur. Sh. B.D. Sharma passed his 10th class in 1943 as a private candidate and got 1st Division with distinction in 3 subjects English, Math and Sanskrit. He joined Jaswant College Jodhpur in 1943, did his Intermediate with distinction, did his BA in 1947 and completed MA. LL.B in Economics and Law from Lucknow University (U.P.) in 1949.

Sh. N Vyas, Advocate in Supreme Court of India with long standing who had a very long and close association with Sh. B D Sharma told the gathering that Sh. Sharma ji was very sharp, studious and intellectual person from the very beginning – conscious, aware and alert – very keen and consistent, friendly and positive also. He was very proficient in reciting Sanskrit Shlokas of Geeta with clear concept and meaning of the same. By the time he reached 10th Class, sh. Sharma ji started attending study circles with known seniors where he used to



Late Sh. B.D. Sharma

become aware of M.N. Roy's writings, while attentively listening to the discussion about M.N. Roy Philosophy. Sh. Sharma ji was instrumental in bringing about widow marriage in his family at a time when child marriages were common in Rajasthan and widow marriage was not at all acceptable in whole Rajasthan. Sh. B.D. Sharma began his career as Advocate at Jodhpur High court in 1949, elected and worked with Zeal as Member Municipal Council in 1956-57, moved to Supreme Court as full time Central Government Advocate in 1968 after he was selected by UPSC. His popularity as advocate and kind human being can be gauged by the fact that he was seen off by around 300 lawyers at Jodhpur Railway Station when left for Delhi. Sh. Sharma ji resigned as Govt. Advocate and started his private practice in Supreme Court of India.

Sh. Vidya K. Sagar, Advocate highlighting the qualities of Sh. B.D. Sharma as an Advocate, Sh. Sagar, told the audience that Sh. B.D. Sharma a fountainhead of social justice always stood for equality and justice. He himself was a Brahmin but was against all forms of casteism

and caste based discrimination. He was always ready to render free legal assistance to the needy but economically weaker litigants well before the free legal aid machinery was created in the courts at the official level.

Sh. S.N. Shukla, Advocate added that Sh. B.D. Sharma was undoubtedly best-exponent of humanism. He knew the art of handling any situation and every one and worked smoothly in his daily life without fear or favour, affection or ill will, unconcerned about money, name or fame. As the vital rays of Sun nurture all, so did Sh. B.D. Sharma spread the rays of hope in the heads and hearts of the poor and forsaken. We found in him an intimate friend, embodiment of simplicity and humility and above all a true KARAMYOGI.

Sh. Jetendra Singh, Advocate: Sh. B.D. Sharma was always smiling in pain as well as in pleasure. He did not expect anything in return for doing good to others.

Sh. S.C. Varma, Advocate and trustee I.R.I. in his emotionally worded speech told the congregation that Sh. B.D. Sharma had very deep knowledge of law; rather he was an ocean of

law coupled with his humanity, kind heartedness and sweet conduct. He always said “digest everything but never digest doubts”. Sh. B.D. Sharma was equally popular among Advocates and judges. There were all praise for Sharma ji due to his humble behaviour and deep knowledge of law. Once Sh. B.D. Sharma was offered judgeship of High court to which he politely declined. We thus see that Sh. B.D. Sharma’s life stood for promoting human values and human rights, scientific temper, rational thinking and humanist way of life. Sh. B.D. Sharma will forever remain in our hearts, bringing us strength and inspiration. We walk on the path guided by him.

Sh. Surya Kant, Advocate, Ms. Deepshikha Bharti, Advocate, Sh. Jasbir Malik Advocate, Sh. Ved P. Arya Advocate and Ms. Deepika Sharma, Social Activist and others also paid their rich tributes and showered praise on Sh. B.D. Sharma as an Advocate, a friend, a guide and a teacher.

Let us all salute Sh. B.D. Sharma on his 90th Birth Anniversary.

Report by: Ved P. Arya, Advocate & Life Member IRI

Anti-fascism and a free society

We stand for a thorough reconstruction of the national life. Our political objective is the establishment of democratic freedom which will mean effective political power for the people. We strive not only for national freedom, but also for the social emancipation of the toiling masses. Our task is to spread enlightenment which will dispel obscurantism in the political and the spiritual life of the country. We advocate modernism in every walk of life against revivalism. We want the disinherited to come to their own and enjoy the richness and fullness of life on this earth. We want man to be the master of the world and the maker of his destiny.

This is why we radicals favour India’s active participation in the war against Fascism. Fascism stands for the destruction of the political, social and cultural ideals of democracy... The war against Fascism can be won only by rousing in the people their urge for freer and fuller life. The supreme task of our movement is to develop that urge, and thus while defeating Fascism, to lay securely the foundations of a free society which is not only free of foreign rule, but also free of native tyranny, exploitation and injustice. - **M.N. Roy**

(The above statement was issued during the Second World War 1939-1945)

Should there be provision for a plebiscite?

ONE key debate in the Indian Constituent Assembly was on the appointment of governors. Many argued that a state's High Court chief justice could fulfill the ornamental role when required. Equally fierce was the demand that a governor should be elected, not appointed. In a democratic polity, a head of the state should be a person who is directly returned by the people. This was the argument.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru intervened to state that an elected governor would become a parallel authority to the elected chief minister. This would hamper the normal functioning of the state. However, Nehru wanted the governor to be an eminent person, respected in his field, whether in academics, science or art. He did not favour a political appointee, a person whom the ruling party sought to give the office.

But he never imagined that even the constitutional head could be used by a political party to serve its ends. The bane was Article 356 which gave the Centre power to dismiss a government if there was a "breakdown" in the law and order machinery in a state. The normal procedure, however, was to wait for the governor's report and then act.

Today, this practice is only on paper. Nehru's dream was shattered by his daughter Indira Gandhi when she was the Congress president in 1959. She was against the Kerala government ruled by the Communists, for having passed an education bill brought out by the E.M.S. Namboodiripad government. He appealed to Nehru against the Congress protests which Indira Gandhi had initiated. Nehru must have spoken to his daughter about the agitation although the media did not say so.

Nehru publicly and privately told Namboodiripad that he was helpless. Since it was the decision



Kuldip Nayar

by the Congress president, the Prime Minister had to obey because he was the party's nominee. Subsequently, President's rule was imposed and a democratically elected government was ousted. This became a precedent.

Over the years, the reluctance to dismiss an elected government has got diluted. The governor now, although a constitutional head, obeys the wishes of the party ruling at the centre. The only chief minister who put up any kind of resistance was Jyoti Basu in West Bengal and he could get away with it because one, he was too tall in politics and, two, he was too popular in the state where he could organize a revolt of sorts.

Now the stature of politicians has diminished so much that the ruling party at the centre gets away literally with murder. And this is undemocratic because the state has autonomy in a federal system we follow. But what can a state do when the centre is determined to have its own way?

Take, for instance, the case of Uttarakhand ruled by the Congress. Nine MLAs defected reducing the Congress Party to a minority. As laid down by the Supreme Court in the S.R. Bommai case, a date was fixed for the government to prove its majority on the floor of the house. Apparently, the Narendra Modi government at the Centre was not sure whether the defected members would

stay out or rejoin the party.

So, 24 hours before the floor-test was to be conducted, the government was dismissed but the assembly was not dissolved. Obviously, the BJP thought that it could form the government with the help of the defectors. Then the Congress government went to the High Court and got a verdict in its favour as the floor test was ordered.

The lesson to be learnt from the entire episode is that the office of governor has got mixed with politics. He is no more an independent entity and follows what the centre tells him to do. As Home Minister Gobind Ballabh Pant once put it, the governor is a civil servant and has to act upon what the Centre tells him because he is New Delhi's appointee. In fact, there are several instances in the past where a governor is not able to complete his tenure because a new government at the centre wants its own trusted loyalist.

Nehru's emphasis in the Constituent Assembly that a governor should be a person of eminence is now a pipedream. A political party wants a trustworthy person in states, particularly where it is not ruling, and it makes no secret about it by crowding out the serving governor. The Congress Party, which had laid down high norms during the time of Nehru, is as guiltier as the other parties are.

Probably, it is difficult to force a ruling party to appoint a non-political, independent person to the office of governor. Therefore, the country should

seriously consider abolishing Article 356 which is undemocratic since a democratically-elected government in a state should only be dismissed by the people who have returned it.

Even otherwise, in a federal system like the one we have the states enjoy independence in their own sphere. The constitution framers could have opted for a presidential form of government if they did not want to give autonomy to the states. Instead, they preferred a parliamentary system which allows interplay of different political parties and states. When a party loses majority in the lower house at any time, it has no option except to quit.

A new election is too expensive and too cumbersome. How many times can fresh polls be held? Had there been a constitutional provision for a plebiscite, the lacuna found could have been overcome. When Justice Hidaytullah was Vice-President and chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he complained that the constitution framers have not provided any method to associate the people's wishes on an amendment to the constitution.

He, in fact, suggested a plebiscite. But this was turned down by the political parties. So the nation was back to square one. And there it stands even today.

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

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<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. Soon the books by M.N. Roy will be available at this website which may be downloaded and read.

Mahi Pal Singh

Nationalism: Malignant vs. Benign

Prabhakar Sinha

Nationalism is not necessarily a blessing; it can be a curse as well. Hitler was a diehard nationalist, who butchered 6 million Jews (of which lakhs were German citizens) in the national interest. He slaughtered millions of others and caused the Second World War for the same reason. Britain, France and many other nations of Europe conquered scores of countries by hook or by crook and looted their colonies to enrich their own countries. China attacked and humiliated India in its national interest just as Pakistan massacred 3 million of her own citizens and raped 4 lakh of her own women in the national interest during the war of liberation of Bangala Desh (former East Pakistan). The nationalist people of Pakistan were not ashamed or shocked.

The independence movement of India was also nationalism in action, but while it sought the departure of the British rulers, it did not want either their blood or their women. It did not preach a tit for tat policy. Our freedom struggle presents an example of benign nationalism. It was inclusive. It accepted the equal right of all Indians born and brought up in the country. It made sincere efforts to unify all Indians to fight the British. The Constituent Assembly produced a Constitution embodying benign nationalism, i.e., a nationalism which is for ALL and against NONE. The benign nationalism is committed to the national interest of the country without being unjust to any within or without the country.

What is the benign nationalism in action? How can it be identified? Who would decide whether a certain act is an act of malignant or benign nationalism? What touchstone can be used to test the real character of a nationalist act acceptable to all Indians, who are committed to adhere to the Constitution of India?

THE TOUCHSTONE FOR TESTING WHETHER AN ACT IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST OR AGAINST NATIONAL INTEREST IS THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RULE OF LAW TO WHICH INDIA AND INDIANS ARE COMMITTED.

Since there is so much controversy on what is anti-national, the touchstone should be used to test their real character. The following cases may be tested on the touchstone of the Indian Constitution and the principle of the rule of law:

1. A member of Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha has been suspended from the house for refusing to say 'Bharat Mata ki Jay'.

Neither the Constitution of India nor any law of the country obliges any citizen to say 'Bharat Mata ki Jay'. Refusing to raise the slogan is the right of a citizen and it is also his duty if asked to do it under threat.

The Maharashtra Assembly's resolution is against the letter and spirit of the Constitution and is against national interest.

2. Some persons raised the slogan 'Pakistan Zindabad' and are, being branded as Anti-national.

The Indian Constitution gives the citizens the right to think freely and express their opinion. There is no law that says that to say Pakistan Zindabad is a punishable criminal offence. It is as permissible as saying 'USA ZINDABAD, CHINA ZINDABAD OR AUSTRALIA ZINDABAD'.

Those who raised the slogans did not violate any law and cannot be called 'traitors' as has been done.

(I am discussing a principle and am not going into the fact that some outsiders with covered faces had actually raised the slogans).

3. To shout Afzal Guru Zindabad or that he was unjustly hanged is not an offence under the law. One has the right to hold a judgment to be wrong and criticise it. Thus nothing unlawful was done and nothing anti-national was done.

Note: If Mahatma Gandhi's murder may be celebrated and Nathuram Godse may be deified with impunity by the Hindu Maha Sabha, the same impunity cannot be denied to the supporters of Afzal Guru.

4. Mere shouting a threat without the evidence of planned action is no offence in law. It is quite common to hear people shout in anger "I will kill you," but no prosecution follows. So if someone merely shouts "Hindustan to Barbad Kar denge" or "Hindustan ke tukre tukre kar denge", it is not illegal and not enough to declare the person a Desh Drohi (a traitor).

5. Kashmir is a problem between India and Pakistan. Then there are people in Kashmir who want AZADI. If some citizens feel that giving Kashmir Azadi is a good solution, it is his/her right to communicate/express his thought to the people and the government. Such persons are only exercising their fundamental right guaranteed under Art.19 of the Constitution.

No person exercising his/her fundamental right can be held to be a Desh Drohi or anti-national.

6. Some Indians believe that Kashmir is under

occupation of India. It is just an opinion. It may be considered wholly wrong, but the person holding the opinion cannot be held guilty of being anti-national or guilty of an illegal act.

7. A citizen has the right to feel FEAR AND EXPRESS IT. Amir Khan's wife violated no law when she felt frightened by the rise of intolerance in the country and wondered if they should think of moving out. Amir Khan violated no law when he shared this with the media. It was most unjustified to compare him with dreaded terrorists and ask him to go to Pakistan.

8. Shahrukh Khan like anyone else has the right to hold and express his opinion. He exercised this right when he said that there was a rise in intolerance in the country. The condemnation that followed, including asking him to go to Pakistan, was an attack on his right as a citizen.

There are numerous acts which are not Anti-National tested on this touchstone, yet they are condemned as anti-national. It is because they have been tested on the touchstone of MALIGNANT NATIONALISM, which is against the Constitution, the principle of the rule of law and the ways of a humane society.

The distinction between Malignant and Benign Nationalism and the way to test an act should always be kept in mind while judging whether an act is in the national interest or against it. To overlook the difference would be against benign nationalism and national interest.

Prabhakar Sinha is the national President,
PUCL

Respecting others' view-point

I have repeatedly observed that no school of thought can claim a monopoly of right judgement. We are all liable to err and are often obliged to revise our judgements. In a vast country like this, there must be room for all schools of honest thought. And the least, therefore, that we owe to ourselves as to others is to try to understand the opponent's view-point and, if we cannot accept it, respect it as fully as we expect him to respect ours..

-Mahatma Gandhi

Caste Abolition is the only Remedy

I feel that Justice has been vindicated when parties united to celebrate 125th Birthday anniversary (on 14th April, 2016) of Dr. Ambedkar. But the question that needs to be asked: is “whether that is genuine sentiment of these parties who reviled him in his life time”. Dr. Ambedkar how ever was made of sterner stuff and carried on vehemently his campaign against Caste System. He specifically said “I have never been Anti Brahmin but I have always been anti Caste. To stop taking about Caste is to shut ones eyes to the most important single reality of Indian situation”. Fortunately, in all fairness and deference Dr. Rammanohar Lohia Socialist Party leader (though much younger to him) openly recognized the greatness of Dr. Ambedkar when he said publically in 1955, “Dr Ambedkar to me was a great man in Indian politics and apart from Gandhiji as the greatest of the Caste Hindus this fact has given me a solace and confidence that the caste system of Hinduism could one day be destroyed. I have always been trying to communicate to the Harijans an idea which is basic with me.”

It was in pursuance of this basic philosophy that Dr. Lohia corresponded with Dr. Ambedkar the need for both the Socialist party and Dr. Ambedkar’s party jointly contesting the forthcoming Parliament elections. Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Lohia had agreed on a date to discuss this mutually. Unfortunately Dr Ambedkar died before the meeting could take place. But Dr. Lohia’s regard for the view expressed by Dr. Ambedkar in his book on “Annihilation of Castes” expressed by Dr. Ambedkar, was on the same wave length that enabled Dr. Lohia to continue his fight against the Caste system which he expressed so vehemently thus: “Caste is the most overwhelming factor in Indian life. Those who deny it in principle also accept it in prac-



Rajindar Sachar

tice. Life moves within the frontiers of caste and cultured men speak in soft tones against the system of caste, while its rejection in action just does not occur to them.”

Dr. Ambedkar was for giving special opportunity to those who had been deprived for centuries in all walks of life. But the false friends of the deprived castes take cover by suggesting that solution lies in raising everybody economically, give everybody an equal opportunity. But these false advocates of destruction of caste, wrongly presume as though rising standards and opportunities would be restricted to the low-caste only. When everybody has an equal opportunity, castes with the five thousand year old traditions of liberal education would be on top. Only the exceptionally gifted from the lower-castes would be able to break through this tradition.

Some of the so called secular parties however seek to maintain reservation in a cast-moulded measure while they are themselves viciously caste-ridden, perhaps unknowingly. They denounce caste by birth, but in enthroning the principle of merit, they keep secured their privileged positions. It is to the credit of Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy and vision that this perverted view of history is now being viewed differently.

Notwithstanding the universal acclaim for Dr. Ambedkar (obviously for taking political advantage) no government has yet tried to take effective steps to increase the participation of

Dalits in the field of economic development – without which the chain of stratified caste system cannot be destroyed.

In the matter of alleviation of any misery a country with limited resources has necessarily to evolve priorities in each sector. Our social system has, it must be remembered, to live down the centuries of caste exploitation and sub-human existence to which this large chunk of our population, i.e., Dalits were condemned. It is for this purpose that many of us maintain that to see fruition of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy completely, it is now necessary to go beyond mere provision of reservation in education and service sector. To do further leveling Dalits need to be assured by law of a proportionate share of public works and government.

The same would be justified on the ground of reasonable classification inasmuch as it was to give benefits to a class or society which have been deprived of opportunity for hundreds of years and which can only be redeemed by providing them special provisions.

A similar situation arose before the United States Supreme Court. There was a "minority business enterprises" clause in the Public Works Employment Act of 1977 which contained provisions that 10% of the federal funds granted for local public works projects must be used by state and local grantees to procure services or supplies from businesses owned and controlled by "minority group members", amongst being defined in the Act as United States citizens i.e. who are "from Negroes". The Court upheld the validity of the legislation as it contained provisions designed to uplift those socially and economically disadvantaged persons to a level where they may effectively participate in the business mainstream of the U.S. economy.

The Court said that it was necessary to en-

sure that the minorities were not denied equal opportunity to participate in federal grants to state and local governments, which is one aspect of the equal protection of the laws.

Thus it is fallacious to say that if a similar law was made in India, non-Dalits will thereby be thus discriminated because as the US Court said, "It is not a constitutional defect in this program that it may disappoint the expectations of non-minority firms. When effectuating a limited and properly tailored remedy to cure the effects of prior discrimination, such 'a sharing of the burden' by innocent parties is not impermissible."

The Court ended with ringing words, "If we are ever to become a fully integrated society, one in which the colour of a person's skin will not determine the opportunities available to him or her, we must be willing to take steps to open those doors."

Steps like this need to be followed immediately if we wish to avoid the grim warning given by Dr. Ambedkar at the conclusion of the finalization of the constitution when he said, "We are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life, we will have inequality....We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously constructed."

I humbly submit that the above warning continues to have the same relevance and urgency today.

New Delhi. Dated: 21/04/2014

(Justice Rajindar Sachar has been Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi and President, PUCL, India.

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Today, We Students Are the Opposition

Anirban Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI: The title of this event 'Jashn-e-Azaadi' (festival of freedom) alludes to the rhythmic chanting of the slogan for Azaadi that has become the anthem for the Stand with JNU movement – not just in JNU, or in Delhi, but across India and the world. The Administration Block rechristened Azaadi Square or Freedom Square certainly became the centre of the carnival of freedom. This slogan in fact defined in many ways the fundamental tenets of the movement: freedom of expression, freedom from fear, freedom or autonomy of a university, freedom from the doctrine of Hindutva, freedom from Brahmanism, freedom from oppression, as also the declaration of freedom against fascism.

Undeterred in the face of a most malicious witch hunt and reign of terror, the struggle of the democratic forces within JNU and the solidarity from without transformed the lives of thousands. As Lenin said, “There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.” And much of this was articulated through the slogans for Azaadi. But while Azaadi defined one end of the spectrum, the other slogan that has been posed as its counter in this country-wide debate is of course Bharat Maata Ki Jai. As students of history, we know how every slogan has its roots in history, how each of them acquire certain meanings, they travel in time and space and are used to articulate a particular vision at a particular time. It might be a good occasion to unpack and contrast these two slogans and the ideas they propagate.

The idea of ‘nation’, contrary to populist notions, is a product of history. It’s not a preordained entity existing from time immemorial. The colonial experience, the sketchy boundaries that the British Raj drew for itself by the late 19th century became the basis for the imagination of

an incipient nation. In the last two decades of the 19th century, in the midst of the Hindi-Urdu controversy, the gau-mata or gauraksha movements, music before mosque and such issues – the Indian nationalism that took stronger roots in public imagination was that of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. Inspired by a play by Kiran Chandra Bannerjee, Bharat Mata (1873) or Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s novel Anandamath (1882) this idea of nationalism soon acquired an anthropomorphic shape in the form of the Bharat Maata that subsequently were popularised through calendars, posters and so on. What was common in all these representations was the fact that Bharat Maata is depicted as a Hindu goddess and is supposed to express universal Hinduism and nationhood.

This Bharat Maata as popularised by the RSS is a close approximation of Durga or Maata Shera Waali - fair-skinned, clad with jewellery, her flag reaching up to Afghanistan, her saree fluttering up to north-east stretching up to Myanmar, her crown approximating Kashmir and her feet till the tip of Kanyakumari. And of course the lion. This or any other version of the Bharat Maata has the commonalities of them representing a dominant caste, Vedic Hindu divinity, with a certain bourgeois respectability (read Karen Gabriel). In short, in Bharat Mata we have a Vedic, Aryanized, Brahmanical, possibly North Indian, dominant caste, wealthy even regal, Hindu figure with whom the Dalits, the tribals, the Muslims, the Christians, the Sikhs, or even the poor could not have identified. Over the course of the early twentieth century, this is the brand of nationalism that prevailed over any other. Hasrat Mohani’s Inquilab Zindabad, adopted first by Bhagat Singh and his comrades and then by a wide spectrum of freedom fighters, and the

Jai Hind of Bose and the INA somehow were subsumed or superseded by this particularly majoritarian imagery of Bharat Maata. The closing time in Tihar at 6pm every evening is for instance marked with three salutations of Bharat Maata Ki Jai and one salutation of Jai Hind. And it is precisely this imagery or vision of a Hindu India as espoused most avowedly by the RSS that Ambedkar identified as the biggest threat to democracy. He said, “If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost.” Irrespective of the kind of nationalism, he envisioned, or for that matter even Periyar or Bose envisioned, despite the particular notion of India encapsulated in the Constitution, it was ultimately the saffron and thoroughly brahmanical brand of nationalism that came to dominate the minds and limbs of the state apparatus no matter which shade ruled at the centre.

If this was one aspect of the contradiction, then there were plenty of its derivatives. In fact Ambedkar himself said while introducing the Constitution that, “We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.” The aim, objective and vision of every democratic voice in this country is to address this contradiction – to fill this widening gap. But the same contra-

dition in fact still remains. Today those who are selling off the country's resources at the cost of waging a war on the adivasis in the name of Operation Green Hunt; privatising health, education and allowing MNCs to bypass even the laws of the land in SEZs are calling themselves the defenders of the country's sovereignty. Those who are mutilating the constitutionally espoused value of secularism by spreading communal venom dedicated to an idea of Hindutva are swearing by the Constitution and calling others “anti-national”. Those who have buried the idea of socialism through their pursuance of a brazenly neo-liberal regime since 1991 are said to be upholding the constitution. The paradox that Ambedkar pointed towards in fact still exists. Today those who are more forthright, more sincere about the constitutionally guaranteed rights, today those who are more closer to the people of “We the People”, are being branded as “anti-national”, “seditious” and “enemies of the state”. Whereas those who might just swear by a book or chant Bharat Mata Ki Jai are immediately certified as the most “nationalist” of the lot.

This brings us to the other slogan – our slogan of Azaadi. This slogan also has its own telling tale. Unlike many who think that the Azaadi slogan originates in its present form in Kashmir, then they would be mistaken. Interestingly, the chant originated as a feminist assertion against patriarchy. It was evolved and popularised by well-known feminist Kamla Bhasin in the women's movement all over south Asia in early 1990s. Of course it came into prominence yet again in the streets of Kashmir in the summer of 2010 as the valley erupted with the young stone pelters facing the army and the chants for Azaadi reverberating through the valley reaching up to Delhi. It was picked up and adopted adeptly and creatively by JNU students during the 16th December 2012 movement demanding freedom for women. And from thereon by February 2016 it became the popular Azaadi an-

them against brahmanical hindutva fascists forces. But while today we are fighting for and celebrating the Azaadi to debate, discuss and advocate any opinion or issue – from nationalism to caste to gender to development – we, however, still seem to be wary of one issue. As Perry Anderson says, in the descending order of “permissibles” in this ‘democracy’ one that probably ranks the lowest, and one that amounts to heresy is to speak of Kashmir.

In the year 325 Emperor Constantine I convened the first ecumenical council of Christendom. As Galeano puts it, after much deliberation this council ruled that the word “heresy”, from the Greek “hairesis”, which means “choice”, from then on would mean “error”. So, when we say that both India & Pakistan should give primacy to the “choice” of the people of Kashmir, we commit “heresy”. When we say that instead of the LoC or the AFSPA, or the “strategic” landmass, - it should be the people who should be kept at the center by both India and Pakistan to arrive at a resolution, we commit “heresy”. When we remind the people that our own first PM Nehru had in the UN promised the people of Kashmir this “choice” through a plebiscite followed by years of betrayal and AFSPA to curb the same “choice”, we commit “heresy”. The Himalayan human cost of this bleeding issue has already taken the lives of four million Kashmiris as per modest Indian estimates. The figure is more than double if higher estimates were to be believed. Today, after decades of conflict and deathly “peace” Kashmir still simmers with the living memory of thousands of disappeared, with the haunts of hundreds of unidentified mass-graves, rapes, tortures and fake encounters. Nehru said, “We have gambled at the international stage on Kashmir, and we cannot afford to lose. At the moment we are there at the point of a bayonet. Till things improve, democracy and morality can wait.” Seven decades have passed, democracy

and morality still wait outside the doors of AFSPA.

Ambedkar – whom the so called nationalists are eager to appropriate and whom they celebrate as the maker of the Constitution, in his resignation speech made it clear that he wishes that a plebiscite be held at the earliest in Kashmir and that he was against the allocation of over half the budget to the armed forces to be stationed in Kashmir. What would we call Ambedkar then? “Anti-national”? “Seditious”?

Gandhi, in his meeting with a Naga delegation in 1947 said, “You can be independent. You are safe as far as India is concerned. India has shed her blood for freedom. Is she going to deprive others of their freedom? Personally, I believe you all belong to me (sic), to India. But if you say you don’t, no one can force you.” What do we call such a thought? “Seditious”?

The people sitting in this hall may differ from me, even vehemently so. They may have a different resolution in mind. We may argue fiercely. Many of us here may differ on several counts with Prof. Bipan Chandra’s positions (for instance, on reservation). But in academic spaces at least we must fight together to defend the right to have opinions, debate, discuss and differ on issues ranging from caste discrimination, gender to working class to the right to self determination. Because, as someone said, “speech is really free, only when it hurts”. Even taking the K-word – Kashmir should not immediately be called “seditious”. For us such should be the extent of Azaadi. After all, “We differ, therefore we are.”

Rohith Vemula in HCU was demanding Azaadi from brahmanism, from communal fascism for which he had to pay with his life. It only strengthened the struggle. Today, as the VC in HCU has been reinstated, the teachers and students who were protesting in indignation and outrage were brutally lathi-charged and ar-

rested. Even this shall not arrest Azaadi. The fight of the Dalits, Adivasis for land, livelihood and dignity is also for their Azaadi. Women and other oppressed genders today are fighting for their own right to self-determination or Azaadi. The workers fighting for their right to unionize or the farmers of Vidarbha also have their idea of Azaadi. But if we are to expand the horizons of Azaadi and defend our gains at the time of ascending fascism, we must forge a unity in struggle. Because, even today if we remain divided into red, blue and green and so on, – fascism will ensure that tomorrow none survives. Maintaining our ideological differences – our

colours, sharpening our tools of criticism and self-criticism, we must shun the path of sectarianism and build genuine unity of the oppressed against the combined assault of the brahmanical Hindutva fascist forces and the forces of big capital. From FTII to IIT Madras, from Allahabad to Jadavpur, from HCU to JNU it is this unity that we ought to build. Because, today, we students are the opposition.

(This is the text of the paper presented at 'Many Meanings of Azaadi' session in JNU on 28th March, 2016).

Courtesy **The Citizen**, Friday, April 01, 2016.

Should a refusal to say Bharat Mata Ki Jai be considered as disrespect to the Constitution?

When demonstrators in Mumbai supporting the abortive naval mutiny of February 1946 tried to force Mumbai-wallahs to shout Jai Hind, Gandhi responded by saying that to 'compel a single person' to 'shout Jai Hind' was to drive a nail 'into the coffin of Swaraj in terms of the dumb millions of India' (Harijan, March 3, 1946). Bharat Mata Ki Jai was favoured by many of our founders. I do not know whether Dr Ambedkar was enamoured of it. But forcing, coercing, or compelling anyone to recite any slogan, no matter how noble, is a violation of the constitutional guarantee of free speech, which includes the right to remain silent. Forcing you or me to say something is the only issue here, not the nobility of a slogan. When compulsion is legitimised, the weak — the helpless, the excluded, Dalits — are the worst sufferers. Then you are empowering the bullies.

Rajmohan Gandhi in his new book Understanding the Founding Fathers

Oral Statement by IHEU on State-led aggressive nationalism:

International Humanist and Ethical Union

UN Human Rights Council, 31st Session (29th February – 24th March 2016)
General Debate on Item 9

Elizabeth O’Casey

The UN High Commissioner recently noted that when the UN Charter was drafted, it was partly done so in response to a world that had been thrown “violently into imbalance” by “feral nationalisms.”

That was 70 years ago. Yet, we live in a time again when leaders [as observed by the High Commissioner] “are pandering to a simplistic nationalism,” mirroring the “simplified and destructive ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mind-set of the extremists”, and fanning “a rising wind of prejudice and fear.”

Notable is the rise we have seen in European political parties with ideologies grounded in nationalism and populism, and their response to the migration crisis.

State-led aggressive nationalism has been particularly stark in India and Russia. In both instances, we have witnessed a dangerous hijacking of religion to create an exclusionary and discriminatory nationalist identity and a destructive use of nationalism to suppress speech and dissent.

A rise in Hindu nationalism in India under the premiership of Narendra Modi has seen a continuation in the increase of attacks on religious minorities. Statistics on inter-communal violence show a 30%

increase in the first half of 2015 with a total of 330 attacks, of which 51 were fatal. This violence has happened against a backdrop of a number of BJP politicians making deeply derogatory remarks about minorities.

The colonial charge of ‘sedition’ has even been imposed recently, in response to the union of students at the JNU University critiquing government policies.

In Russia, a government-led nationalism tightly interlinking state and Orthodox Church – and selectively limiting free speech – has been instrumental in whipping up anti-migrant sentiment, and fuelling the often extremely violent intolerance of religious minorities, such as Muslims from the Caucasus, and LGBTI minorities.

The Durban Declaration is clear in its condemnation of “violent nationalist ideologies based on racial or national prejudice” (para 84). On International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we call on the Council to do more to combat the harmful and exclusionary ideology of populist nationalism, particularly in the two aforementioned member states.

(Emphasis in bold added)

Paper presented at the IRI Study Camp, February 13-14, 2016, New Delhi:

The Radical Humanists & Electoral Politics

Ajit Bhattcharyya

Rarely in history a single man came nearly to revolutionize the prevailing thoughts and launched his nation peacefully to a dramatic new course. We may mention one ancient and another modern example. But both did it from inside without giving up authority and power they held.

Alone, among conquerors the Maurya Emperor Asoka after the Kalinga war was so disgusted by the cruelty and horror of war that he renounced it. He was influenced to the change of mind by the Buddhist monk Upogupta. Gautama Buddha's Eight Fold Way, which includes insistence on 'mental uprightness', 'right aims and speech', 'right conduct', 'honest livelihood', etc. conquered the imagination of Asoka. Thereafter Asoka strenuously tried to establish a tolerant, rational and humanistic social order among his subjects in a visionary spirit unthinkable in that era or rarely seen ever since.

But Asoka did not dismantle the mighty Mauryan army and kept it ever battle ready. In one of his edicts he cautioned the rebellious border tribes not to take his recourse to peace as his weakness.

He also did not dilute the severe penal provisions introduced by his grandfather Chandragupta Maurya. He only directed his officials to postpone the execution of capital punishment for three days so that a higher authority may re-try it.

Asoka is the first propaganda guru in history. He inscribed probably eighty thousand edicts in popular 'Prakrit' language on rock surfaces and stone pillars all over his empire. It shows to what extent education was spread in that time. He

made provisions for the education of women and created a ministry for the care of the aborigines and subject races of India.

Asoka left no prince and no organisation of men to carry on his work. Still, his system lasted for about seventy years after his three decades long rule.

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev's revolutionary programme of Perestroika (Restructuring) and Glasnost (Openness) effected profound changes in the then Soviet Union within five years (1985-91) of his assuming power, and finally completely undo the old order.

M.N. Roy formulated that real democratic socio-political changes would occur only through local grass root initiatives.

We have only one historical evidence when feuding local war lords chose a leader peacefully through mutual consent. In the middle of the 8th century, when Bengal and Bihar were in the grip of a prolonged period of anarchy, Gopala, the son of an affluent commoner was thus chosen King of Bengal and Bihar. Though it cannot be taken as a grass root revolution, it has shadows of delegation of power.

Initiative has always come from individuals. But from our hoary savage past only organised efforts had given workable shape to the visions conceived by individuals. History has witnessed no second way till date.

M.N. Roy's analysis of the mischief of Party politics is beyond question. It has rather become more murky, specially in the Third World countries. But has Party Politics exhausted its positive values and utilities in spite of its blatant mis-

use? Roy, I am afraid, did not give due consideration either to its historical role or to its contemporary relevance. The Party System is barely 350 years old. The Restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660 heralded the beginning of the Political Party system as it was practically the first recognition of governance by law. This is the most important contribution of the Party politics.

But there is a rider. Prof. Giorgio Agamben, a noted Italian philosopher, has recently remarked that the sovereign authority and aspirant thereto are both anarchical by nature. They do not care even to obey the rules framed by themselves. Prof. Agamben terms this as "The State of Permanent Exception or Emergency" when normal juridical process does not work. The mature Western Democracies have reached near approximation of the 'Rule of Law' after centuries of trial and error. This contradiction was grasped by M.N. Roy through his vast experience. But he failed to pin point that the contradiction is inbuilt in governance itself, not merely in any system of governance.

This is true, to some degree, of every man made institution.

Roy's vision of Party-less participatory democracy through people's committees is also a system of governance. So it is doubtful whether it would be totally free from the inbuilt vices of governance.

The very competitive nature of power politics, along with a vibrant public opinion, the media, the Civil Society, the Judiciary etc, ensure 'Rule of Law' in varied degrees in different countries.

Roy's vision of Party-less democracy is unique. But no other Political Party followed it. And none, even Roy himself, tested it till date. The blueprint has thus remained so far as an object of academic interest only, which may be

implemented in the unknown future.

While M.N. Roy never gathered mosses and updated himself with new wisdom throughout his life, we are struck to certain fixations and are thus unable to look out of the box. So Roy did not discard the new opportunity opened up by the coming general election. He recommended participation in it without waiting for his visionary pyramidal democracy. Roy wrote, 'Let us have no illusion. Working for two years we may not return even a single candidate of the first election to come. But even then we shall achieve something. In every constituency where we shall have worked in this spirit, a group of local people will have arisen with some judgement of their own... will act as a catalytic agent and radiate the spirit far beyond their constituency... This process will increase in speed and extent and if the new outlook attract a sufficiently large number of people, there is no reason why in ten or fifteen years from now, that is in the third election in free India, we should not have created a large number of local republics on the foundation of which a real Democracy can be built up.' (From "Politics, Power and Parties"-- reprinted in **The Radical Humanist** - August, 2015).

To my knowledge only three former members of the Radical Democratic Party, namely Seupujan Singh from Bihar, Nalini Sengupta and Nripen Chakraborty from West Bengal contested in first general elections. Though not formal, they were nominees of some sort of local 'People's Committees'. They were mostly assisted by former members of the R.D.P. and the Indian Federation of Labour. But the attempts were not followed up. So, sheer non-practice and lack of field trials brought the new alternative to naught.

M.N. Roy was perhaps far in advance of his age, as no other Political Party was dissolved. But Roy was pragmatic enough not to dissolve or disassociate himself from the Indian Renais-

sance Institute. IRI is a well-knit organisation like any other units, including Political Parties. Its constitution too ensures the hold of the dominant group through its provisions of 'Life Trusteeship'. Its dual role - one as a property holding body and secondly as a vehicle of ushering in of new Renaissance of Roy's vision, is not structurally balanced. In the beginning years it was perhaps needed to prevent its takeover by unwanted elements. But by now are we not mature enough to make it more representative by decreasing the numbers of 'Life Trustees'?

Power and Politics are to remain. In this context we should strive for gradual approximation of Roy's core ideas such as 'individual freedom', 'self sufficiency', etc. An activist organisation is urgently needed for it. It may be named "Humanist Initiative". It would have greater out reach. We must not be averse to participate in electoral politics. Certainly we are very small in numbers. But in federation with acceptable

groups and persons we may venture into it. But we must have good field work first. In this very Study Camp we may form such a provisional unit to be regularized in near future.

Our entire legislative system has become the fountain head of misrule and corruption. As President of the 'Citizens for Democracy' Jaya Prakash Narayan set up a committee under Justice V.M. Tarkunde to report on money and muscle power, misuse of official authority, and other corrupt electoral practices. The report was presented to the Presiding Officers of both Houses of Parliament at the conclusion of a massive and historical rally. Nothing happened. Again between 1990 and 2010, eight committees submitted their reports on the complex issues of electoral reforms. But the Government is yet to take a final considered view. The demands for electoral reforms may be the first issue of our activity. We should discuss other relevant topics also.

Gandhi on Nationalism

*Gandhi's understanding of nationalism as expressed in Hind Swaraj in 1909, more than 100 years ago, never changed. He wrote then: 'India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. Those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion... In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India.' As for Ambedkar, this is what he wrote in a preface dated January 1, 1945, to the second edition of his significant book, first published in 1941, *Thoughts on Pakistan*: 'It is a pity that Mr. Jinnah should have become a votary and champion of Muslim Nationalism at a time when the whole world is decrying against the evils of nationalism... But isn't there enough that is common to both Hindus and Musalmans, which if developed, is capable of moulding them into one people? If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country...' Compare the Sangh Parivar's view of nationalism with these two conceptions and draw your own conclusions.*

Rajmohan Gandhi in his new book Understanding the Founding Fathers

The Boy without Shoes

The following article was written four years ago

Ayesha Ibrahim

One day while shopping for some comfortable shoes in Peshawar Saddar, with limited pocket money (as can be the case with all private college teachers), my husband had one of his many other unique experiences on the road. Before moving to next part of the incident, I would like you to know that we are sensitive, ordinary, middle class people, too busy to fend for ourselves- thanks to the great gift handed over to us in the form of Capitalism.

Peshawar Saddar is home to many beggars- young, old, handicapped and kids too. Some begging for alms, others asking for medical help for some relative, few advertising their mutilated body parts for a chance of bigger reward. Kids aged twelve, eleven or under selling candies and chewing gums. Many professional and not so professional paupers approached my husband asking for alms. He shrugged them all, just like anyone of us would do while waiting in the car. There is a rule to follow before any 'contribution'. If you have to give alms, give it when you are leaving (the shopping centre in your car) or else 'they' will swarm you and your vehicle. It is only but natural that as humans we avoid such situations when 'reality' is staring at us right in the face. When we realize that it is more of 'them' and less of us. When we realize that it is a minority that always rules. When we realize that children in Africa do die of hunger and our children are going right in that direction! But... we want to turn away because we 'think' we cannot do anything. And that is when we agree and unhesitatingly blurb that pet statement, 'this is the State's responsibility to feed and clothe them', while we are shopping for expensive branded clothes.

While a variety of help seekers came and

went away, this kid aged around 8 years, carrying a plastic tray dressed with candies, diagonally strapped to his torso moved towards the car and asked my husband if he would buy some chewing gums. The kid was small, innocent and belonged to an age group when children like to play most of the time. For a child of his age, he seemed very serious and dismal of life. My husband became curious and started interviewing the child regarding his small business in Pashto which is our mother tongue.

Husband: 'How many do you sell each day?'

Kid: 'Five or four.'

Husband: 'How much do you sell one for?'

Kid: 'Rs. 7 each.'

Husband: 'And how much it costs and what are your profits?'

Kid: 'Rs. 5 each, I make two rupees on each chewing gum.' The reply boggles my husband.

Husband: 'What does your dad do?'

Kid: 'He teaches children to read the Holy Quran'.

The child now became peculiar of my husband and so unhesitatingly questioned him, 'Why don't you rich people give money to poor people like us so we can buy food?' My husband was speechless because the question asked was very cryptic in nature.

According to our definitions we are not rich, but to impoverished people like this child, owning a car can only be characteristic of the rich even though the car might be 10 years old and fuel prices sky high. This kid goes to school in the morning and returns to his business in the evening. At a tender age, he got to realize that

earning a few rupees is not easy. He travels all the way from home on local bus along with his cousin- a partner in his small enterprise. My husband wanted to prolong his interview but the kid seemed to be in a hurry because he had to grab other potential customers. My husband said, 'I don't have money or change.' To this the kid mocked, 'You are sitting in such a big car and you do not have Rs. 7?!'

After my husband narrated the above, the incident led me to question myself. Why don't I feed the poor by living a simpler life and by not promoting materialism? Why I want to be accepted in a society that does not even care, by buying new clothes for every event costing Rs. 5000/- the least if it has to be a wedding function. This all is done in order to show 'others' how well I am doing after getting married! And if I cannot afford that, a simple stitched three piece suit costs Rs. 2000/- the

minimum. And if you want to deteriorate the quality even further that would be 'Rs. 1500/- madam'! This is something this kid's mom still cannot afford! Why I cannot do anything about it?! Why 'We' cannot do anything about it?!

It is easy to point fingers at others but it would be more worthwhile if we critically examine ourselves first. There is no use of gaining false pleasure and warmth from branded clothes, they might be a status symbol but individual recognition comes from one's social conduct. As a society we must uphold our lost past traditions of caring for our neighbors and the needy. Imagine what change only this could bring! Revolutions like these do not just happen, they are brought by the people, individually on a united front.

(Courtesy the **Blog of Ayesha Ibrahim-Radical Humanist**)

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Wealth Does Not Trickle Down, It Floods Offshore \$21 to \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts, Research Reveals

The world's super-rich have taken advantage of lax tax rules to siphon off at least \$21 trillion, and possibly as much as \$32tn, from their home countries and hide it abroad – a sum larger than the entire American economy.

James Henry, a former chief economist at consultancy McKinsey and an expert on tax havens, has conducted groundbreaking new research for the Tax Justice Network campaign group – sifting through data from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and private sector analysts to construct an alarming picture that shows capital flooding out of countries across the world and disappearing into the cracks in the financial system.

Comedian Jimmy Carr became the public face of tax-dodging in the UK earlier this year when it emerged that he had made use of a Cayman Islands-based trust to slash his income tax bill.

But the kind of scheme Carr took part in is the tip of the iceberg, according to Henry's report, entitled *The Price of Offshore Revisited*. Despite the professed determination of the G20 group of leading economies to tackle tax secrecy, investors in scores of countries – including the US and the UK – are still able to hide some or all of their assets from the taxman.

"This offshore economy is large enough to have a major impact on estimates of inequality of wealth and income; on estimates of national income and debt ratios; and – most importantly – to have very significant negative impacts on the domestic tax bases of 'source' countries," Henry says.

Using the BIS's measure of "offshore deposits" – cash held outside the depositor's home country – and scaling it up according to the proportion of their portfolio large investors usually hold in cash, he estimates that between \$21tn (£13tn)

and \$32tn (£20tn) in financial assets has been hidden from the world's tax authorities.

"These estimates reveal a staggering failure," says John Christensen of the Tax Justice Network. "Inequality is much, much worse than official statistics show, but politicians are still relying on trickle-down to transfer wealth to poorer people.

"This new data shows the exact opposite has happened: for three decades extraordinary wealth has been cascading into the offshore accounts of a tiny number of super-rich."

In total, 10 million individuals around the world hold assets offshore, according to Henry's analysis; but almost half of the minimum estimate of \$21tn – \$9.8tn – is owned by just 92,000 people. And that does not include the non-financial assets – art, yachts, mansions in Kensington – that many of the world's movers and shakers like to use as homes for their immense riches.

"If we could figure out how to tax all this offshore wealth without killing the proverbial golden goose, or at least entice its owners to reinvest it back home, this sector of the global underground is easily large enough to make a significant contribution to tax justice, investment and paying the costs of global problems like climate change," Henry says.

He corroborates his findings by using national accounts to assemble estimates of the cumulative capital flight from more than 130 low- to middle-income countries over almost 40 years, and the returns their wealthy owners are likely to have made from them.

In many cases, the total worth of these assets far exceeds the value of the overseas debts of the countries they came from.

The struggles of the authorities in Egypt to recover the vast sums hidden abroad by Hosni Mubarak, his family and other cronies during his

many years in power have provided a striking recent example of the fact that kleptocratic rulers can use their time to amass immense fortunes while many of their citizens are trapped in poverty.

The world's poorest countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have fought long and hard in recent years to receive debt forgiveness from the international community; but this research suggests that in many cases, if they had been able to draw their richest citizens into the tax net, they could have avoided being dragged into indebtedness in the first place. Oil-rich Nigeria has seen more than \$300bn spirited away since 1970, for example, while Ivory Coast has lost \$141bn.

Assuming that super-rich investors earn a relatively modest 3% a year on their \$21tn, taxing that vast wall of money at 30% would generate a very useful \$189bn a year – more than rich economies spend on aid to the rest of the world.

The sheer scale of the hidden assets held by the super-rich also suggests that standard measures of inequality, which tend to rely on surveys of household income or wealth in individual countries, radically underestimate the true gap between rich and poor.

Milorad Kovacevic, chief statistician of the UN Development Programme's Human Development Report, says both the very wealthy and the very poor tend to be excluded from mainstream calculations of inequality.

"People that are in charge of measuring inequality based on survey data know that the both ends of the distribution are underrepresented – or, even better, misrepresented," he says.

"There is rarely a household from the top 1% earners that participates in the survey. On the other side, the poor people either don't have addresses to be selected into the sample, or when selected they misquote their earnings – usually biasing them upwards." Inequality is widely seen as having increased sharply in many developed countries over the past decade or more – as de-

scribed in a recent paper from the IMF, which showed marked increases in the so-called Gini coefficient, which economists use to measure how evenly income is shared across societies.

Globalisation has exposed low-skilled workers to competition from cheap economies such as China, while the surging profitability of the financial services industry – and the spread of the big bonus culture before the credit crunch – led to what economists have called a "racing away" at the top of the income scale.

However, Henry's research suggests that this acknowledged jump in inequality is a dramatic underestimate. Stewart Lansley, author of the recent book *The Cost of Inequality*, says: "There is absolutely no doubt at all that the statistics on income and wealth at the top underestimate the problem."

The surveys that are used to compile the Gini coefficient "simply don't touch the super-rich," he says. "You don't pick up the multimillionaires and billionaires, and even if you do, you can't pick it up properly."

In fact, some experts believe the amount of assets being held offshore is so large that accounting for it fully would radically alter the balance of financial power between countries. The French economist Thomas Piketty, an expert on inequality who helps compile the World Top Incomes Database, says research by his colleagues has shown that "the wealth held in tax havens is probably sufficiently substantial to turn Europe into a very large net creditor with respect to the rest of the world."

In other words, even a solution to the eurozone's seemingly endless sovereign debt crisis might be within reach – if only Europe's governments could get a grip on the wallets of their own wealthiest citizens.

• *This article was amended on 23 July. In the original graphic Poland was shown in the wrong place. This has been corrected.*

Courtesy **The Guardian**, 21 July 2012.

The Truth about The Gita

By Late V R Narla*



V.R. Narla

(On 30th August 2015 Prof. M.M. Kalburgi, 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 and 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 2015 issue of The Radical Humanist.

Prometheus books in USA has brought out edition of 'The Truth About the Gita' with the introduction by Dr. Innaiah Narisetti and Aramalla. An audio version of the complete book is also available at the link given below and can be downloaded. – Editor

<https://soundcloud.com/cbrao/narla-audio-book-gita>

EPILOGUE

Twelve hundred years ago Sankaracharya picked up the Gita from the dust it was gathering, wrote a commentary on it with his unmatched genius for sophistry, and placed it before the people as the supreme guide to their life and thought and salvation. Since then its influence has been all too pervasive, all too pernicious. It has made our national mind flabby, our national spirit feeble. It has made us callous to human inequality and human suffering. It has made us shameless sycophants and sanctimonious hypocrites. This is the basic theme of a big and bold book by Prem Nath Bazaz. Of its 750 pages, nearly 500 discuss this particular aspect. Next only

to the scattered writings on the Gita by Kosambi, the best critique on it is by Bazaz.

As I pointed out once earlier, the emergence of the Gita as a national scripture and the emasculation of the national mind and spirit are closely linked. This is a historical truth which can hardly be challenged. But no devotee of Krishna, nor an admirer of Sankara, would take that statement lying down. They will react strongly, and call me all sorts of names. The more violent their tirade against me, the happier will I be. For there can be no surer indication that my writing did have the desired effect. What I desired most was to start a dialogue, to provoke a debate, to stir up a disputation. It

is all the same to me whether people agree or disagree with me, whether they praise or abuse me. What I always seek — as I remember to have said elsewhere — is a clash of minds, a flash of ideas. It is the only means for the upsurge of a new spirit, indeed, for the birth of new life.

As I have had my say, it is time for me to wind up. But before doing so, I very much wish to give expression to two of my most ardent wishes. The first is that Krishna, if he is really the greatest god as he claimed to be again and again in the Gita and elsewhere, should not keep his promise to come down again and again to our poor little earth, whenever he thinks that righteousness is in jeopardy (IX - 7). His coming on the last occasion did infinitely more harm than good. In the name of reinstating righteousness, he was primarily instrumental to the outbreak of a terrible war, and if we were to go by the Mahabharata, the number of survivors at its end was just nine from among the millions of its active combatants. What is worse, it marked the end of a better age (the Dwapara) and the beginning of a worse age (the Kali). It may also be recalled in this context that Krishna claimed that, of weapons, he was Vajrayudha or "the thunderbolt", as Radhakrishnan preferred to translate it (X - 28). If he were to reappear now, he would claim that he is the latest among the nuclear weapons. And the war which he would actively promote to reestablish righteousness would result in the extermination of all life from the face of our earth.

Now my second wish, no less ardent, is that we as a nation should forget the Gita as Arjuna did. In less than a year or two after it was taught to him by Krishna as a special favour, he told his friend and mentor that it had all "disappeared" from his mind. It will be a great blessing if our nation, too, allows the Gita to

disappear completely from its mind. Only then can we awaken from the slumber of ages; only then can we shake off our many illusions and delusions; only then can we know the value of free, daring and original thought. And then only can we learn to despise the ideal of personal salvation and fix our sights on the future of humanity, indeed, on the time when man can migrate to other, and perhaps better, worlds in our vast cosmos. If only he could reach them what a great triumph will it be for the ever-questing, ever-soaring and ever-daring spirit of man! According to Sagan, there may be millions of such worlds in our galaxy alone. Being much older than our earth, some of these worlds may have far surpassed us in arts, science, philosophy, literature, culture, civilization and the rest of the graces of life.

I will not live to see that happy day when India will forget, like Arjuna, the Gita with all its contradictions and confusions, its equivocations and evasions, its twists, turns and trickeries. But such a day will come, may be a long time after my death, but come it will. And when it comes the people of India will begin to live again, vitally, joyously, meaningfully. They would then stop fixing their gaze on the tip of their nose to still the mind and to kill all thought; they would then cease to peer into the so-called empty space within the heart where the soul is believed to have its temporary tenement, they would then scorn the ideal of union with that mirage, the Supreme Soul (Paramatma). With a new awakening, a fresh vision and a burning zeal, they would join the progressive world community in trying to unravel the many mysteries which are still locked inside the microcosm of the atom and the macrocosm of the cosmos.

To hasten that golden dawn on the murky history of India the first step to be taken is to disown Krishna and to discard the Gita

CHAPTER XVIII

From the Writings of M.N. Roy: POLITICS OF FREEDOM*

A word to young Indians

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)

Continued from the previous issue...

Moreover, from this follows another problem: You may have built up industries, and let us assume you have taken the labour from the villages: Soon large quantities of goods will be produced which you shall have to sell. But in the meantime the standard of living of the bulk of the people has not risen appreciably. You have enlarged production but not enlarged the market. And again you will be confronted with a big new economic problem.

These are some illustrations to show that the programme of social revolution, or even of democratic reconstruction, so long as it was a matter of slogans and mass agitation, seemed easy enough, but when that programme has to be put into practice, it is an entirely different

story, and good intentions and roused emotions alone will not be enough. Unfortunately we have neglected that aspect of a revolutionary movement which could supply us with the key to solve those problems of reconstruction, namely the philosophical aspect of our political practice.

We are in this awkward position because in the period of the nationalist movement we have been fascinated by our own big words, deluded by slogans which sounded attractive and looked plausible enough on paper, without trying to find out what we were to do when our slogans should ever happen to materialise one fine day. In other words, we are now confronted with the consequences of the irresponsibility of our political life in recent years. All our politics was opposition,

and we still suffer from this tradition. Previously it was opposition against Imperialism; today it is opposition against one party or another. When our old enemy Imperialism is retiring, we are confronted with a pent-up spirit of aggression in search of an enemy which may lead us straight to civil war if even now we are not going to think seriously and change that spirit, canalising it into constructive channels. So long as the country was ruled by others, we could suggest impossible solutions, telling the rulers that they did not accept our suggestions because as foreigners they did not have the good of the country at heart. But now we shall have to solve all those problems ourselves.

Now, when our own representative governments are finding those problems baffling, and are therefore inclined to the practice of staging circus instead of giving bread to the people, we shall have to do our own thinking and produce positive answers and constructive solutions to all those questions and problems, viewing them in their proper perspective and explaining them to the people in that light, to get over this habit of the agitational approach, which always makes us blame somebody else, and which always compels us to be against something, or somebody, whether it is the foreigners, the government or this whole material Universe.

The time has come for us to take up responsibility. Since we have to take up the responsibility for reconstructing our society, of carrying out at last that social revolution which has been our professed ideal for these many years, we shall have to apply our minds to fundamental problems, and the most fundamental problem is the problem of freedom. What do we mean by freedom? This question has not until now been considered in detail. We believed in national independence. We thought, or at least it was said, that if the Indian nation became independent of Britain, everything else would be alright, everything would happen automatically for the best.

It was not necessary to make that facile assumption, because, before our very eyes we have seen independent nations whose people were not free. So, India also might become an independent nation and yet her people might not be free. It is a very superficial and baseless assumption that every member of an independent nation is also free. On the other hand, unless I can put a positive content in the idea of freedom, I cannot dispute that contention.

That being the case, and if we agree that the attainment of freedom is the object of political activity, the time has come for us to consider the problem of freedom, give some concrete content to this ideal and then find out which means should be adopted in order to attain the ideal. This should have been done much earlier. But no use crying over spilled milk. Even now, if we take a sober and dispassionate view of things, we might yet avoid worse to happen.

Politics has come to be considered exclusively a matter of power. Everything depends on capturing power, on coming to power and it is believed that nothing can be done without this precondition. Conversely, once we capture power, once we are in power, it is thought we can do anything we like or want. But when power is captured, whether by a nation or by a class, neither the nation nor the class as a whole captures power. What happens is merely that groups of persons are capturing power in the name of a nation or a class. The experience of our time has shown that, whether under national independence or under proletarian dictatorship, it has always been a minority which captured power, and power has been vested in and wielded by the minority. Thus, if it is true that power is the means to freedom, then we shall have to despair of ever attaining freedom of the people or real democracy.

We are experiencing at this moment in India a case in point. A Constituent Assembly is meeting in Delhi. It has been elected by less than 12

p.c. of the people. Now the gentlemen who are meeting in the Constituent Assembly in Delhi are advancing the claim, conceded by our “enemies” the British, that they represent the nation as a whole and therefore power should be transferred to them. Once the Constitution is framed and power transferred to Indian hands, power will have been transferred to the representatives of 12 p.c. of the people. Not even that. Because a large majority of these 12 p.c. did not vote consciously and intelligently for those particular gentlemen. They voted in many instances simply because they were dragged to the polling stations like dumb-driven cattle and voted as they were told by those who dragged them. Actually, this Constituent Assembly represents perhaps not even one percent of the people, which should be food for thought to the advocates of parliamentary democracy. Thus, when the ideal of transfer of power will be attained, when India will become nationally independent, she will have the privilege of being ruled by a minority government representing a very small percentage of the people.

When political power will thus be concentrated in the hands of a small minority, you may have the facade of parliamentary democracy, but for all practical purposes it will be a dictatorship, even if it may be paternal and benevolent. How many people realise that, assuming the most democratic intentions on the part of the national leaders, the entire trend of our national politics is leading towards dictatorship? And as long as we do not lay the foundation of democracy, which is a conscious and educated demos, that cannot be helped. The laying of this foundation did not have to wait till it was nearly too late. But now it is certainly high time that we begin to lay this foundation, and in that political effort we must be guided by certain philosophical principles.

Because, even if a dictatorship is benevolent, have you ever asked yourself whether freedom

is possible under any kind, even the most paternal, of dictatorship? This question would not arise if the object of Indian politics was merely to get rid of the foreign rule, and to see only that every Minister, Civil Servant etc. would be an Indian, and this was all we wanted. Most of our countrymen, moved as they are by high ideals, did not have the foresight to put to themselves the question what would be the shape and contents of national independence, and what we really wanted to do with it once it came. The mistake of our political life has been to identify automatically the concepts of independence and freedom, but they are not identical. But the difference cannot be understood unless we try to go deeper into these problems and examine their philosophical background.

Independence can be defined easily enough. It is in a way negative. It means that a nation wants to be independent from some other country. You can be independent of anything, but you have to be free for something. What is freedom? This question has been asked not only in our country, but the entire modern world is confronted with the problem. Different answers to the question have been given by various kinds of political movements. For me, all freedom is an abstraction except the freedom enjoyed by individual human beings. Some simply deny that the problem exists, by dismissing the ideal of individual freedom as an empty abstraction and as such as something unattainable, assuming even it were something desirable. But if human freedom is not attainable, is it worthwhile spending all our life in politics? And freedom has to be experienced by individual men and women for their own unfoldment and fulfilment.

The objectionable theory, that freedom of the individual is an empty abstraction, has been set up by those who maintain that we can set a nation or a class free, but to talk of every single member of a nation or a class becoming free, that is Utopian it cannot be. Now look at the

absurdity of this proposition that the freedom of the individual is zero, but if you put a large number of individual zeros together, that gives you a large amount of freedom. On the contrary, it is maintained that liberation of a nation or a class is conditional on the individuals composing the nation or the class sacrificing their freedom and other values which they may cherish in their personal lives.

We have suffered and sacrificed a good deal for the sake of independence. And now independence has come. What is our share in that independence? It is said our share will be that national industries will be built to make the nation great. In order to do that, we must build up first of all high tariff walls around the country. The consequence will be higher prices for many things we used to buy from countries which produced them better and cheaper than ours. Who pays those higher prices? You and I and the poor people. Take one after another the concrete things which concern the ordinary people in their daily life: they are all to be considered later; in the meantime, we hear nothing but that India must be great, powerful and glorious, and for achieving that, Indians must suffer more. So the greater India will be, the more the Indian people must sacrifice, until some day India will be great enough. But will that day ever come?

The same arguments hold good for a class as well as for the nation. To overthrow the class rule of the bourgeoisie, the workers must suffer and sacrifice; and when the bourgeois class rule is overthrown, the workers must work more and suffer and sacrifice even more to build up Socialism. Now, if the precious socialist fatherland demands so much sacrifice from them, what good is its glory to the workers themselves? Such a fatherland is not a fatherland, it is a step-fatherland.

What do we really want? What is our ideal? The leftists say that our ideal is Socialism or

Communism. Very good. Just as freedom is a word, a concept, so also Socialism or Communism are concepts. Why should I prefer Socialism to Capitalism or Feudalism? There must be some standard of comparison, some reason for the preference. There was a time when I chose Communism, thinking that under Communism the common man will be in a better condition than under Feudalism or Capitalism, that he will be freer and happier. There can be only one measure of the degree of freedom enjoyed by any class or country, and that measure is the actual amount of freedom enjoyed by the individuals composing that country or that class. If we do not have that standard, we may be misled by people who want to go somewhere else from where we want to go. Therefore, we have always insisted that the object of our political activity must be clearly defined, and we must have a standard to show us whether we are advancing towards our objective or going away from it. Otherwise, in the name of freedom, people might be defrauded of their freedom by politicians exploiting their emotions, who may promise them freedom while what they really want is power; such people are rather likely to use that power to enslave others and deprive them of their human freedom in the name of a higher national freedom in which the individual citizens have no tangible share.

Only two or three years ago, nobody was prepared to take this warning seriously. Now people are listening because things are turning out different from expectation. But even now many people, and even many leftists, still do not understand the seriousness of the matter and are confusing the issues of independence and freedom. The leftists, who are merely acting as the extremist wing of nationalism, maintain that even today Imperialism is still pulling wires and oppressing India. On the other hand, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel say that the British are as good as gone and that they themselves have all the

power to do what they want. You can take your choice whom to believe, unless you have your own standards of judgment.

This confusion expresses itself in various forms of misdirected discontent. In several States, students have demonstrated in the streets and been shot. What has this to do with the freedom of the Indian people? Unless issues are understood and clearly stated, these aimless and senseless disturbances, which are brewing everywhere and occasionally breaking out, are bound to lead to loss of life and may lead to communal war. Unless we can give a positive sense and different direction to our politics, this dangerous situation will continue, make public life insecure and may lead to catastrophe. But such a new sense of direction requires a different philosophical outlook. In order to develop that, we must come out of this hectic atmosphere of emotional exuberance and give a more solid and sober purpose to our political activities. We must explain this need to the people and help them to think for themselves, so that gradually a more rational atmosphere will be created. Only then will it become possible for us ultimately to solve our problems rationally and effectively.

We have to be clear about our objective. We want that all individuals should have full opportunities to develop as human beings; not as proletarians or as worshippers at the shrine of some geographical goddess or other collective symbol, but as human beings. We have to tell the workers and peasants that they are not only workers and peasants, but that they are primarily human beings, and that they are men and women first and foremost, and if they are religious you can tell them that they have been created by the same God and were born equals with the Tatas and the Birlas and Mahatma Gandhi. If you must believe in a God, believe at least in a just God.

We have a National Government now and there is a lot of talk about how many ambassa-

dors are going to be sent out to various countries. That is a matter of national prestige, but what use is it to the people? They do not care about this outer show of greatness. They ask: What about the

scarcity of cloth and food? Previously they were told that the British took all the wealth away and therefore the people were poor. Now, instead of the three chattacks they used to give us, we should expect at least four chattacks. But instead of that we get less than before even during the war. And at the same time the prices of everything have increased. What is happening seems to be progress on the reverse gear, and in order that we should not become too conscious of it, we are given circus: India is taking her place in the United Nations Organisation and sending out ambassadors.

But all this leaves us cold. We want freedom, and freedom means that every Indian should at least begin getting increasingly the minimum necessities for building up a healthy body to house and develop a sane and healthy mind. Those minds must be formed, and for that we want a proper system of education. But look at our system of education as it is and the new plans for what is called basic education. Are your children really to work to pay for their own education? And are the standards of education to continue going down? Is that the kind of education to produce citizens who will fight for freedom, their own and that of their fellow-citizens, citizens who will be in a position to stand up against authority, whether of the British or of the Vedas or even of Karl Marx? Unless we place such an ideal of freedom before the people, our political life will not improve and mature and our problems will remain unsolved.

Our object should be such things which can be realised. A Government which can give the people enough to eat and decent housing to live in, plus the possibility of giving their children the education they need to be free men, and a rich

cultural life for all, will be a good government. But if you want to formulate your demands, you must at least know what you could do yourself to realise what you want if you were the government. You must behave responsibly and demand such things that can be done. The students of our country have been active participants in politics and they have been flattered from thousands of platforms as the makers of India's future. Now the time has come for them to live up to that flattering role. Let them tell these things to the leaders of our country, and if they cannot act accordingly, then the new generation can stand up and say to them: you have sat here long enough; for all the good you have done in the past, it is time for you to go and let others do the making of the future.

But you will have the right to do so only when you will yourself not be the proverbial blind man to lead the blind. You have to do your own thinking. You have to realise the novel problems confronting India, and not only India but the whole world. These two world wars and the period between them have completely changed the world, and the problems before us are new and unprecedented. None of the old remedies and notions can help to solve those new problems. Therefore, those problems cannot be solved by people who still cherish outdated ideals and cling to past tradition. That is so in our country also. Therefore, the old leaders are baffled. Yet they do not want to yield their leading position, convinced, as leaders are apt to be, that none can replace them. And once in positions of power, it will not be easy to dislodge them, because they will cling to their power, as always happens. Then things will drift on as before and freedom will recede farther and farther, for ever to remain a dream.

In this critical moment, the young men and women of India, who have participated in politics out of idealism and out of the fullness of their hearts, must think hard, conscious that his-

tory has given them an enormous task and responsibility which they cannot discharge unless they have the boldness to strike out new paths and blaze new trails. These are not phrases, but very concrete propositions.

Parliamentary democracy has collapsed in many countries. The idea of dictatorships of all kinds has proved to be an undesirable alternative. We have to evolve a new type of State. That is the task of the new leadership of India. We cannot have a British Parliament, nor a Soviet, nor a Nazi dictatorship. None of the known clichés will fit India or solve our problems. We have to think of a new kind of political organisation of society.

The peoples of Europe are confronted with similar problems. The old methods of reconstructing the political and economic systems of most European countries have been found wanting but the problems are still there. They have no panaceas to offer to us. We have to rebuild Indian society in its social, economic and political aspects all out of our own resources, material and ideological. But that cannot be done by the old prescriptions. New ideas have to be developed. New schemes have to be evolved. Science and technical advances in every branch of human activity alone will not help us, and no progress can be made, unless we shall be able to do this fundamental and original thinking for ourselves. Political change alone will not have any essential and lasting effect unless we have a new philosophical approach. That approach is expressed in formulating the object of politics as the attainment of freedom to be enjoyed by individual human beings.

When we say that we want freedom, we mean the freedom for every Indian, be he Hindu, Atheist, Muslim or Christian, to live and develop as human beings in every sense of the word, because only by developing all their potentialities and learning to discriminate morally and intelligently in the process can human beings become

better human beings, and hence create a better society.

That is the relation between philosophy and politics. We believe that politics, in theory and practice, is related to certain human values and ethical concepts. Politics becomes a dirty game, a mere scramble for power and success, when this relation is forgotten. That is what has happened. When politics becomes merely a matter of power and success, no nation, no class and no human being can be really free; such pursuits can only lead from one form of slavery to another form of slavery.

It depends on this generation whether or not that misfortune is to happen. Those who want to avoid that the attainment of independence will

lead to the loss of freedom, must feel the responsibility to place the ideal and the ideas of real freedom before the people, and thereby raise the movement for freedom on a higher level. Only when we turn our back on the type of politics which is based on emotional effervescence and hectic fanaticism, can we usher in a new period of fruitful scientific politics, which alone will be a pursuit worthy of rational intelligent human beings. And only as such can we pursue ideals which are truly worth living for and, if it comes to it, worth dying for.

Concluded.

**** Lecture delivered at the Students Hall, Calcutta, January 30, 1947.***

Readers' Comments

Dear Mahi Pal Singh

I have seen the April issue of the RH which has come off well. I could see your effort in this.

Narisetti Innaiah

.....

Dear Mahi Pal Singh

Wish you all success in accepting the responsibility of editing the RH, a challenging tradition of a galaxy of past editors like Roy, Tarkunde, Sib Ray, and others of the same category.

Jayanti Patel

.....

Dear Mahi Pal ji,

The magazine The Radical Humanist is fantastic. The articles, printing, photos, in fact the overall publication is so good and authentic. Beautiful presentations. Keep it up. If you need my assistance, please don't hesitate to call me. I am always ready to serve.

Thanks & regards,

Supriyo Bhattacharjee, Jharkhand

Human Rights Section:

Book Review :

In Search of Justice

Dipavali Sen

Framed As A Terrorist My 14-year Struggle To Prove My Innocence,
Mohammad Aamir Khan with Nandita Haksar, Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt Ltd,
New Delhi, 2016; English, paperback, cover design by Puja Ahuja, photographs in
black and white, pp 240, price Rs 250.

This is a book difficult to review. For, when reviewing a book one has to be calm and dispassionate. But this is a book that churns up one's feelings and makes one angry, even intense.

Fourteen years of youth and innocence wasted away in prison and courts of law! It is impossible to reconcile this with the Idea of Justice that Amartya Sen has traced through long human history.

In the opening chapter 'The Context', Nandita Haksar, the well-known human rights lawyer, campaigner, teacher and writer, introduces readers to Aamir.

In simple but telling words, she narrates how an ordinary young man with ordinary dreams suddenly got into an extraordinarily murky maze. She skillfully depicts the eco-political background of "Delhi-6", carrying it to the late 1990s. It was in 1998 when Aamir, born in 1977, was "kidnapped by the police and accused of being a terrorist, planting bombs and being in league with dreaded Pakistan-based militants" (p 1). Haksar argues cogently that even now, justice has not been done to Aamir. He has not been compensated or rehabilitated and those who had framed him have not been indicted or penalized. Haksar helps Aamir tell his story to the world, reveal how he was jailed endlessly and his aging parents suffered, their lives revolving "around courts, jails and visits to lawyer's chambers" (p

38). The chapter 'Abbu's Last Words' is especially poignant with the reproduction of chits where Aamir's father had noted down the dates of his son's numerous court hearings and which his mother had preserved carefully. His father's last words to Aamir were to say sorry for his inability to attend a "tareek". He had been a Pathan who was "a pucca Congress supporter" (p 46) and a very fond father as well.

The chronological account of Mohammad Aamir Khan's life starts now, with '1. Growing Up in Delhi-6'. This first chapter begins with his birth in Mohalla Kishangunj, Azad Market, in old Delhi, with vibrant descriptions of his Ammi keeping hens and potted plants on the terrace of their house in Kucha Pandit neighbourhood near Sitaram Bazar, Amir's own kite-flying and the weddings of his sisters. It was a normal, happy childhood.

One of his sisters was married off to a businessman in Karachi from the Quam-e-Punjabi community. When Aamir was nearing twenty, and developing soft feelings for distant relation Alia, it was decided in the family that he would go and visit this sister in Karachi.

Aamir begins the next chapter (2. An Amateur Spy) by saying that, in that neighbourhood, visiting Pakistan was not yet something out of the ordinary. Aamir also mentions here that apart from a married sister, he had an elder brother settled in Pakistan, one who had long been dis-

owned by the family. He then states that in November 1997, as soon as he got his visa from the Pakistan High Commission, and was walking towards a bus stop “really excited” and “lost in thought”, he was approached by one ‘Guptaji’, an agent from an ‘Intelligence Department’. Perhaps it was his happy mood that made Aamir agree at once “to do something for my country” without even trying to know what it was (p 70).

It turned out soon that he was to act as an amateur spy and take photographs of the Naval Headquarters at Shah Faisal Road in Karachi, with details of vehicles and road signs. Aamir writes, “I guess I was very naïve and had no idea what I had let myself into” (p 71). The visit itself (12 December 1997-11 February 1998) is described with refreshing candour. Aamir was both happy and impressed with his sister’s flat in specific and the new land in general. There are charming touches here, like the reference to the Karachi dish ‘khatakhata’ and the first waves at the sea-beach. These touches go a long way in convincing the readers that Aamir was indeed ‘not guilty’ of being the terrorist he was accused of being. Aamir developed jaundice and kidney stones while at Karachi. Still, on getting a reminder call from Guptaji, Aamir tried to take the pictures he had been asked to take, but was “too scared to take out the camera” (p 80). He did go on 5 February and collect a bag from an unknown person at a hotel, but on the return journey, before getting into the Samjhauta Express, he “panicked” (p 81) and threw it away before the Customs check. He did reach “home and the safety of the arms of my beloved Ammi and Abbu” on 13 February (p 82). But only till 20 February.

‘3. How I Was Denied Extrajudicial Justice’ now opens with its harrowing tale. On the 14th and the 17th, he met Guptaji and told him of his failure. Guptaji accused him of being a “liar”

rather than a failure. He accused Aamir of being “recruited by the Pakistani intelligence services” and in the evening of 20th February, near the Sadar Bazar area, a white Gypsy picked Aamir up. Physical torture was dealt out to him in exhausting and excruciating phases.

‘4. How I Was Insidiously Framed’ takes Aamir through the tortuous routes of the court to the Mulahiza Ward of the Tihar Jail, a ward meant for young first-timers. Amir wonders, will he have to break stones in the hot sun like Amitabh Bachchan in Bollywood films (p 116)?

‘5. Proving My Innocence’ allows us an insight into the lives of Abbu and Ammi, aging yet fighting for their son’s rights. They had to cope with police harassment as well as abandonment from neighbours. Further, a convict who had once been a constable of the Delhi police, beat Aamir up badly and the jail warden encouraged him by calling Aamir a deshdrohi or traitor. But by then Aamir had become more aware of his rights and insisted on getting himself treated outside the jail hospital. However from November 2000, Aamir began to be acquitted of the false cases put against him. His mother smiled for the first time since his arrest (p 140). But in August 2001 he lost his father and felt as if his life had ebbed away (p 146). The chapter ends on a note of utter helplessness and loneliness.

In the next two chapters, ‘6. The Politics of Hatred’ and ‘7. Caged Prisoners’, Aamir narrates how the attack on Twin Towers in New York on 11 September and the attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December further vitiated the attitude of the jail authorities towards Muslim prisoners, especially those accused of terrorism. To give just one instance, while Hindus were allowed to construct temples inside the wards, the raised platform used for offering namaz in Jail No. 3 was broken down (p 155). But Alia, the distant relation for whom Aamir had just begun to develop feelings before he got

arrested, came into his life again, through letters and a rare visit to the jail with Aamir's mother. Getting to know other prisoners (like Aqil, Kulbhushan Rawal and Vijay Singh in Dasna jail) and compassionate lawyers (like RH's very own N.D. Pancholi ji) kept Aamir's spirits up. But then Aamir was put in the solitary cell of the high-risk 'Tanha' ward and in June 2009 went through the trauma of fellow-prisoner Shakeel's suicide, just two cells away (pp 195-7). Aamir, who had been pursuing his studies through IGNOU, took his exams in May 2011. He won an inter-prison essay writing competition and his work was published in Karagar Bandi Jeevan magazine, April-June 2011. Love blossomed.

Aamir sent Alia pressed rose-petals in letters carried to her by Pancholi ji, his lawyer. Ammi, conveyed to the court in Pancholiji's car, appeared as a defence witness in a wheelchair.

In January 2011 Aamir had been shifted to Rohtak Jail. On 12 January 2012 he walked out of it a free man, although he still had loose ends to tie up. '8. National Outrage' is a moving account of his home-coming. "I got on to the Haryana Roadways bus going to Delhi. I sat down and waited for the bus to start. I felt a growing anxiety that the jail authorities may come to get me again..." (p 205). But he did make it to Delhi-6 again, to his mother and sister.

Aamir received good publicity in the media and political parties too petitioned for his rehabilitation. He was awarded by the People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights and aided by Islamic religious organizations. He could buy a new house, join the NGO Anhad, and marry his faithful Alia. But he was never provided governmental rehabilitation because he had been acquitted on grounds of 'reasonable doubt' (p 221). Aamir sees this as a legal trick depriving him of basic constitutional rights.

He has lost his long-suffering Ammi but now has a daughter. As the book ends, he still has two appeals pending in the High Court and feels "vulnerable" in the "political atmosphere of the time" (p 222). He has worked with 'Anhad' and even tried his hand at a jewellery business, but as he tells Nandita Haksar in the 'Afterword', he still needs training .. and time (p 232).

A trusting youth "kidnapped" by the police, can he ever be restored with his innocence, freed of his trauma? Can he and his family ever be rehabilitated or compensated? Carefree college years with parents, siblings and girl-friend .. can they ever be recovered?

It is a miracle that Aamir has retained his basic confidence in life and not strayed into the path of extremism and violence, despair and drugs. To some extent, reading about his life restores the faith in the Indian judiciary and the Indian constitution. But as Faizan Mustafa, Vice-Chancellor, National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), "... not many innocent people are as lucky" (back cover).

The Notes at the end of the chapters are simple yet invaluable inputs refreshing memories and adding to them. The Appendix provides the readers insight into some legal documents, complete with their spelling mistakes. The photographs of Aamir and his family make his story come alive, although the narration is vibrant in itself. Printing, editing and cover design are impeccable. Read the book, and gift it, even on birthdays and weddings. It is a classic humanist document as well as a piece of literature, a novel about how a happy dream can turn into a nightmare (pp 1, 232).

I had begun by saying that this book makes the reader indignant and emotional and so is difficult to review dispassionately.

Well, all the more reason that this classic humanist document should be read widely.

PRESS RELEASE

Release of Fact Finding Report by Coordination of Democratic Rights Organisations (CDRO) and Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS) entitled, “State of Siege: Report on Encounters and Cases of Sexual Violence in Bijapur and Sukma Districts of Chhattisgarh”

Between the 16th to 22nd January, 2016, members of Coordination of Democratic Rights Organization (CDRO) and Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS) conducted a fact finding in villages of Bijapur and Sukma districts of Chhattisgarh. The team investigated the deaths of four unarmed villagers of Peddajojer (Bijapur) on 15 January 2016 by security forces and conducted enquiries into the large scale violence, particularly sexual violence, that the security forces unleashed in Nendra (Bijapur) and Kunna (Sukma) villages, between 11th—14th January 2016. Besides meeting officials, the team met villagers and relatives of those killed in the fake encounter at Peddajojer village and the families affected by the brutality committed by men in uniform including acts of loot, plunder, rape, sexual assault and physical violence in Kunna, Chotegadam and Nendra villages. The team also visited Maharani Hospital in Jagdalpur and met two injured women who were lodged there.

Following are the findings of the team:

Peddajojer village

1. On the morning of 15 January, 2016, six villagers of Peddajojer village were on their way to the nearby market for buying daily provisions. These included three men and three little girls (See pp 8-9 and Annexure 1 of the report).

2. On the way to the market they were ambushed by security forces lying in wait at a dense forest track en-route to the market. Of the six people, two girls managed to escape while the

three men and one girl were killed.

3. The villagers upon hearing gunshots and being informed of the incident by the girls who had escaped, rushed to the site only to find that the bodies were missing.

4. The security forces took the bodies without informing the family members of the deceased. They did not conduct any inquest at the site of the encounter. The security forces took the bodies to Bijapur General Hospital. In violation of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) guidelines, the post mortems were done at the hospital without proper identification of the bodies. No video recording of the post mortem was conducted.

5. Upon learning where the bodies were kept, the villagers assembled outside the hospital and demanded that the bodies be handed back to them. The police initially refused and even asked Rs. 4000 per body as transport charges. Only after the villagers protested, were the bodies returned on 17 January.

6. The four killed were ordinary villagers of Peddajojer engaged in agricultural work and not Maoists as claimed by the security forces. The little girl killed was only 13 years old. The villagers also told us of how harassment by the security forces has become the norm in the village.

Kunna village

1. Between 11 to 14 January, security force occupied Kunna and Chotegadam villages of Sukma district. A combing operation by the DRG,

CRPF, COBRA (around 500 to 600 troops) was being conducted in the area.

2. The forces initially occupied a school but later occupied homes of people.

3. During the first two days the forces sexually assaulted many women. At least two women were raped by the forces. Women were stripped, beaten and verbally assaulted. Young girls were also stripped by the forces.

4. On 12 January several men and women from Kunna were taken into custody (see annexure 2 for details). On the way to one police camp, five men and five women were continuously beaten and the 5 women were also stripped and sexually assaulted. Apart from these, three boys were kept in illegal custody and forced to sign on a blank pieces of paper.

5. Twenty-one-year-old Lalu Sodi was severely beaten by the security forces on 12th January. He died two days after, and the villages did not report the death as they feared further intimidation from the security forces.

6. Livestock was consumed by the forces, houses were broken into and implements were stolen by the men in uniform (See Annexure 2).

7. The team found the people of Kunna in a state of shock and their everyday life had become difficult because of the violence by the forces.

8. Finally, an FIR was filed on 27th January, 2016 after a harrowing process by activists and the women of Kunna village (See page 15 for details)

9. Chotegadam village witnessed a similar pattern of plunder and violence (See pp 11-12 and Annexure 2 for further details)

Nendra Village

1. Between 11 and 14 January, security forces occupied Nendra village(Bijapur). Four to five

batches of police and security forces (CRPF, DRG, Koya) conducted search and combing operations while being stationed there.

2. The men of the village fled immediately as staying back would have meant either getting beaten up or being implicated in false cases. The security forces occupied houses of villagers.

3. Over thirteen instances of gang rape were reported by the women. Many other women were disrobed, molested, subjected to verbal abuse. Women's faces were covered with a towel or even a mosquito net when rapes took place.

4. The forces not only threatened to burn down the houses with children inside but also threatened the women with the kind of violence they experienced during the time of Salwa Judum.

5. The security forces also looted rations, consumed poultry causing huge economic loss to the already impoverished villagers. (See annexure 3 for more details)

6. When women asked the security forces for money for the rations they had consumed the women were beaten up with lathi and rifles. Older people were also beaten (See Annexure 3 for details)

7. On 18 January, 2016, members from the fact finding team along with 12 women of Nendra went to the Collectorate to bring to his attention the incidents in Nendra. However, the women had to wait till the 21 January to get their FIR registered, that too after a prolonged struggle with the administration. (see page 16 of the report for details)

State Response

A significant part of the team's energies went into meeting officials in a bid to register FIRs against the accused. In all three cases the response of the administration was one of insensitivity and hostility. In the case of the fake en-

counter at Peddajejor, the official response was of “we will look into the matter”. The efforts involved in filing the FIR in the Kunna case took almost 13 days of constant pressure by the survivors and team members. In the Nendra incident, even when the Collector ordered the recording of statements, the police refused. Only after the fact-finding team was able to meet members of the NCW (National Commission of Women) who were collecting information regarding the infamous Peddagellur incident of October 2015, that the FIR was finally lodged on 21st January.

These incidents, along with the climate of fear that has been created for ordinary villagers, activists, lawyers and journalists, needs to be seen in the light of Mission 16, which forms the governments objective in eliminating Maoists and handing over these lands to mining companies.

A copy of the report can be accessed here: http://pudr.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/State%20of%20Siege_Report_29th%20April_0.pdf

Asish Gupta (Coordinator, CDRO), Shivani (Coordinator, WSS),

27th April 2016

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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Thanking you.

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Political religion of Nationalism

“They speak grandiloquently of national interest, national honour and national spirit; behind all these high-sounding phrases are hidden the selfish interests of minority. Drugged by the political religion, called Nationalism, a people becomes the Nation which claims and obtains the effacement of individuals composing the people. Rising and capturing power on the authority of the people, the Nation becomes the enemy of popular freedom. The state being the political organization of society, it is equated with the nation. But it is a historical fact that political organization of society became necessary when homogeneous human communities were divided into possessing and dispossessed classes, and ever since that time the State has been the instrument in the hand of the former to maintain its position of privilege. So, by identifying itself with the State, the Nation becomes antagonistic to the interest and freedom of the people. It is a totalitarian concept. Therefore, nationalist politics cannot but be power-politics without any socially liberating principle.”

- M.N. Roy

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



V. R. NARLA Foreword by INNAIAH NARISETTI

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