

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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**Veteran Radical Humanist
Prof. Gouripada Bhattacharya is no more**



588

A Public Hearing –‘Women in Resistance’ at Constitution Club, New Delhi, 18 January 2019

Many women activists came on the stage and spoke of the struggle in which they are engaged in various parts of India, resisting the oppression and being thrown into prisons from time to time. But they asserted their resolve to continue their fight. One Kashmiri activist, who has undergone prison for seven years, spoke about the repression in Kashmir and ended her narration with a few lines of the famous poem of renowned poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, i.e., ‘HUM DEKHENG’ meaning ‘we will not surrender’. I give below the link at which the poem is sung by famous ghazal singer ‘Iqbal Bano’. General Zia-ul-haque, the then dictator of Pakistan, had thrown Faiz in prison. Iqbal Bano sang the song in defiance before a large gathering wearing a black saree - even though wearing of sarees had been banned by the dictator.

Link of the song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxtgsq5oVy4>



Our Tribute to Prof G. P. Bhattacharya

(1926— 2019)

Sh. Gouripada Bhattacharya died on the mid-night of 22nd January, 2019 at the age of 92 years. He began his life with the charismatic M N Roy and took his last breath as an enlightened humanist following the footsteps of M. N Roy. He was one of the living persons who had the privilege of doing handshake with Roy in 1944, when he was merely a student and member of the Radical Democratic Party's Students Union (RDSU) in Dacca University.

His first book was MN ROY and Radical Humanism, 1961, published by Wadia Publishers, Bombay. His second book on M N Roy was his PhD D thesis on Roy's political philosophy and its evolution, 1971, titled as Evolution of Political Philosophy of M N Roy, Minerva.

His last book is a classic book on M N Roy's thought, titled as M N Roy: From Marxism to Humanism, 2014, Nripen Chowdhury on behalf of Minerva.

Besides, as he belonged to the Dept of International Relations & Politics, several books on this discipline are in his credit. He wrote in addition to text book like

* Renaissance and Freedom Movement of Bangladesh, 1972, (Minerva)

* "Perestroika", (Minerva)

* Nepal and Indian politics, (Minerva), South East Asian Politics: Indonesia and Malaysia, (Minerva). Many articles in English & Bengali are available in some reputed journals. Some PhD works on Roy and Trade Union Movement and left politics were done under his supervision.

* He was the Managing Editor of the Radical Humanist after the death of MN Roy and Ellen Roy before its office was shifted to Delhi. Once he contributed a lot to the survival of this journal in the crisis period and we can't deny his intellectual contribution to the continuing of the Radical Humanist founded by MN Roy himself in 1937.

• The R H Association, West Bengal honoured Professor G P Bhattacharya in 2016 in Kolkata. After that, he was also honoured by the Jadavpur University in Kolkata.

All of his books— his own and collected were gifted to the library of the University.

Ms. Anjali Chakraborty for and on behalf of all the Radical Humanists

31 January 2019.

Our Tributes to Prof G. P. Bhattacharya (1926 - 2019) and Sh. Suniti Mukherjee (1934 -2018)

The Radical Humanist Association, Kolkata paid its tributes to the veteran radical humanists, **Prof G. P. Bhattacharya and Sh. Suniti Mukherjee**, who died recently, at a meeting held at the R H Hall, 15 Bankim Chandra Street, Kolkata – 73 today, the 29th of January, 2019.

Report by **Ms. Anjali Chakraborty**

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Articles and Features:

The Challenge of Fascism

(We are recirculating the Editorial we had written for the Republic Day special issue of the Janata Weekly (January 27, 2019), as we think it is very important that the issue be discussed among all anti-BJP political groups and organisations in the light of the coming 2019 Lok Sabha elections.)

G.G. Parekh, Neeraj Jain

With the gradual coming together of the opposition, hope has been generated across the country in recent days that the BJP can be defeated. This hope was first generated in a big way when the BJP was soundly defeated in the bypolls held across ten states in the country in mid-2018. Among the biggest defeats suffered by the BJP were its losses in Gorakhpur and Kairana parliamentary constituencies, both of which it had won in 2014 by huge margins. The Gorakhpur seat was in fact considered as one of the safest seats for the BJP in UP. This hope got a boost when the Congress–JDS came together to form the government in Karnataka, and then further when the Congress defeated the BJP in the assembly elections held in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh towards the end of 2018.

Of course, this unity is still fragile. The opposition nearly lost the plot in the Karnataka, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh assembly elections. In Karnataka, the JDS and Congress failed to form an alliance, resulting in a three-way election in which the BJP emerged as the single largest party (104 seats, 9 short of majority mark of 113; Congress got 80 seats, and JDS 37). It was only because the Congress did a quick climbdown and offered the chief ministership to the JDS that the two parties were able to come together and form the government. Had the two parties jointly fought the elections, an analysis of the election results shows that they would have easily won at least 30 more seats. Similarly, in Rajasthan and Madhya

Pradesh, where the BSP and Congress failed to fight the elections unitedly, the vote share of the Congress was only marginally more than the BJP in both the states. In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress actually failed to win a clear majority (winning 114 out of 230 assembly seats), and was able to form the government only because the BSP and SP announced their support for it. Had the Congress and BSP come together in the MP state elections, analysts say that the combine would have won more than 140 seats.

Likewise, in the crucial state of UP, while the SP–BSP have come together in a very hope-generating development, they are attempting to keep the Congress out of the alliance, which may result in a big split in the opposition votes.

On January 19, leaders of 18 opposition parties shared the stage in the grand rally organised by Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on January 19 before a crowd of roughly half-a-million people, and resolved to put up united fight against the BJP and oust it from power in the upcoming general elections. If indeed the opposition can get its act together and unitedly fight the BJP in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, there is a good possibility that it may defeat the latter and form the government at the Centre. Of course, the coming together of the opposition and fighting the BJP one-on-one is a big IF, as the above discussion shows.

However, even if the opposition does indeed manage to form the government at the Centre, even assuming that the government remains a

stable government unlike the drama going on in Karnataka, the important question is whether it can indeed fight the challenge posed by the BJP. That is because firstly, the challenge—indeed, the threat—posed by BJP is no ordinary challenge, but is the danger of fascism; and secondly, the economic agenda of the opposition, as proven by the policies implemented by it wherever it has been in power, both at the Centre (like the UPA government of 2004–14) and in the states, has not been fundamentally different from the policies of the Modi Government of 2014–19.

The Danger of Fascism

Before we discuss the BJP and fascism, let us first discuss what is meant by fascism.

Fascism is a type of political movement that first originated in Europe in the early decades of the 20th century. It stormed to power in several countries of Europe during the interwar period of 1930–45 when the big corporations of those countries backed and liberally financed it, as they thought that the fascists in power would best serve their interests instead of the democratic system. The diversities of the different European countries implied that there were different types of fascisms. Thus: i) One type of fascism was represented by Nazism in Germany—where the capitalist classes supported the rise of Hitler's fascism to power to achieve their failed hegemonic aspirations of establishing domination over at least a part of the world; ii) Another type of fascism came in Italy under Mussolini—where the capitalist classes had no hegemonic aspirations to dominate Europe, their sole aim in supporting the rise of Mussolini being to counter the growing power of the left and socialist movements in Italy; iii) A third type of fascism was that of the Vichy Government under Philippe Pétain in France following the defeat of France at the hands of Germany in the Second World War, while Hungary's Miklós Horthy and Romania's Ion Antonescu represented still yet another type

of fascism in the less developed capitalist countries of Eastern Europe.

Despite their differences, all these fascist regimes had certain common characteristic features. These can be called the fundamental characteristics of all fascist regimes:

1. Fascism bases itself on the categorical rejection of “democracy”. It seeks to replace the general principles on which democracy is based—recognition and respect for diversity of opinions, respect for electoral procedures to determine majority opinion / views, guarantee for the rights of minority—by majority authoritarianism. It seeks to impose the will of the majority on the minority by force and promotes violence by the majority without ethical or legal constraints.
2. This is almost always accompanied by a return to backward values and backward-looking ideas, such as a return to some ‘golden past’, or submission to some supposed characteristic of the ‘race’ or the ‘nation’. This provides a kind of legitimacy for assault on democracy.
3. Fascists often seek to mobilise the masses, that is, the majority of the people, in the name of extreme nationalism:
 - certain communities or groups are targeted as being a threat to the country, and nationalistic fervour is then used to mobilise the majority to attack and isolate them;
 - using this artificially created obsession with national security, opponents and critics are labelled as anti-national and traitors.

BJP and Fascism in India

Let us now take a look at the growth of fascism in India.

The BJP stormed to power in the 2014 elections. In the subsequent five years, while it has proposed several significant changes in the constitution, it has not rejected constitutional,

liberal democracy, it claims to uphold the institutions of liberal democracy such as the constitution, judiciary and a free media, and swears by universal franchise, multi-party elections and rule of the law.

But the difference between the BJP and the other right wing parties in the world, like the US Republicans or the British Tories, is that it is not an independent political party at all, but is only the mass political front of a seasoned and semi-secret organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or the RSS.

While the RSS calls itself a ‘cultural’ and ‘non-political’ organisation, its declared intention is to subvert India’s democracy and secular structure and transform India culturally, politically and socially into a *Hindu Rashtra*. According to the Anthropological Society of India, Indian population comprises of more than 4,000 distinct communities, marked by differences in customs, language, caste, religious beliefs, cuisine, location, and what have you. The RSS believes that despite these diversities, 80% of the Indian people are Hindus, and if indeed they can be united thus, then this demographic majority can be converted into a political majority. Furthermore, this hold over political power can become permanent, if those whom the RSS calls ‘Hindus’ willingly accept its ideology, and accordingly culturally transform themselves—an uncannily Gramscian principle. It can then easily go about transforming the country into a *Hindu Rashtra*, without formally repudiating liberal constitutionality.

And so, ever since its founding ninety years ago in 1925, the RSS has displayed a remarkable degree of patience in gradually spreading its ideology among the ‘Hindus’. For this, the RSS has created a network of thousands of front organisations—together called the Sangh Parivar—to cater to the innumerable diversities among the ‘Hindus’, with the aim of creating a cultural homogeneity out of this ocean of diversities, and thereby ‘Hinduisng’ them. This

is the essence of *Hindutva*, the political ideology of the RSS—welding the overwhelming majority of the Indian people together as ‘Hindus’, so that they can be mobilised towards transforming secular and democratic India into a *Hindu Rashtra*.

The religio-cultural definition of ‘Hindus’ by the RSS is very similar to the definition of the German Aryan race by the Nazis. And like Hitler sought to unite the Germans by spewing hatred against the Jews, depriving them of their civic and political rights, and persecuting them, the RSS is seeking to unite the Hindus by spewing hatred against the minorities, especially the Muslims and Christians, and orchestrating attacks on them under all kinds of guises.

Simultaneously, the BJP, together with the other front organisations of the RSS, has launched a brutal offensive to silence all opposition, labelling all opponents of the regime as anti-nationals, hounding them through sections of the media who have abandoned all media ethics to become stooges of the ruling party, getting a docile police force to arrest them under false charges of sedition . . . tactics that again are uncannily similar to those used by the Nazis.

The BJP and Corporate Power

Modi during his chief ministership of Gujarat for more than a decade and a half had a very successful record of favouring corporate houses, allowing them to rake in enormous profits. And so, as the 2014 Lok Sabha elections approached, the country’s leading corporate honchos came together to strongly and openly promote Narendra Modi for the post of prime minister of the country, something that had never before taken place in the country. This transformed his image from that of being the man responsible for the pogrom-like ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, to that of an economic genius who had single-handedly led the state of Gujarat from rags to riches, a veritable Development Man (*Vikaas Purush*)

whose firm and visionary leadership was much needed by India in its quest to become an economic superpower.

India's big business houses poured so much money into Modi's election campaign that it is estimated that he spent roughly the same amount as that spent by Obama in the 2012 Presidential elections in the USA. It was an unprecedented election campaign, what with 3D holographic rallies, extensive use of the social media as never before, and a mesmerising media campaign.

Predictably, the BJP swept the elections. Since then, the Modi-led BJP Government has blatantly run the economy for the profit maximisation of the corporate houses. So much so that it has even transferred lakhs of crores of rupees of public funds into their coffers, in the name of corporate tax concessions, corporate loan waivers, transferring the country's mineral wealth to them at very low royalty rates, giving them huge subsidies in their investments in the country's infrastructural sector in the name of public-private-partnership, selling off the country's public sector corporations to them at throwaway prices, and so on. It is because of these huge transfers of public money that the number of billionaires in India has more than doubled during the first four years of the Modi Government, going up from 56 in 2014 to 121 in 2018. In 2018, the wealth of India's richie rich increased by a whopping 39%, because of which the richest 1% in the country today hold more than half the country's wealth, and the richest 10% own 77.4%.

The flip side of these policies is that it has led to appalling levels of unemployment, a huge worsening of the crisis gripping the agricultural sector on which more than half the population depends for its livelihoods, and massive increase in poverty and destitution. As if this was not enough, the Modi Government has also made huge cuts in the government's already low social sector expenditures, further worsening the conditions of the people.

This has led to a groundswell of discontentment among the students and youth, the farmers and the working people. This caused the BJP to suffer a loss of about 17% in its voteshare in the 2018 Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan as compared to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, while in Madhya Pradesh it declined by about 13%—propelling the Congress to power in all these states. It is this swing in the mood of the people that is creating the conditions for a possible defeat of the BJP in the coming Lok Sabha elections, if the opposition is able to unite.

Will the Opposition be Able to Fight Fascism?

Even assuming that the opposition is able to unite and defeat the BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, and even assuming that it is able to overcome its internal divisions and provide a stable government for the next five years (let us, for brevity, call it the anti-BJP coalition government), the fascist threat facing the country is going to decrease only marginally.

The first reason is that the RSS has been seeking to capture the liberal institutions of the country, including the judiciary, the police, the educational, scientific and cultural institutions, and the media, from within, by staffing them with its personnel. This process began with great speed during the prime ministership of A.B. Vajpayee, and has considerably accelerated under the Modi regime. Desaffronising these institutions is going to be a massive task, and how much will the anti-BJP coalition government be willing to carry it out is open to conjecture. That is because the Hindutva ideology has succeeded in spreading its roots so deep in Indian society that none of the major anti-BJP parties (apart from the communists to some extent) are willing to counter it head-on, because of the fear of losing votes. Thus, for instance, way back in 1993–94, a textbook evaluation committee set up by the NCERT had stated that many of the textbooks prescribed in the

thousands of schools run by the RSS (more on this below) through its front organisation, the Vidya Bharati, were “designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young generation.” Despite this damning diagnosis, the Congress-led UPA Government during its ten years in power from 2004–14 made no attempt to ban these textbooks.

The second reason is even more important and crucial, and that is, will the anti-BJP coalition be willing to implement genuinely pro-people policies, in contrast to the pro-corporate policies of the Modi-led BJP Government? This question arises, because while the anti-BJP coalition has been criticising the BJP for its anti-people policies, these policies of the Modi Government are essentially only a continuation of the policies of the previous UPA Government. These are the policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. The only difference is that the Modi Government has implemented them at a much faster pace. These policies, also known as neoliberal policies, were in fact first introduced in the country by the Narsimha Rao-Manmohan Singh led Congress Government after it won the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, and have been implemented by every successive government that has come to power at the Centre since then.

If the anti-BJP coalition continues with the economic policies of the BJP, then it will only lead to yet more immiseration of the people, and will only create the conditions for the BJP to come back to power in the next Lok Sabha elections of 2014. With the RSS having further increased its strength by then, the BJP–RSS will be in a far more stronger position to impose fascism on the country than today.

What Next?

The only solution to this is that the genuinely socialist organisations—intellectuals and the non-sectarian left must mount pressure on the anti-BJP alliance to implement pro-people policies if

the latter is able to come to power in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. And the present political conditions in the country provide them the opportunity to do so.

Times of crisis also generate new rays of hope. BJP–RSS’s fascist onslaught has so badly crushed the opposition parties that despite the huge egos and vested interests of their leaders, they have been forced to come together to unitedly fight it. They are also reaching out to progressive and socialist individuals and small groups / parties and are attempting to bring them together in the anti-BJP platform.

The fascist threat is the biggest crisis facing the country. *And the alternative to fascism is democracy, not socialism.* That comes later, once democracy is saved. Therefore, the more radical socialist intellectuals and groups, the genuinely anti-neoliberal socialists, even the genuinely anti-capitalist socialists, even though they may have reservations about aligning with the Congress or the socialism of the Samajwadi Party led by Akhilesh Yadav and the Rashtriya Janata Dal led by Lalu Prasad Yadav, should support / join the anti-BJP opposition alliance. Though they are presently weak, their organisations are weak, their support to the opposition alliance will bring them to a position where they can influence the anti-BJP coalition to implement progressive policies—such as increasing taxes on the rich, stopping the loan waivers being given to the corporate houses and forcing them to repay their loans, taking steps to curb the profiteering of the corporate houses that would bring down electricity and gas prices (to give just one example), increasing government spending on the social sectors (especially education, health and nutrition), taking steps to mitigate the crisis gripping agriculture, implementing policies that would create decent jobs, etc.

Countering the RSS Network

There is another, actually more important reason, why the fascist threat will only have

marginally decreased if the anti-BJP opposition alliance comes to power. And that is: it will only be the BJP that would have lost the elections, it will not affect the grassroot network and strength of the RSS. Therefore, the RSS will continue with its campaign of indoctrinating the people in its Hindutva ideology. The RSS has by now become a most formidable force. It has created hundreds, possibly even thousands, of front organisations, to together constitute what is easily the largest political force in the world of liberal democracies. These include some of the biggest mass organisations in the country. Thus, its workers' organisation, the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, claims a membership of over ten million workers and affiliation of over four thousand trade unions. Its student organisation, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, is the largest student organisation in the country. Another important front organisation is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which in the late 1980s spearheaded the rolling out of violence and rabid ideological hysteria across the country that brought the BJP to power in Delhi for the first time for 13 days in 1996 and then for six years from 1998 to 2004, this time at the head of a coalition government. Apart from these mass organisations, even more dangerous is the huge network of schools created by the RSS across the country, coordinated at the all-India level by Vidya Bharati. In the guise of education, these schools indoctrinate the young minds of children with the RSS ideology. It is the largest network of private schools in the country. Way back in 2012–13, that is, before Modi's rise to power, Vidya Bharati's network included 13,465 schools, 31.2 lakh students, 1.3 lakh teachers, 49 colleges and training schools, and 9,806 schools for providing informal education to children unable to attend formal schools (called Sanskar Kendras and Single Teacher Schools) with 2.4 lakh students and 8,900 teachers. This network must have expanded considerably since then.

The anti-BJP alliance just does not have the wherewithal to counter this octopussian network of the RSS. These parties and their mass organisations simply do not have the dedicated cadre required for this.

Again, this task can only be undertaken by the progressive / socialist / non-sectarian left organisations. While supporting the anti-BJP alliance, they will need to take advantage of a friendly government being in power to spread / strengthen their grassroot network and spread the values of the Constitution—equality, secularism, democracy, fraternity—among the people. This will include culturally winning over to these democratic values the crores of people who today have become blind followers of the fascist Hindutva ideology.

Towards Socialism

This will also create the conditions for the genuinely socialist organisations to advance the country towards socialism.

One of the biggest misunderstandings present among many believers of socialism today is the belief that if they are able to somehow come to power, they can take the country towards socialism by implementing pro-people policies. This is one of the most important reasons for the failures of the socialist movements during the twentieth century. Socialism is not statism or populism—wherein all the decisions are taken top-down, and the people look to the State to provide them with resources and with the answers to all their problems. Socialism is a new society that puts humans and not machines or the State at the centre of society, where apart from providing people with food, goods and services, it also creates new, socialist, human beings. This creation of new socialist human beings does not take place automatically, but takes place only through a conscious process wherein people in the process of transforming society also change themselves.

By 'new human beings', we mean not just people who believe in genuine equality of all

human beings (that is, people who genuinely do not believe in caste, who believe in gender equality, who believe in equality of all people, who have genuine respect for all religions); we mean not just people who believe in cooperation and who believe that production should take place not for profit maximisation of a few but should be oriented for fulfillment of social needs; we also mean: human beings with fully developed capacities. And people only develop their capacities when they themselves take an active part in decision making at all levels that affect them, be it their workplaces, or neighbourhoods / communities, or the society as a whole.

The fight against fascism, the fight to build an anti-BJP platform of all opposition parties

and groups, provides the socialist organisations and groups with a great opportunity of developing such a network of socialist activists at the grassroot level. And assuming that the anit-BJP coalition is able to win power in the 2019 elections, the struggle to push this alliance to implement pro-people policies will provide a further opportunity to further strengthen this grassroot network, and further advance the capabilities and capacities of these grassroot activists.

These are indeed difficult times. But they also provide us, the socialists, with an unprecedeted opportunity to advance our struggle for socialism . . .

G.G. Parekh and Neeraj Jain are Editors, Janata Weekly 

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Appropriating an Icon: RSS Celebrates Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

Ram Puniyani

On this 23rd January BJP-RSS organized various programs to honor Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. In one of these programs, a clash took place leading to a curfew in Kendrapada, Orissa. In different meeting organized by BJP-RSS attempt was made to draw parallels between Bose and Savarkar, Bose and RSS. Propaganda is on to show that it was on Savarkar's suggestion that Bose undertook to tie up with axis powers (Germany and Japan). Parallels are being drawn between RSS and INA (Azad Hind Fauz). Now all attempts are on to show that Bose's nationalism was close to that of Savarkar-RSS.

RSS combine is trying to praise Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as the one who gave legitimacy to struggle for Independence against British. When did this combine realize the contributions of this great freedom fighter? Or for that matter the question comes did RSS combine ever want to struggle against British rule? It is last few years that these attempts to identify with national icons are going on. While in case of Sardar Patel the propaganda is that had he been the first Prime Minister of India we would not have had Kashmir problem, we would have progressed more. The truth in this matter is that Patel and Nehru were two solid pillars of Indian Cabinet who gave foundations to Indian republic. The differences among them were of minor nature and Patel was the most trusted Cabinet colleague for Nehru,

As far as Subhash Chandra Bose, Netaji, is concerned we know that he is one of the major freedom fighters of India. He was part of Indian National Congress most of his life and was its President of Tripura session in 1939. Within Congress he was part of the Socialist group. He and Nehru had matching ideas on

issues of socialism, secularism among others. He did fallout from Congress on the issue of method of getting freedom. While Gandhi led Congress wanted to adopt the path of non violence, Netaji did not see eye to eye on this issue. For getting freedom for India, Congress launched 'Quit India' movement to build the anti British pressure and this gave boost to the freedom struggle. During Second World War Netaji's approach was to launch armed military action against British by collaborating with axis powers (Japan and Germany), that's how he set up INA. He also formed free India's provisional Government in Singapore on 21st October 1943. He has been a charismatic leader who was thoroughly anti British.

Undoubtedly Congress was firm in the path of non violence. It launched the Quit India movement which was led by Mahatma Gandhi. Bose did develop some differences on the matter of fighting against British. He resorted to tying up with the Fascist Germany and its ally Japan. What were RSS and Hindu nationalists doing at this point of time? Hindutva ideologue Savarkar, the progenitor of Hindutva and Hindu nation ideology, propagated at that time that Hindu nationalists should help British in their war efforts against Japan and Germany. RSS Sarsanghchalak M. S. Golwalkar also went on to instruct all its branches not to do anything which will annoy British and kept aloof from the anti British struggles. So while Congress was putting pressure on British through Quit India movement, Netaji was fighting British through INA, Savarkar was proactively helping British by helping them in recruitment for armed forces. In a way RSS did nothing which went against British rule. So here with a forked

tongue Hindu nationalists on one hand were supporting the British in their war efforts (Savarkar) or keeping aloof (Golwalkar-RSS), on the other now they are eulogizing Netaji for his anti British INA!

While Netaji was Socialist, close to ideas held by Nehru, Golwalkar went on to write that Communists are internal threat to the Hindu nation. While BJP at the time of its formation used the word Gandhian Socialism, it was a mere electoral Jumla (gimmick). The ideology and actions of Netaji and Hindu nationalists-RSS were poles apart. So why are they projecting him today? Why are they trying show similarities which are not there? Essentially as RSS did not participate in freedom movement, it does not have any national icon. RSS's Atal Bihari Vajpayee at that time was a young college student who during Quit India movement was jailed by mistake; he apologized and got himself released. Savarkar since he was Anti British before being imprisoned in Andman jail has been glorified as the brave warrior by prefixing Veer (Brave) to his name. He also had apologized to the British and got released from the jail. Mostly the communal nationalists, Muslim League-Hindu Mahasabha-RSS never took anti British

stance. This should be the defining point for Indian nationalism. Congress and Bose were anti British to the core, so their nationalism in a way has similar wave length despite some differences.

When INA of Bose was being tried by British for their anti War actions against British, it was the likes of Nehru who defended the INA, none from Hindu Nationalist camp came forward to defend Bose and his colleagues during the trial by British. It is only for electoral reasons that now RSS-BJP need to identify with the likes of Patel and Bose. They are actively trying to dig up some points here and there to get a ride on the back of legends like Patel and Bose. So far Sardar Patel has been projected and now it's Netaji's turn! Their central opposition is to Indian nationalism. They vilify Jawaharlal Nehru who stood rock solid in defense of secularism and democracy. Since RSS wants to oppose the Nehru legacy, Congress on electoral ground, RSS keeps propping up icons like these. While these icons had some differences with Nehru, they essentially were on similar wave length as far as secular democratic values are concerned. These projections of Patel and Netaji are mere electoral ploys to garner more power! 

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The Low of Indian State: Nana Deshmukh & Pranab Mukherjee are Bharat Ratnas Now!

The Indian State may be a modern entity, claiming to be governed by a liberal-secular constitution, but the mindset of its rulers is frozen in the feudal and colonial past. One glaring example is that of bestowing awards or sinecures to its favourites which was common practice with the feudal lords and the British masters when they ruled India. They regularly awarded their henchmen/women with titles like *Amir*, *Rai Bahadur*, *Salar Jung*, *Jang Bahadur*, *Counsellor of the Empress*, *Khan Bahadur*, *Grand Knight of Star of India*, *Sir* and hundreds others. The British masters 'honoured' Indian rulers or princes of states like Gwalior, Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Pataudi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Nizam, Bhopal etc. with many of these titles for helping the former in crushing the 1857 War of Independence.

The Indian Constituent Assembly conscious of this evil of the pre-independence rulers' culture to patronize anti-people/nation personalities abolished award of titles under Article 18, which read, "No title, not being a military or academic distinction, shall be conferred by the State..." There were to be no exceptions. It was strictly followed till 1954 when these were introduced from the back door under the heading 'civilian awards' which Constitution of India prohibited in clear words. It became a happy hunting ground for favourites of the Indian rulers. The only exception was 4th PM, Morarji Desai who during his stint as PM (1977-80) suspended conferment of such awards on the ground that the "availability of such titles led people to flatter those in power and harmed both government and society a great deal. The irony was that Desai was awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously!

However, Desai was not off the mark. In a democratic polity where ever person enjoyed

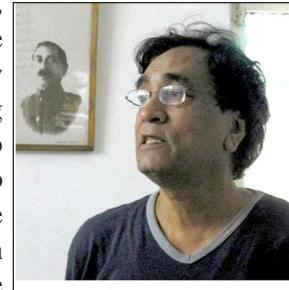
the same status, conferment of these civilian titles only showed the rampaging *darbari* culture to honour those who were part of the kitchen cabinets or in good books of the ruling party, family or alliance. There have been allegations that awards were secured through lobbying, manipulation and even bought. It was not Congress rulers only who indulged in such favouritism. This evil continued with a semblance of transparency, care was taken not to honour people with sectarian and questionable past. With RSS/BJP government headed by PM Modi in 2014 these precautions were abandoned.

How this *Lakshman Rekha* is being violated by the present rulers will be clear by the declaration of conferment of the highest national award BHARAT RATN (gem of India) to Nanaji Deshmukh and the former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee on January 25, 2019 on the eve of Republic Day. In 2015 Bharat Ratn was conferred to the Hindutva icon Madan Mohan Malviya. PM welcoming the decision referred to Nanaji Deshmukh's stellar contribution towards rural development showed the way for a new paradigm of empowering those living in our villages. According to him,

"He [Nana Deshmukh] personifies humility, compassion, and service to the downtrodden. He is a Bharat Ratna in the truest sense.

Praising Pranab Mukherjee [President of India 2012-17] he declared that

"Pranab da is an outstanding statesman of our times. He has served the nation selflessly



Prof. Shamsul Islam

and tirelessly for decades, leaving a strong imprint on the nation's growth trajectory. His wisdom and intellect have few parallels. Delighted that he has been conferred the Bharat Ratna.

Nana Deshmukh (his proper name) is not alive to thank Modi's government but Pranab Mukherjee lavishly thanked the government for this award. Let us compare the above justifications with the actual facts of history in connection with these two Bharat Ratnas.

Some of Nana Deshmukh's 'Contributions' for the Nation

According to PM, Deshmukh was conferred this award because he personified humility, compassion, and service to the downtrodden. This is neither honest nor complete description of Deshmukh's 'contributions'. He remained a *paracharak* (whole-timer) of the RSS throughout his life, remained committed to Hindutva politics which aimed at converting India into a Hindu State where *Manusmriti* would prevail as the law of the land reducing *shudras* and Hindu women to a sub-human status. So far as compassion is concerned he justified 1984 massacre of Sikhs by circulating a document 'MOMENTS OF SOUL SEARCHING' on November 8, 1984, when the carnage was on. Nana Deshmukh in this document outlined the majoritarian justification of the massacre of the Sikh community in 1984.

This document was published in the Hindi Weekly *Pratipaksh* edited by George Fernandes, who later became Defence Minister of India in the NDA regime, in its edition of November 25, 1984 titled Indira Congress-RSS collusion' with the following editorial comment:

The author of the following document is known as an ideologue and policy formulator of the RSS. After the killing of Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi) he distributed this document among prominent politicians. It has a historical significance that is why we have decided to

publish it, violating policy of our Weekly. This document highlights the new affinities developing between the Indira Congress and the RSS. We produce here the Hindi translation of the document.



Deshmukh in his document ‘MOMENTS OF SOUL SEARCHING‘ is seen outlining the justification of the massacre of the Sikh community in 1984. His defence of the carnage can be summed up as in the following:

1. The massacre of Sikhs was not the handiwork of any group or anti-social elements but the result of a genuine feeling of anger.

2. Deshmukh did not distinguish the action of the two security personnel of Indira Gandhi, who happened to be Sikhs, from that of the whole Sikh community. According to his document the killers of Indira Gandhi were working under some kind of mandate of their community.

3. Sikhs themselves invited these attacks, thus advancing the Congress theory of justifying the massacre of the Sikhs.

4. He glorified the *Operation Blue Star* and described any opposition to it as anti-national. When Sikhs were being killed in thousands he was warning the country of Sikh extremism, thus offering ideological defense of those killings.

5. Sikh community as a whole was responsible for violence in Punjab.

6. Sikhs should have done nothing in self-defence but showed patience and tolerance against the killer mobs.

7. These were Sikh intellectuals and not killer mobs which were responsible for the massacre. They had turned Sikhs into a militant community, cutting them off from their Hindu roots, thus inviting attacks from the nationalist Indians. Moreover, he treated all Sikhs as part of the same gang and described attacks on them as a reaction of the nationalist Hindus.

8. He described Indira Gandhi as the only leader who could keep the country united and assassination of such a great leader such killings could not be avoided.

9. Rajiv Gandhi who succeeded Mrs. Gandhi as the PM and justified the nation-wide killings of Sikhs by saying, ‘When a huge tree falls there are always tremors felt, was lauded and blessed by Nana Deshmukh at the end of the document.

10. Shockingly, the massacre of Sikhs was being equated with the attacks on the RSS cadres after the killing of Gandhiji and we find Deshmukh advising Sikhs to suffer silently. Everybody knows that the killing of Gandhiji was inspired by the RSS and the Hindutva Ideology whereas the common innocent Sikhs had nothing to do with the murder of Indira Gandhi.

11. There was not a single sentence in the Deshmukh document demanding, from the then Congress Government at the Centre or the then home minister Narsimha Rao (a Congress leader dear to the RSS who later silently watched demolition of Babri masjid by Hindutva goons as PM of India in 1992) remedial measures for controlling the violence against the minority community. Mind it, that Deshmukh circulated this document on November 8, 1984, and from October 31 to this date Sikhs were left alone to face the killing gangs. In fact November 5-10 was the period when the maximum killings of Sikhs took place. Deshmukh was just not bothered about all this.

12. It is generally believed that the Congress cadres were behind this genocide. This may be true but there were other forces too which actively participated in this massacre and whose role has never been investigated. It could be one of the reasons that actual perpetrators remain unknown. Those who witnessed the genocide were stunned by the swiftness and military precision of the killer/marauding gangs (later on witnessed during the Babri mosque demolition, burning alive of Dr. Graham Steins with his two sons, 2002 pogrom of the Muslims in Gujarat and cleansing of Christians in parts of Orissa) which went on a burning spree of the innocent Sikhs. This, surely, was beyond the capacity of the thugs led by many Congress leaders.i

Nana's alleged role in the murder of Deen Dayal Upadhyay

DD Upadhyay when he was at his prime of career in the RSS and become one of the most

prominent ideologues of RSS died a mysterious death. While travelling in a train, his dead body was found at Mughal Sarai junction on February 11, 1968. It was alleged that he was murdered by Communists or Muslim fundamentalists. However, Balraj Madhok, a senior RSS/Jan Sangh leader who preceded Upadhyay as president of Bhartiya Jana Sangh, leveled serious allegations in his autobiography against a few of his old colleagues of RSS/Jana Sangh for conspiring to kill Upadhyay.ⁱⁱ

According to Madhok, “the murder of Deendayal was not undertaken by Communists or some robber” but,

“He was killed by a hired assassin...conspirators who sponsored this killing were those self-seekers and leaders with criminal bent of mind of Sangh-Jan Sangh.

He goes to the extent of pointing fingers towards ex-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nana Deshmukh as the main conspirators in the murder of Upadhyay.ⁱⁱ

According to the autobiography, the murder of Upadhyay was planned by those who were kept out of the leading positions of the BJS by Upadhyay as president. It is to be noted here that Upadhyay after taking over presidentship of the BJS from Balraj Madhok in December 1967, had kept out both Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nana Deshmukh from important posts.

According to Madhok, Upadhyay was murdered because,

“He was constantly ensuring that ill-reputed people should get no career advancement in BJS, so that the reputation of the organization is not tarnished. For this reason some characterless selfish people were finding him a stumbling block in their path of self-seeking fulfillment.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The question is whether Nana Deshmukh was awarded Bharat Ratn for these ‘contributions too.’ It is clear that he was conferred highest civilian award for being a Hindutva ideologue.

SOME OF PRANAB MUKHERJEE’S ‘CONTRIBUTIONS’ FOR THE NATION

The Bharat Ratn to Pranab Mukherjee materialized due to his joining the Hindutva bandwagon. He had been a leader of the Indian national Congress, theoretically committed to democratic-secular India, for more than four decades, and also occupied the office of the President of India, the highest constitutional office of the country. Interestingly, his election was contested by BJP and its Hindutva allies for being a secular candidate. It needs no reminding that he prospered as a national political leader in the Congress ‘secular’ rule. Before becoming President of India sponsored by Congress he held posts of finance minister, foreign minister, defence minister, leader of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, deputy chairman of Planning Commission in Congress governments. Of course, all this would not have possible without the patronage of the Gandhi clan.

He got it mainly for being a turncoat who defected to the Hindutva ideology. RSS/BJP rulers miss no opportunity to declare Congress rule as period of misfortune, loot and corruption are sponsoring this old Congressman. He is welcome as he was a ‘good Congressman’ since he kept quite when Sikhs were massacred in 1984, remained silent when Muslims, Christians and Dalits suffered regular cleansing campaigns by the Hindutva gangs, stood for neo-liberal policies (in fact, a prime ideologue of globalization).

What got him recognition as the gem of India by the RSS/BJP rulers was his joining RSS. To make it public, he participated as a chief guest in a major RSS event at latter’s headquarters (Resham Bagh, June 7, 2018) attended by Mohan Bhagwat and top brass of RSS. He declared

“Today I came here to pay my respect and homage to a great son of Mother India”. He was referring to KB Hedgewar, founder of RSS. Shockingly, this ‘great son of mother India’ founded RSS in 1925 to oppose the united freedom struggle for an inclusive India. He did

not join the freedom struggle because it was being fought for an all-inclusive India and not a Hindu State. He declared minorities, specially Muslims the enemy of India and not the British rulers. He was a diehard Casteist. He was inimical towards the Tricolour which had become a National Flag for resistance to the British 1930 onward.

Hedgewar hated Gandhi as,

“It is clear that Gandhiji worked constantly with one eye on Hindu– Muslim unity...But Doctorji sensed danger in that move. In fact, he did not even relish the newfangled slogan of Hindu– Muslim Unity’.”^{iv}

His Hindutva icon VD Savarkar led Hindu Mahasabha ran coalition governments with the Muslim League in 1942 in Bengal, Sind and NWFP when Congress was banned, the country

had become a jail and hundreds of patriotic Indians were being ruthlessly massacred for daring to carry the Tricolour or unfurl it at house tops. Hedgewar believed in Hindu nationalism as opposed to Indian nationalism.

It was for such ‘contributions’ that Pranab da was praised by the PM Modi as one whose “wisdom and intellect have few parallels”. Another important factor could be Pranab’s long association with Ambanis who are very close to RSS/BJP rulers, specially PM Modi. During Congress rule former President of India was a link between Congress governments and the Ambanis. This linkage can be seen in a recent photograph snapped on the occasion of marriage of the daughter of Anil Ambani, brother of Mukesh Ambani. The posture of Anil makes it crystal clear; who patronizes whom.



February 03, 2019.

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- i) https://www.academia.edu/4890979-RSS_IDEOLOGUE_NANA_DESHMUKH JUSTIFIED_MASSACRE_OF_SIJKHS_IN_1984_From_RSS_archives
- ii) Balraj Madhok, *Zindagi Ka Safar—3: Deen Dayal Upadhyay Ki Hatya Se Indira Gandhi Ki Hatya Tak [Journey of Life—3: From the Murder of Deen Dayal Upadhyay to the Murder of Indira Gandhi]*, pp. 22-23.
- iii) Ibid. 145.
- iv) **H. V. Seshadri (ed.), Dr. Hedgewar, the Epoch-Maker: A Biography, 61.**

Modi's leadership deficit: India's aspirational classes voted for a transformational leader but got a transactional politician

Ramesh Thakur

As liberal democracies experience a crisis of leadership everywhere, the gulf between India's political leaders and a disaffected populace grows wider too. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has failed to use his entrusted power for the larger social purpose of uplifting all sections and accelerating India's ascent up the ladder of development. Towering self-regard notwithstanding, Modi will find it difficult to achieve another comfortable BJP majority. His biggest asset this year is the absence of competitors as national leaders; Rahul Gandhi is even less credible. Yet, in a telling symptom of how far the halo of transformational leader has slipped from Modi, Rahul is winning the Twitter war.

As the Americans say, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Modi swept into power on promises of 'minimum government, maximum governance', 'sabka saath sabka vikaas', 'parivartan' and 'acche din'. Instead of a government responsive to the needs of the poor, resources have been squandered on pet projects of religious virtue signalling. Far from draining the swamp of India's politics, Modi finds himself sinking deeper in it, unable to escape the taunt of suit boot ki sarkar. Institutional points of resistance to arbitrary, capricious and damaging economic and social policies have been systematically dismantled while urgent economic and educational reforms to sustain inclusive long-term growth and prosperity are neglected.

Leadership is the art of making others connect emotionally and intellectually to a larger cause that transcends their immediate self-interest. Politicians divide and rule for personal and party aggrandisement. Leaders

govern to uplift the whole community. They excel at setting goals and standards, explaining why these matter, inspiring by example, cajoling people into realising lofty aspirations for the nation alongside material benefits for themselves. Modi did demonstrate some early signs of genuine leadership in raising the uncomfortable issues of inadequate toilets and public cleanliness. But, surprisingly in the context of the ridicule heaped upon 'Maunmohan' Singh for his many silences, Modi retreats into reticence when confronted by difficult events. If Singh operated in silent mode, Modi operates in flight mode – with frequent trips abroad and campaigning in state elections – that blocks political messages from ordinary citizens getting through.

When Mohammad Akhlaq was lynched by a frenzied Hindu mob in Dadri in 2015, as his mother, son and family watched in horror, the wounded nation looked to the PM for words to soothe and heal. Instead, two weeks elapsed before Modi delivered a banal homily that Hindus and Muslims should jointly fight poverty and not each other. A neta hugs powerful and famous foreigners; a leader would have embraced the traumatised family, connected with their loss and committed the full apparatus of the state to delivering speedy justice.

The Dadri lost opportunity was followed by equally taciturn non-responses to vigilante terrorists who decry love jihad, encourage ghar wapsi, lynch suspected beef eaters and in myriad other ways demean the rich religion in whose name they commit these horrors. The coarsened Hindutva politics of character assassination, mob rule, intimidation by Internet trolls and voodoo policies is an electoral bust

that, without winning Modi anything, is losing BJP the bigger prize. The loudly screamed crude insults, coordinated attacks by an army of trolls, insistent rudeness and accusatory tones betray the workings of an ordered democracy that has been the envy of the world.

In a leader personal ambition is fused seamlessly into larger ambition for the nation. Modi is proving to be proof against national ambition of the larger kind. Leaders hold firm convictions and fight to bend the arc of history

towards their desired destination. They know the difference between perseverance – willingness to pay the price for belief – and stubbornness – refusal to admit mistakes and retreat for fear of seeming weak. Does Modi?

The Author



Ramesh Thakur is Professor of Public Policy, Australian National University
Courtesy [TOI, 19 January 2019.](#) 

Road to perdition: Don't sacrifice institutions like the National Statistical Commission at the altar of political vanity

Manoj Joshi

India has failed to meet its own potential as a modern, prosperous democratic society. Its undoubted successes have been overwhelmed by the scale of its failures. Perhaps the most disturbing among them has been the wanton sacrifice of its governance institutions at the altar of political vanity.

Indira Gandhi's "committed bureaucracy" and "committed judiciary" were part of a wider attack on the very structure of the Indian system. It took a long time for the country to recover, and the Emergency remains a huge stain on the reputation of the person whose spectacular political achievements and military triumph over Pakistan stand out in history.

So, what can explain the Modi government's assault on institutions – the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Reserve Bank of India, the Central Information Commission, the National Statistical Commission, Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and so on. Of course, there is the disdain for the "Nehruvian" past, but there is also a touch of political wantonness here.

The government has clearly outdone its predecessors in messing up CBI, the country's

premier investigating agency. After a year in which its director Alok Verma and his deputy Rakesh Asthana slugged it out, the government took recourse to a midnight surgical strike to remove Verma, allegedly when he was readying to probe the Rafale issue.

To compound this, there is a more recent fulmination of a Union minister from his sickbed in New York, rebuking CBI, now headed by his own government's chosen interim director, for "investigative adventurism". The minister's call for professionalism rests uneasily with the reality where investigating agencies like CBI and the Enforcement Directorate coincide with the ruling party's political needs. CBI is no longer a parrot, it could well be a dead canary in the cage.

The untimely exit of two successive RBI governors tells its own story. A renowned economist of Raghuram Rajan's calibre did not fit with the agenda of jumlanomics, and neither, eventually, did his successor Urjit Patel who fell afoul of government nominees to the RBI board that included the ideologue S Gurumurthy. In essence, the government

nominees wanted a policy that would enable the ruling party to cruise into re-election on a low interest rate regime, while Patel, like Rajan, maintained a relentless focus on checking inflation.

The attack on official data is more insidious, but perhaps more damaging and more widespread. Earlier this week, the two independent members, including one who was the acting chairman of NSC resigned. They charged that the government had failed to publish the new National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) employment survey data for 2017-18, that had been readied in December.

The reason why this has not happened is well known: India has seen a sharp rise in unemployment in the last couple of years and a slowdown of economic growth. Then Modi government has made it a policy to not only withhold data that tells this story, but script its own one generated by having the data massaged by agencies other than NSSO, which

is the country's apex statistical body.

The government's *jumla* is that the NSSO report is being processed and needs Cabinet approval, both blatantly untrue assertions. This is the second, equally serious instance of prevarication after revising GDP data to show NDA years looking better than those of UPA. The work of institutions like CBI, the data integrity provided by institutions like NSSO, or the autonomy of central bank, are not exercises in vanity, but a crucial element in the economic and political growth of the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has an intense desire to put his stamp on the country. In the process he wants to reject the past and create a new paradigm. Destroying the old to create something new – creative destruction – is in itself not bad. But taking apart working institutions without any serious efforts to replace them with something better is the road to perdition.

Courtesy **TOI**, 2 February 2019. 

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- Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist

Modi govt's report card:

1. Debt up 50% to Rs 82 lakh crore

Total liabilities of the government have increased 49 per cent to Rs 82 lakh crore in the last four-and-a-half years during the Narendra Modi government, as per the 8th Edition of the Status Paper on Government Debt released Friday.

Compared to the latest data available till September 2018 when the total debt of the Central government stood at Rs 82,03,253 crore, the corresponding amount till June 2014 was Rs 54,90,763 crore, the Finance Ministry's data on government borrowings shows.

The huge surge in government's debt has been propelled by 51.7 per cent growth in public debt from Rs 48 lakh crore to Rs 73 lakh crore in the four-and-a-half year period, which in turn was driven by 54 per cent rise in internal debt to about Rs 68 lakh crore.

Dependence on market loans show a similar rise of 47.5 per cent to more than Rs 52 lakh crore during the period. While debt raised through gold bonds was nil at the end of June 2014, it stood at Rs 9,089 crore including the gold monetisation scheme.

The Central government, in the status paper

on government debt, gave a detailed analysis of the overall debt position of the government of India. It has been bringing out an annual status paper on government debt since 2010-11, the Finance Ministry said.

"The overall liabilities of the Central government are on a medium-term declining trajectory and government's debt portfolio is characterised by prudent risk profile," the paper, covering details of fiscal deficit financing operations of the government, however, said.

"Government is primarily resorting to market-linked borrowings for financing its fiscal deficit. Conventional indicators ... indicate that debt profile of the government is comfortably placed in terms of debt sustainability parameters and is consistently improving," it added.

While the country's debt has been on the rise, little help is expected from the fiscal deficit side in the current financial year. The fiscal deficit in the first eight months till November stands at Rs 7.17 lakh crore, or 114.8 per cent of the Rs 6.24 lakh crore full year's target.

Courtesy Economictimes.indiatimes.com,
19 January 2019. 

2. Job loss! Demonetisation, GST led to dip in jobs, profits for MSMEs, traders: AIMO survey

The AIMO said that MSMEs witnessed a rough weather since 2014 and there is a need to pay attention to revive the sector with a lot more urgency and seriousness.

(Soon after the RBI released its annual report, former Finance Minister P Chidambaram launched a fresh attack on the Modi government saying that the country paid a huge price for demonetisation by way of job loss, closure of industries and the GDP growth.

"Indian economy lost 1.5 per cent of GDP in terms of growth. That alone was a loss of Rs 2.25 lakh crore a year. Over 100 lives were lost. 15 crore daily wage earners lost their livelihood for several weeks. Thousands of SME units were shut down. Lakhs of jobs were destroyed," Chidambaram said in a series of tweets. The Congress demanded an apology from PM Modi. – Prabhash K. Dutta in India Today, 30 August 2018)

The micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and traders have registered a huge decline in jobs and profits in the last 4.5 years, particularly after the roll-out of GST and demonetisation, according to the latest survey by the All India Manufacturers' Organisation (AIMO). It analysed 34,700 samples from traders and MSMEs across India and raised many red flags on the critical condition of MSMEs and traders.

The AIMO, which represents over 3 lakh MSMEs engaged in manufacturing and export activities, said in the survey that MSMEs witnessed a rough weather since 2014 and there is a need to pay attention to revive the sector with a lot more urgency and seriousness.

There was a job loss of 32% in the micro segment, 35% in the small businesses segment, 24% loss in the medium businesses segment and 43% in the trader segment. Worst-hit sectors dominated by unorganised labour. These included stitching units, matches, plastic, crackers, dyeing units, stone units, tanneries, job work units and printing companies.

Also, the operating profits of traders fell drastically by about 70% since 2014, K E Raghunathan, president of AIMO, told The Indian Express. "Micro industries show a 43% drop in operational profits, small-scale industries report a dip of 35% and medium scale industries faced a drop of 24%. This is

huge, this deserves immediate attention as many sectors within these traders and MSMEs have already gone down beyond a revival," Raghunathan added.

Due to high sentiments and expectations from the Narendra Modi-led government, 2015-16 witnessed growth in all areas. "It went down next year due to demonetisation. The rollout of GST, due to finance availability and higher outstanding with government payments and compliance matters all worsened these sectors in the next three years," he said.

The most popular schemes launched by the government in the past 4-5 years such as Digital India, Make in India, Skill India and Startup also failed to help traders and micro and small industries. Medium scaled industries though felt effects of Digital India initiatives. Also, the survey found that those who participated in the study acknowledged the current government for being corruption-free, pushing online transactions and having transparency.

The challenges that micro, small and medium scale industries faced included profitability, government documentation, sourcing funds, availing incentives such as subsidies, and raw material costs. On the other hand, traders reported that profitability, sales and sourcing funds were the key challenges they had.

Courtesy FE Online, December 17, 2018. 

3. Only 3.3 per cent of Budget for education

National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education Budget slashed by Rs 155 crore

Smita Sharma

Education was hardly a focus area in the Budget announced by Piyush Goyal on Friday as the Union Government allocated 93,848 crore to the education sector.

The government's allocation to the Human

Resource Development Ministry is only 3.3 per cent of the total Budget expenditure for 2019-2020.

Courtesy **Tribune News Service**, New Delhi, February 1 

4. Unemployment Data Reiterates That Note Ban Left Us In A Shambles

Sanjay Pugalia

The numbers coming out of the NSSO report, held back by the government and published by a newspaper, indicate several failures on the employment front. While unemployment rate is above 6 percent, the labour force participation rate too, has plunged to a historic low of 37 percent. However, beyond these obvious numbers lie the true extent of the rot. It is now evident that demonetisation disrupted the job market massively.

Also, women received more of a raw deal as they withdrew themselves from the job market to take care of the household. The scenario is slightly better in rural pockets than that in the urban areas, because people are quitting agriculture and migrating to cities in search of new jobs.

The focal point of the development is something that has come to the fore time and again – the current government either masks data or fudges it or simply denies its viability.

It is obvious that the government will attempt similar spin doctoring on this occasion too. However, it needs to be considered that the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) had also revealed similar figures recently.

The government will definitely say the data is inaccurate to contain the political implications. Further, it will try to highlight the number of beneficiaries of its welfare schemes like Ujjwala and Mudra. However, the data on these schemes are not beyond doubt either.

For example, the Ujjwala scheme benefited 6

crore people in the first tranche. However, even an RTI will not reveal how many of them have continued to take LPG cylinders under the scheme. Thus, there is an absolute absence of confidence on government data. Let us look at the scenario from yet another perspective which shows that the government is both arrogant and scared. The report that has come to light now was ready in June 2018 and could have been released in September-October last year.

The government's neglect towards the data frustrated the two members of the National Statistics Commission (NSC), including its Chairman, to such an extent that they eventually resigned from the body.

This shows that the government is least inclined to recognise a damning data which has come out of its own stable. Instead, it is more interested in drum beating in the election season.

However, the government should keep in mind that a person who is unemployed does not need data to be appraised of his situation. No amount of propaganda will be enough to make a person believe that his rural income has gone up, when in reality it hasn't.

In a nutshell, what this data reiterates is that demonetisation was a decision driven by ignorance and arrogance. It remains to be seen if the government will have to bear the political brunt of this decision but on the economic front, it has definitely left the country in a shambles.

Courtesy [The Quint.com](http://TheQuint.com), 31 January 2019. 

5. Central staff strength down 75k in 4 years

The strength of the central government, which is the biggest employer in the country, has decreased by over 75,000 since 2014. The number of central staff, as per actuals declared in the Budget for 2018-19, came down by

75,231 as compared to the strength on March 1, 2014. The actual strength of the establishment was 32.52 lakh across 55 central ministries and departments.

Courtesy [The Times of India](http://TheTimesofIndia), 19 Jan 2019. 

Modi Government's Paranoia Laid Bare Before Parliamentary Polls

Anand K. Sahay

After years of broken promises and communal conflagration, the public mood has begun to change – even BJP's political allies of decades are deserting it.

When Narendra Modi, the challenger, campaigned with sensational vigour in 2013 and the early part of 2014 for the Lok Sabha election in May that year, he said he had a dream of a New India – where farmers' incomes would double and employment for the youth will be aplenty – to beckon.

Five years on, that spirit is pre-history. There is disenchantment and despair among the owning classes; the toilers have a sense of being sold short. Those in between – the middle classes, who were praised sky high by the prime minister in his New Year's day interview to a news agency – have been squeezed by joblessness, no tax relief, and petrol rates crashing every price barrier much of the time.

Faith in the regime's promises has grown scarce. This is the real change from 2014. In order to remain in the hunt, Mr. Modi seeks to use an imagined past – his five years in office – as a crutch to traverse the treacherous terrain of the present since there is no brave new world to credibly project as the country slips into election mode for the Lok Sabha polls in May.

The prime minister misses the irony of his words when he still promises a “majboot” or strong government, as he did at his party's national convention in New Delhi last Saturday.

But the going is tough. These years have been inglorious. No set of five consecutive years since 1947 has been as flawed – and this country has known famine, war, defeat, times of unsettled political authority, and a suspension of liberties as during the Emergency.

This makes Mr. Modi's strategy of pumping

up the past seem uncaring, and probably self-defeating. But the prime minister appears to be doing just that. In his January 1 interview, he maintained that his demonetisation policy (which was strictly his own, with even the finance minister being cut out of the consultations) and implementing the GST the way his government planned it, was necessary and effective and successful.

This is akin to sprinkling salt in the wounds of the most devastated sections of the country.

Failures and broken promises

The boldest move to emanate – in the closing weeks of the regime – from the most influential office in the land is last week's offer of a 10% reservation in jobs and higher education to high caste Hindus if their family earnings are less than Rs 65,000 a month. This brings people rich enough to pay income tax into the quota tent, creates yet another creamy layer, effectively sealing the fate of the genuine poor among the upper caste.

Even BJP MPs worry what reaction their constituents might confront them with in respect of what sycophants and time-servers have called a “game-changer”.

Reserving 10% jobs for the poor among the upper castes is not a new idea. It is a failed old idea. It had been attempted by prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1997 in the wake of the backlash to prime minister V.P. Singh's Mandal policy. The move had been struck down by the Supreme Court for being unmindful of the basic structure of the constitution. And yet the Modi government has played the same card, in full knowledge of the history.

Doesn't that make it an election-time sleight of hand, a “*chunavi jumla*”, to recall BJP chief

Amit Shah's counter-famous words about a reckless promise made by Mr. Modi to voters in 2014 that was impossible to fulfil?

If this is how the new year and the BJP's new election campaign have begun, the saffron party may be called upon to rue its future at leisure should history repeat itself as a tragedy, to quote Marx's famous words of warning.

Great nations can survive policy failures and broken promises. It's much harder to repair social cohesion and the nation's unity when these have been ruptured as a conscious act by the constellation of forces that emerged with the rise of Modi to power, and were permitted to conduct themselves with a rare latitude and impunity.

The cow-related violence was nothing but that. Every act of communal conflagration promoted under the RSS-BJP dispensation points in the same direction. The latest example of causing social upheaval by fiat is the push to amend the Citizenship Act in order to bring aliens into the country on the sole basis of religion.

All of Northeastern India has risen in revolt as a result, in likely electoral terms hurting the BJP more than any other party. A towering Assam intellectual and Cambridge scholar, the 80-year old Hiren Gohain, who has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi award, has had the charge of sedition pressed against him by the BJP government for opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill at a public meeting.

In today's climate anyone can be hounded as an "anti-national", and a collaborator of Pakistan to defeat the present regime.

The regime is in paranoia.

A remarkable thing about each of Mr. Modi's five years in office – apart from policies that

proved to be sordid failures – was the propensity of the leadership to attack and demonise a party that was not in power.

This did not stop the Congress from snatching victory from the BJP in the three Hindi heartland states last month. But the BJP is undeterred. After the tactic so emphatically failed, Mr. Modi continues to believe that an unceasing attack on the nationally out-of-power Congress is the only weapon of defence in the BJP's depleting arsenal.

Ordinary Indians are aghast at the current goings-on, which seemed bad enough before news about the Rafale-related corruption charge broke.

If the BJP's political allies of decades are deserting it as the Lok Sabha election looms, presenting a picture which is in such stark contrast with 2014, it is because they have sensed the public mood.

And they are not the only ones. The RSS has too. It can be inferred that the mother-body of all Hindutva outfits has permitted the speculation to grow that Union minister Nitin Gadkari could be a likely contender for Prime Minister, should the BJP have the opportunity to again lead a coalition. And, in an open letter to the RSS, Sanghprisha Gautam, an 80-year old founder-member of the BJP from Uttar Pradesh, has endorsed the idea of replacing party president Amit Shah as well.

These strange twists before the next battle for India is joined suggest the spread of disarray in the saffron establishment.

Anand K. Sahay is a New Delhi-based journalist and columnist.

Courtesy The Wire. 

Biennial Conference of the Indian Renaissance Institute and meeting of the Board of Trustees

Dear friends, We are pleased to inform you that the Biennial Conference of the Indian Renaissance Institute and meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on 6th and 7th April, 2019, Saturday and Sunday, at Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. Agenda will be sent soon.

Warm regards, **Ramesh Awasthi**, Chairman, IRI

SC to examine plea alleging encounter killings in UP

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi perused the materials on record and said the issues raised in the petition of People's Union for Civil Liberties required 'serious consideration'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine in detail "on the earliest possible date" a plea seeking a court-monitored CBI or SIT probe into incidents of alleged police encounters and killings in Uttar Pradesh.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi perused the materials on record and said the issues raised in the petition of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) required "serious consideration" and fixed the hearing on February 12.

"Having considered the pleadings brought on record and having heard ...we are of the view that the matter would require an examination by the court on the earliest possible date. We accordingly fix the matter for hearing on February 12, on the top of the board," the bench, which also comprised justices Ashok Bhushan and S K Kaul, said. The top court said it would decide on the next date of hearing the plea of organisation 'Citizens against Hate', represented by lawyer Prashant Bhushan, seeking to be made a party to the petition filed by the PUCL.

The court will also decide on February 12 whether to seek a report from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the alleged encounter killings in the state.

Bhushan said the rights body was "in seisin of some of the (encounter) cases" and its report be called for the adjudication of the plea by the apex court.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, said all norms and procedures were followed by the state administration.

Earlier, the apex court had sought response from the state government on the PIL filed by the NGO, alleging that there were about 1,100 encounters in 2017 in which 49 people were killed and 370 injured.

It, however, had not agreed to the submission of lawyer Sanjay Parikh, appearing for PUCL, that a notice be also issued to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) as it had already taken note of alleged statements of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the encounters in the state.

The NGO, in its plea, has referred to news reports quoting the chief minister, his deputy Keshav Prasad Maurya and ADG Law and Order Anand Kumar, justifying the encounter killings of criminals in the state.

It has sought a probe into the encounters by an independent agency, that is the "Central Bureau of Investigation or a Special Investigation Team comprising police officers of integrity and who have not served in the state of Uttar Pradesh." "Direct that investigation be monitored by this Hon'ble Court or by a monitoring committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge," the plea said. "The monitoring committee should also inquire into the role played by all authorities/persons who directly/indirectly supported the encounter killings by abdicating their legal duties/responsibilities," it said.

The plea said the families of those killed or injured be also granted compensation.

"By this petition, the petitioner is bringing to the notice of this court incidents of massive administrative liquidations taking place in the

state of Uttar Pradesh in blatant violation of the rule of law, legal and constitutional protection available to the citizens, in particular, regarding life under Article 21 of the Constitution,” it said.

Facts available in the public domain state that over 1,100 encounters have taken place in the past year, wherein 49 people were killed and 370 were injured, the plea claimed.

Quoting the figure provided by the state to the NHRC, it said that 45 persons have died between January 1, 2017, and March 31 last year.

It referred to the binding guidelines laid down by the apex court in a judgment delivered on one of the PILs filed by the PUCL and said “each such encounter is required to be investigated on the basis of FIR, followed by a magisterial inquiry and thereafter, a criminal trial in accordance with law”.

The chief minister had on November 19, 2017 said that “criminals will be jailed or killed in encounters”, the plea submitted. This statement

of the chief minister was taken cognizance of by the NHRC, it claimed.

The plea also quoted the observation of the NHRC which had said that it seemed that “the police personnel in Uttar Pradesh are feeling free, misusing their power in the light of an undeclared endorsement given by the higher ups...”.

“In the present case, the law enforcement machinery has endorsed the acts of police encounters, no fair probe can be expected from them. In the circumstances, it is necessary that the investigation should be handed over to the CBI to be monitored by this Court, in addition to a committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to inquire into the role played by the state machinery in the act of commission of police encounters,” it said.

(This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed)

Courtesy Livemint.com, 14 January 2019. 

UN Rights Body ‘Extremely Concerned’ About Fake Encounters in Yogi Adityanath’s UP

“We are extremely concerned about the pattern of events: individuals allegedly being abducted or arrested before their killing, and their bodies bearing injuries indicative of torture.”

New Delhi: United Nations officials have written to the Indian government with information about 15 cases of what could be extra-judicial killings by the Uttar Pradesh police. They have also taken note of 59 cases of possible fake encounters.

In a press release on Friday, they said they express “alarm” and said they are “extremely concerned”.

The officials from the Office of the High Commissioner for United Nations Human Rights (OHCHR) said the Indian government has not yet replied to their letter and that they continue to receive more information on these

killings. Most of the cases which the OHCHR has raised with the Indian government pertain to Muslim victims.

“We are extremely concerned about the pattern of events: individuals allegedly being abducted or arrested before their killing, and their bodies bearing injuries indicative of torture,” said the UN experts.

In 2017, the UP police said that in six months of chief minister Yogi Adityanath’s government, 420 encounters were conducted and 15 people killed. By 2018, UP police had conducted 1,038 encounters in which 32 were killed.

Last year, The Wire investigated encounter

killings in Uttar Pradesh, visiting 14 families and finding testimonies and evidence that countered the police versions of “encounters”, with many families alleging the deaths were “pre-planned”.

Six months ago, the OHCHR wrote to the Indian government on the issue of alleged fake encounter deaths in Manipur and the government’s failure to complete inquiries within the Supreme Court’s deadlines. “We are extremely concerned that the delay appears to be deliberate, undue and unreasonable, and we condemn this lack of progress,” they said.

A case in the Supreme Court may come up this month, asking for a court-monitored investigation into UP’s encounter killings. The Supreme Court is already monitoring an investigation into Manipur’s encounter killing cases.

Government flouting Supreme Court guidelines

The OHCHR says that the evidence available and pattern of the deaths indicates that many of these could be extra-judicial killings as they took place in police custody. The police often claim that these were done during “encounters” and in “self defence”.

The Supreme Court has passed orders on the humane conduct of Indian security forces and on investigations into the killing of civilians by security forces in a number of cases.

The experts from the OHCHR cite *People’s Union of Civil Liberties vs State of Maharashtra* (2014) and say that the Indian government has not been following the guidelines laid down in this case on how investigations should be conducted.

For example, in this 2014 case, the Supreme Court ordered that the police must inform family members about the killings, must provide them

with post-mortem reports and must transfer cases to independent investigative agencies.

OHCHR officials say this is not being done.

The four special rapporteurs and experts following this issue of extra-judicial killings in UP are (L-R) Agnes Callamard, Michel Forst, Nils Melzer and Ahmed Shaheed.

In fact, the experts say they have been getting information about the police demanding money to release victims prior to their killings. They also are concerned that family members and human rights defenders are being harassed and intimidated, even with death threats and the possibility of false cases.

“These are extremely serious allegations requiring immediate action,” say the experts.

UN officials ask for review of police killings

The UN officials say that there needs to be an “urgent review” of these encounter killings to know if they were compliant with international standards and that there should also be a prompt, independent and through investigation into these deaths, resulting in actual prosecutions.

They also ask that family members and human rights defenders are kept safe from threats and intimidation.

The officials are also concerned by statements made by government and police officials which seem to “incite, justify or sanction killings”.

The four special rapporteurs and experts following this issue of extra-judicial killings in UP are Agnes Callamard, Michel Forst, Nils Melzer and Ahmed Shaheed. As pro bono experts, they do both fact-finding and monitoring of human rights issues in various parts of the world.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 12 January 2019. 

“Humanism: Making Bigger Circles” Video
Presented by the American Humanist Association (AHA)
Narrated by Dr. Isaac Asimov, May 21, 1986
https://www.corliss-lamont.org/Humanism_-_Making_Bigger_Circles/

Modi's Victory and the Future of Religious Freedom in India

Chad Bauman

On this day (30.6.2016), Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the United States for the first time since his visa ban was lifted. On this momentous occasion, Cornerstone revisits the implications of Modi's rise to power.

(BJP) recent landslide electoral victory in India was extraordinary not only for its proportion, but also for the astoundingly meteoric rise of the BJP's prime minister, Narendra Modi, a man to whom the United States had until recently denied a visa (even though no Indian court has yet convicted him) because of his alleged complicity in a series of deadly riots primarily targeting Muslims in Gujarat, the state he ran since 2001.

The BJP's triumph is relevant to discussions of religious freedom in India because of the party's ideological stance. The defeated Indian National Congress (INC), heir to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, and dominant political power since India's independence 67 years ago this week, is popularly associated with secularist ideals and the protection—critics say appeasement—of ethnic and religious minorities. The BJP, however, is one among the many organizations of the Sangh Parivar, a loose-knit collection of religious, social, and political organizations known for espousing the ideology of Hindutva, or “Hindu-ness,” as the special genius and *sine qua non* of India's future flourishing.

“Foreign” religions, like Islam and Christianity, represent a potential threat to the nation, according to the Sangh, because they do not possess this essence, and because of their putatively foreign loyalties. While the BJP tempers its rhetoric, at least at the national level, it draws significant support from

other Sangh organizations more openly hostile to India's minorities, the members of which are somewhat regularly implicated in incidents of intimidation and violence against India's religious minorities.

Many Muslim and Christian communities responded to the BJP's victory with alarm. One Indian mission organization announced on its website, before pulling the post down that the election portended the Indian Church's “Second Great Persecution” of the century.

Others argued, with Christian and minority rights activist John Dayal, who testified to US Lawmakers just before the election, that a BJP victory would lead to greater governmental harassment of religious minorities, the removal of pro-minority affirmative action schemes an increase in mass violence against religious minorities, and the passage of a national law like those active in several Indian states, which forbid conversion through force, fraud, and allurement, sometimes require that those converting others secure the permission of local authorities beforehand (as in the “Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act of 2003,” signed into law by Modi), and are frequently used to hound and intimidate Christians (and only Christians, as some have complained). Not surprisingly, India's religious minorities have been desperately trying to read the tea leaves (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasseography>) of the former tea seller's first moves as prime minister. Deeply concerning to many, in this regard, is Modi's recent appointment of the controversial Amit Shah as the party's President. Shah is Modi's long-time advisor and problem solver, and has been accused of

abusing his power and ordering extrajudicial killings (<http://www.ndtv.com/topic/sohrabuddin-sheikh-fake-encounter-case>), though it should be noted that 30 percent of those who won seats in the Lok Sabha, India's lower house of parliament, have criminal cases lodged against them and at least some of them are politically motivated.

The naming of Shah was in no small part a reward for his effective engineering of an overwhelming electoral victory in Uttar Pradesh. But in the early stages of the campaign there, Hindu-Muslim riots many believe were manufactured by the Sangh to consolidate the Hindu vote against the INC killed around 60 people (roughly 2/3 Muslim and 1/3 Hindu). Afterwards, Shah was briefly banned from the campaign trail for a number of inflammatory statements among them that the Jat Hindu community affected by the riots should consider voting for the BJP a way of "voting out the government that protects and gives compensation to those who killed Jats. It is about *badla* (revenge) and protecting *izzat* (honor)."

Modi's own campaign speeches, however, struck a different tone. Candidate Modi feigned ignorance about church burnings and managed to express only a bumbling kind of regret about those killed in the Gujarat riots that took place under his watch. Nevertheless, though some detected an underlying cultural nationalist tone his campaign focused on his development record, and struck many as subdued and secular-minded. He avoided publicly expressing concern about or making fun of Muslims' high fertility rates as he had been known to do earlier in his political career. And while he sent a certain kind of message to India's religious minorities by appointing Shah, he has sent a very different one by so far excluding from his cabinet two figures who had at one time been considered frontrunners: Arun

Shourie and Subramanian Swamy, both of whom have frequently spoken and written in ways fiercely critical of India's Muslims and Christians.

There are other reasons to believe that Modi's government may not be as bad as feared for India's religious minorities. Post-election analysis suggests that the BJP was returned to power less because of its Hindutva ideology than because of popular dissatisfaction with the corruption-plagued INC, concern about India's flagging economic growth, and the galvanic allure of Modi himself (1 in 4 said they would not have voted for the BJP's political alliance if Modi had not been its candidate for PM).

Moreover, while statistical research I conducted with Tamara Leech on violence against Christians lends support to the popular assertion that such violence is more common in states where the BJP is politically strong, it also suggests that the BJP may be more likely to lose political power in states that experience it. In addition, while the number of Lok Sabha seats won by the BJP was overwhelming, the party secured only 31 percent of the popular vote. If voters who thought they had voted for a charismatic development guru find instead that they've elected an anti-minority ideologue in a party that has over-read its mandate. The BJP's support could dwindle down once again to its ideological base. Knowing this, Modi and the BJP may determine that now is the time to consolidate, rather than divide. Only time will tell.

Chad Bauman an associate professor of religion at Butler University is an expert on religion and society in India.

This piece was originally authored on September 26, 2014 for the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. 

Amol Palekar : Govt interference in world of art makes it tough for artistes to take stand

Too much governmental interference in the world of art often leaves artists in a vulnerable state, said veteran actor-director Amol Palekar, who was in the news last week when he was interrupted during a speech at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA). Palekar, who was one of the guest speakers at the opening of an exhibition in the memory of artiste Prabhakar Barwe on February 8, was repeatedly interrupted by some NGMA members when he criticised the Ministry of Culture for reportedly scrapping advisory committees at the gallery's Mumbai and Bengaluru centres.

While the intolerance of NGMA members was evident, the fact that none of the artistes present in the audience came out in his support bothered him, Palekar told in an interview.

"In the NGMA incident, the intolerance was so apparent that they wanted me to stop my criticism of the ministry's unilateral, arbitrary decisions. They didn't allow me to speak. The ex-chairman of the artists committee, (Suhas) Bahulkar's conduct was nothing but genuflecting. In fact, it was his moral and professional duty to bring these issues in the public arena," the veteran actor said.

"What was more upsetting was that there were many veteran artists, curators, gallery owners and art lovers in the audience. Not a single one said to the organisers, 'Let Amol speak'. Many came and congratulated me in person or sent messages in the last 48 hours," he added.

Palekar believes artistes avoid speaking out as they are afraid of the consequences.

"Since there is too much governmental interference even in the world of art, the artists cannot afford to take stands so that they can seek benefits, patronage, assignments from and

of government.

"This vulnerability is crippling and the voice of dissent gets suppressed at that level itself. So the contingencies cause the gagging. Then, of course, it's their choice not to raise voice or to take a side or to conform to the dictates of the system."



A video available on social media purportedly shows Palekar criticising the ministry at the opening of an exhibition in memory of artist Prabhakar Barwe on February 8 for reportedly scrapping the NGMA's advisory panels.

Through his speech, Palekar said, he was trying to find reasons for the cancellation of retrospectives and was happy that the uproar has pushed the government to take back its decision.

"The Ministry has already issued their clarification whereby they have taken back their decision to cancel retrospectives. It's a victory. They have also assured to consult with the artists while taking decisions and to reconvene the advisory committees. I am happy about this development. All I wanted was to bring the issues in the public domain so that artists can participate in the decision making process," he added.

Courtesy **PTI**, Feb 13, 2019 

Why are Indians immune to reckless police brutality against protestors?

Delhi police tendered ‘deepest apologies’, saying they had mistaken the journalists for protestors, after being accused of manhandling and groping.

Mathew Idiculla & Abhayraj Naik

The “long march” by some students and teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi on March 23 has once again brought to the fore questions regarding the space for public protest in India. The march was held to protest against sexual harassment on the campus, the recently introduced compulsory attendance requirement and the Union government’s plan to grant autonomy to educational institutions it funds. As the march commenced from the university campus in South Delhi and reached INA market on its way to Parliament, there was a face-off with the Delhi police. The police sought to disperse the crowd using water cannon, and also lathi charged and manhandled many people. However, it was not just protestors who were at the receiving end of the police’s wrath, but also journalists. A journalist was allegedly groped and manhandled by the police, who are also alleged to have thrashed another journalist and snatched a camera from a photojournalist.

A group of journalists subsequently staged a dharna in front of the Delhi police headquarters to oppose the police’s treatment of members of their fraternity. The Delhi police tendered their “deepest apologies” and sought to justify their actions by stating that they had mistaken the journalists for protestors. The basis of the apology was hence not the rightness or wrongness of the alleged acts of thrashing, manhandling or groping citizens, but rather only the fact that the journalists who were at the receiving end of such acts were not the intended targets. The key point here is that apart from the journalists who were victims of police

brutality, a large number of protesting students and teachers were also subjected to a brutal attack with water cannon, lathis, fists and shoes by police personnel in India’s national capital. Yet, these acts of violence, engineered and controlled by the police, are not something that the state and the police feel they should apologise for, or even address at length.

What happened on March 23 in New Delhi implicates many pressing issues going to the heart of freedom of speech and democratic participation, spatial justice, police reform, decolonisation of the mind, and the nature of violence in post-colonial India. The police violence was not unusual for India either. In the past, farmers, striking workers and trade unionists, protesting nurses and doctors, environmental activists, right to information activists, anti-corruption crusaders, antiglobalisation activists, retired Army personnel, disabled people, and others have also seen their protests being brutally smashed by the police in cities and villages across India. Official state communication, leave alone deliberation, on such matters is seldom forthcoming. Such a situation is a result of how the state’s primary responsibility for maintaining public order has traditionally been understood in modern India.

The idea of public order

Why does the police not feel the need to apologise or even examine its own actions more carefully here? Why does reckless police brutality against protestors not raise many eyebrows from members of the public? Why are the state responses to what happened in

Delhi so unacceptable? The action and the official response to the incident suggest that attacking and manhandling protestors is something that the police in India have got habituated to such an extent that they do not even feel the need to examine if their actions were right and appropriate to the situation. To provide a comparative example, the violent attacks by American police forces on largely peaceful protestors against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999 provoked massive outrage, analysis, and soul-searching in the United States. More recently, violence against anti-Trump protestors in the US has once again stoked the moral outrage of the American public and the world at large. In India, by contrast, it seems that a large section of the public has internalised and justified a particular idea of what the police could do and ought to do when dealing with a group of protestors and with public protest. However, in normalising such action, we unquestioningly legitimise police practices that are morally questionable, discriminatory, anti-democratic, imperialistic, and unjust.

While there might be some continuing ambivalence about how much force may or should be used, the need to contain protests to maintain “public order” is something that seems to be widely accepted in official and common Indian sensibilities. The origin for both our present understanding of the term “public order” and the means permissible to establish or maintain it, trace back largely to colonial ideas and imperialistic practices. As is well known, the colonial state’s two primary tasks were the maintenance of public order and the collection of revenue.

This structuralist legacy has lived on, and even today, the primary vehicles through which the post-colonial state in India exercises its power are the police department, which maintains law and order, and the revenue department, which is responsible for general administration.

Scholars such as Uday Singh Mehta and

Mahmood Mamdani have once again brought attention to the discriminatory and violent colonial practices against the people of the Caribbean, South Asia and Africa, persuasively arguing for recognising the spurious origins and false authority of European liberalism. Others like Mithi Mukherjee and Elizabeth Kolsky have further highlighted the presence of a perverse utilitarian logic of imperium or supreme power and violence at the heart of India’s constitutional justice and its primary legal codes. The role of the police in quelling public protests that potentially destabilise public order in contemporary India raises once again some long suppressed questions about the law, about the state, about public order, and about democracy and citizenship, in post-colonial independent India.

Lathi: The totem of police power

The maintenance of public order by the police continues to manifest itself in independent India through means like the “lathi charge”, the method used by the colonial state in British India to “control the natives”. This basically involves the police forces launching a coordinated charge at protestors while wielding heavy wooden sticks – sometimes fortified with iron or metal – which for long have been a favoured weapon of the police in India. Tracing back to ancient South Asian stick-fighting martial arts, the lathi, when wielded effectively, can break bones and crack skulls. The lathi has today become a totem of police power and brutality across the Indian subcontinent.

Webb Miller, the American correspondent and war journalist, in a particularly evocative description of the brutality of the lathi charge by police forces against unarmed, peaceful satyagrahi protestors at Dharasana Salt Works near Dandi in 1930, noted: “Police officials ordered the marchers to disperse under a recently imposed regulation which prohibited gatherings of more than five persons in any one place. The column silently ignored the warning

and slowly walked forward. I stayed with the main body about a hundred yards from the stockade.

Suddenly, at a word of command, score of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like tenpins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down..."

With Gandhi arrested and in jail, Sarojini Naidu had assumed leadership for rallying the protestors at Dharasana Salt Works, and she too was arrested soon after the police violence against the protestors. Sardar Vallabhai Patel's words on surveying the violence, as recorded by Webb Miller, are particularly noteworthy: "All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost forever. I can understand any government's taking people into custody and punishing them for breaches of the law, but I cannot understand how any government that calls itself civilized could deal as savagely and brutally with nonviolent, unresisting men as the British have this morning."

Despite this bloody history, the phenomenon of the lathi charge is something that has become quintessential to the police in India exercising its duty while dealing with public protests. A careful investigation will, of course, reveal that very many of the devices, practices, and technologies used by the colonial state to surveil, control, and discipline the Indian population have seamlessly reproduced themselves in

independent India. The French thinker Michel Foucault, in a delightful commentary "Lemon and Milk", originally published in *Le Monde* in October 1978, notes: "[J]ust as people say milk or lemon, we should say law or order. It is up to us to draw lessons for the future from that incompatibility." Pointing out that it is "for the sake of order that the decision is made to prosecute or not to prosecute; for the sake of order that the police are given free rein; for the sake of order that those who aren't perfectly 'desirable' are expelled", Foucault indicates just what is at stake by pointing out that the primacy of order in a legal system has consequences where "the judicial system increasingly substitutes concern for the norm for respect for the law; and it tends less to punish offences than to penalise behaviours".

Are these disciplinary and security practices so entrenched in our state institutions that it is impossible to unlearn these worldviews, imaginaries and knowledge? Are there alternative systems of policing that can work in India? How can we move from our present policing practices to a situation where human lives matter – where rights matter, where laws matter, where justice matters – and there is no more ambiguity about this recognition in the organisation of our social lives together? What kinds of emancipatory politics will end police impunity and usher in accountability, dignity and justice? What does the right to public protest and the right to the city mean in specific spatial and social contexts in India? These are the questions that we must consider afresh and reflect on as we deliberate the unjustice of police violence in a post-colonial democracy such as India.

Mathew Idiculla is a research consultant at the Centre for Law and Policy Research, Bengaluru and **Abhayraj Naik** is an independent legal researcher and consultant based in Bengaluru.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Apr 17, 2018 · 

Rafale Deal: The question is not of BJP vs. Congress, but Modi government vs. Indian nation

The mystery on the Rafale Aircraft Deal is standing right there even after the deal has been moving around the governments and their leaders of India and France, various governmental institutions and their officials on both sides, weapon companies and their masters, media and independent journalists, civil society

become uncovered and the Judiciary may bears accusation of wearing a blindfold and not knowing English, but the Prime Minister and his benevolent industrialist stay clear.

Referring to national security the CAG report has hidden the facts such as the price of an original plane, and how many types of equipments were installed in it and how much the total cost comes by installing them. The question is : why the CAG only conceals Rafale's price where as it discloses the price of 10 deals out of 11 deals of the IAF it has mentioned in the report? Despite this, the CAG says that the NDA deal is 2.86 per cent cheaper than the emerging deal in the UPA's bargain. It is believed that this conclusion of the CAG goes in favor of the Modi Government,

activists etc. Rather there is a over casting of darkness in the matter instead of being cleared. The over casting of darkness is being done because the government first misled the Supreme Court by stating that the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has been submitted to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Now when the report of the CAG has been introduced, it has also tried to dump the eyes of the Indian public and democracy. This report tells less, hides more and does not speak at all on certain facts related to the deal.

The Socialist Party believes that the CAG report has been prepared to cover the body of a government and a capitalist. No matter, by this deed of the government, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance may

least emotionally. That has been probably the intention of the report. But this conclusion proves the statement of the powerful minister Arun Jaitley wrong which he gave in the parliament on January 2. Arun Jaitley had said that we have made this deal 9 percent cheaper than the UPA and the aircraft with equipments is 20 percent cheaper. According to CAG data, the Air Force's total 11 deals worth 95,000 crore rupees. In this, the total value of 10 deals is 34,423 crore rupees. The report is silent right here. Now the conclusions can instinctively draw that the cost of the total deal of Rafale aircraft is Rs. 60,577 crore.

Further, there is a difference between the government and the CAG's claims on the issue of bank guarantee or sovereign guarantee. The government says that the absence of bank



guarantee in the deal is a saving for the government and, therefore, it carried out a cheaper deal. While the CAG says that it is the saving of France's aircraft maker Dassault. The CAG also says that the aircraft had four special equipments installed for India, which was not needed. The CAG report says that in 2007, in lieu of advance payment, there was a provision of 15 percent bank guarantee. It had to go 5 percent on performance and 5 percent on warranty. The savings in this item were to be gone in the account of the Ministry of Defense but the CAG report did not look like this. The prices have been compared at 11 points in the report of CAG but prices have not been disclosed anywhere. Everywhere the percentages are mentioned. The CAG has claimed that the price has been increased on four points and reduced on three points. Surprisingly, what was the need for comparisons like this and if it has been done then why all details were not told and explained?

There is no mention in this report that how the deal originally made for 126 aircrafts suddenly arrived on 36 aircrafts? That is, how the strength of the IAF will be enhanced with 36 aircrafts instead of 126? It is also not mentioned in this report that why the contract for Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) changed to Anil Ambani's suddenly stacked company? That is, the lasting strength of India's defense forces would be achieved by strengthening and renewing its own public sector enterprises or would this task of utmost importance be left to the profit-hungry foreign-domestic private companies and their brokers? One cannot expect from this CAG report that it will speak something about how the process of the deal was improperly influenced by the Prime Minister and his office, how the anti-corruption clauses were dropped, how the offshoot contract was awarded to Ambani's Reliance Defense Limited and how the HAL was thrown out from the deal?

The Socialist Party believes that the dubious deeds of the Prime Minister, the decision of the Supreme Court, the reports of several newspapers/magazines, the attacking statements of the opposition and the report of the CAG presented in the Parliament yesterday on the contentious issue of the Rafale Aircraft Deal show that India's economy and politics have been stuck in the grip of fake nationalism. This fake nationalism serves the interests of foreign and domestic weapon companies. The arm deals are made as per the wishes of these very companies. They reveal and hide the information related to the deal as per their interests. Governments work on their terms and government institutions give their reports accordingly. They define India's national security in their own way and channels and newspapers purchased by them run debates on the line of their perspective. In return, companies give some part of the their loot, made of the hard earnings of the Indian public and country's resources, to the political parties and politicians.

Certainly there will be more news reports about the Rafale Aircraft Deal in the coming days and a lot of chaff in the grain will be seen. But in the dust of the Lok Sabha elections, which will take place after a few days, all of that will be lost. That is why the Socialist Party urges the people of India that they should contemplate about the truth of the Rafale Deal as per their own wisdom. They should not be swept away with the mainstream media and the statements/counter-statements of parties/politicians playing with emotions in the name of caste, religion, lineage, family, person. They should not see the Rafale Deal as a war between BJP and Congress, but as a war between the Modi Government and the Indian nation. The people of India can only pull Indian nationalism out of the clutches of arms dealers and war-mongering governments.

Dr. Prem Singh, President, Socialist Party (India) 

Sharm Inko Magar Nahin Aati : Yet They Do Not Feel Ashamed!

Hindu Mahasabha ‘Shoots’ Gandhi: Why Some Get Away & Others Don’t

Tufail Ahmad



Free speech is the engine of a democracy. It engineers the rise of enlightened nations and enables individuals and groups to question irrelevant ideas, and challenge the orthodoxies of our minds. And, in the process, infuses new ideas that foster civility and citizenship in democracies.

In this sense, the re-enactment of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination in Aligarh on Wednesday, 30 January by the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha could have been viewed as a democratic exercise of free speech and expression, but there are serious issues associated with such events that affect the functioning of the Indian democracy.

Hindu Mahasabha’s Re-Enactment of Gandhi’s Assassination

On 30 January, when the nation commemorated the 71st anniversary of Gandhi’s assassination, Puja Shakun Pandey, the national secretary of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, used a pistol to shoot at an effigy of Gandhi. Her supporters distributed sweets, and garlanded Nathuram Godse, Gandhi’s assassin who was a member of Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha.

Gandhi’s assassination in 1948 was independent India’s “first terror attack” as described by Asaduddin Owaisi, the leader of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen.

In the Indian democracy, shooting an effigy of Gandhi, staging a play in praise of Nathuram Godse, or making a movie disgracing him – even writing a totally blasphemous book – should become the norm, if we want to see India emerge as a super power. However, the problem arises when the ruling parties and common Indians proffer different responses in such circumstances.

Whataboutery & Double Standards of Political Parties

Driven by whataboutery, we, the citizens, become partisan in our responses to such events. We condemn one set of ruffians and praise another set of louts, or stay silent on them. Political parties do the same. Since the police act under the orders of our politicised administrative system, the same set of rules do not apply to everyone. In 2012, the police in the then Congress-ruled Rajasthan did not allow controversial writer Salman Rushdie to address the Jaipur Literature Festival, even via video conference, due to a threat from a Muslim group – but most importantly, in order to not hurt Muslim sentiments.

However, when the Bharatiya Janata Party came to rule Rajasthan, the same police gave a free pass to cow vigilantes. This double-standard bedevils the functioning of democracy in India. Now that the BJP is in power, cow vigilantes and Hindutva groups like the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha have sensed that they can get away, because a like-minded party is in power.

The BJP fosters a political climate in which such extremist groups are able to survive.

Hate Speech is Not the Same as Free Speech

Ashok Pandey, husband of Puja Shakun Pandey, justified the re-enactment of Gandhi's assassination saying, "We have trained our children to kill anyone who challenges the unity of our motherland... Our children will not be as naive as us, they will kill many more." Such comments do not encourage citizenship.

Ashok Pandey and his wife can be effectively prosecuted under the laws that protect children for such teachings. Such groups must not escape public censure. Hate speech is not synonymous with free speech.

Unfortunately, senior BJP leaders like Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath do not condemn such incidents because it serves a political purpose.

Even if the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha is not part of the RSS and BJP, its viewpoint on Gandhi's assassin is shared across Hindutva groups. In December 2014, BJP lawmaker Sakshi Maharaj called Nathuram Godse a patriot, though he retracted it later. When Modi ruled Gujarat, he did nothing to develop Gandhi's birthplace in Porbandar, or Rajkot where Gandhi was schooled.

What if a Muslim Did What the Hindu Mahasabha Did to Gandhi's Effigy?

The fact remains that members of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha are supporters of the BJP. Photographs of Puja Shakun Pandey can be seen on social media alongside senior BJP leaders like Union Minister Uma Bharti and Shivraj Singh Chouhan (when he was the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh). The two leaders, expectedly for electoral reasons, are seeking to dissociate themselves now from Pandey and her organisation.

What if a Muslim youth had done something similar to what Puja Shakun Pandey did? He would probably have been arrested and jailed without trial.

When Hindutva groups promote communal hatred, praise the assassin of Gandhi, or take law into their hands, TV news anchors turn mute and politicians dismiss them as harmless "fringe groups". This is because there is a premium on the majority.

These organisations are NOT fringe groups. They are very much in our mainstream.

On the contrary, minorities are hounded. Akbaruddin Owaisi spent several weeks in jail

for hateful speeches and seems to have learnt his lesson, while Yogi Adityanath became chief minister, because his hate speeches were politically useful for the ruling party. For now, the police in Aligarh have registered a case against Pandey and her supports. It remains to be seen what charges are pressed against them.

Hindu Extremist Organisations Thrive Under BJP Rule

Broadly speaking, Hindutva organisations got a pass during the Modi rule, because, they serve Hindutva's purpose. It is time to create a list of organisations that must be kept under close watch. Those that pose a long-term security threat to India must be classified as terror groups. At the least, the equal application of laws without communal prejudice should be ensured.

Unfortunately, India has entered an era when

our youths are jailed for Facebook comments and journalists languish in prisons under the National Security Act. This must stop.

It will be also be erroneous to assume that only law enforcement can eradicate such problems. Such issues must be addressed by ordinary citizens who, irrespective of party affiliation, should shun political partisanship and offer principled arguments that strengthen our democracy.

(Tufail Ahmad, a former BBC journalist, is a senior fellow at the Middle East Media Research Institute, Washington DC. He tweets [@tufailelif](https://twitter.com/tufailelif). This is an opinion piece and the views expressed are the author's own. The Quint neither endorses nor is responsible for them.)

Courtesy **The Quint**, 2 February 2019. 

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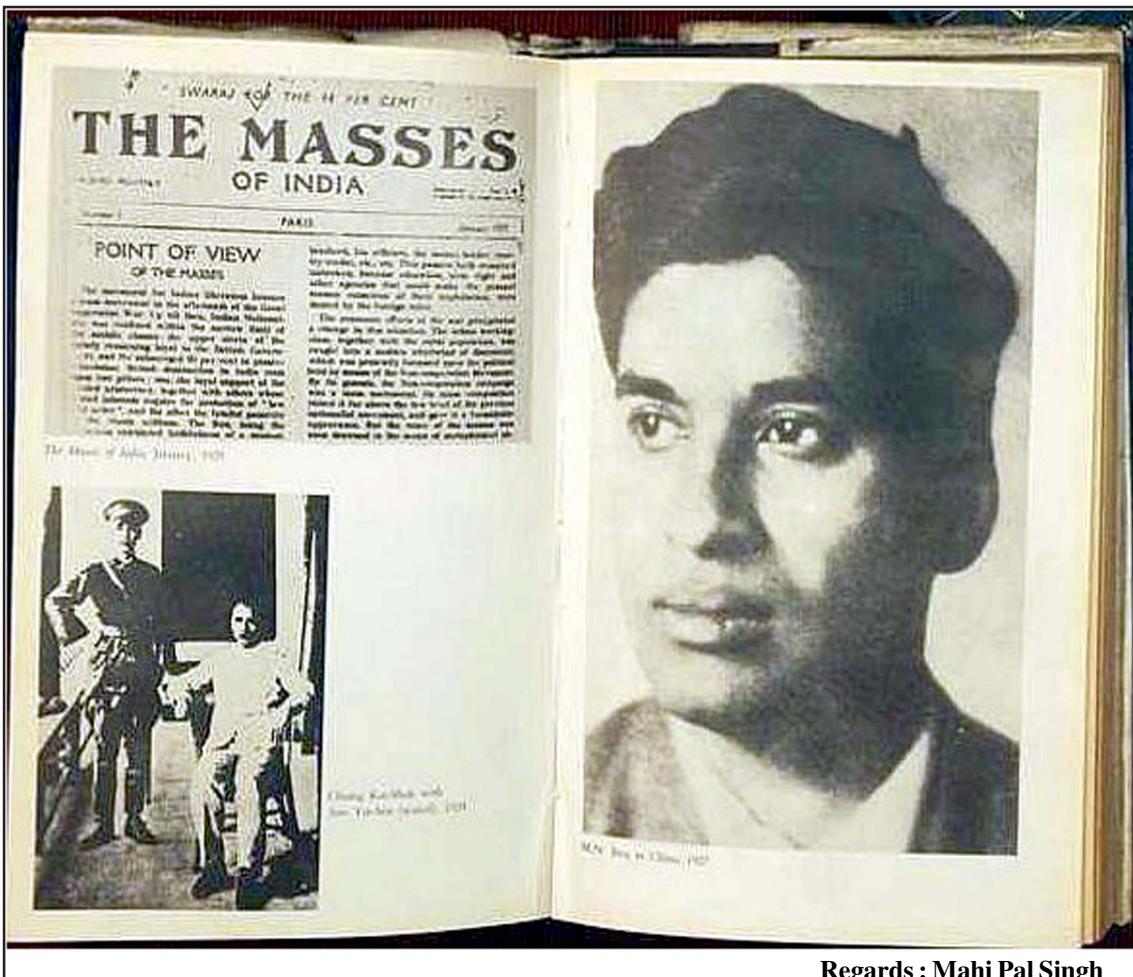
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I, Satish Chandra Varma, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

March 1, 2019 .

Satish Chandra Varma, Publisher,
The Radical Humanist

The title page of 'The Masses', the journal run by M. N. Roy and Evelyn from Europe



Regards : Mahi Pal Singh

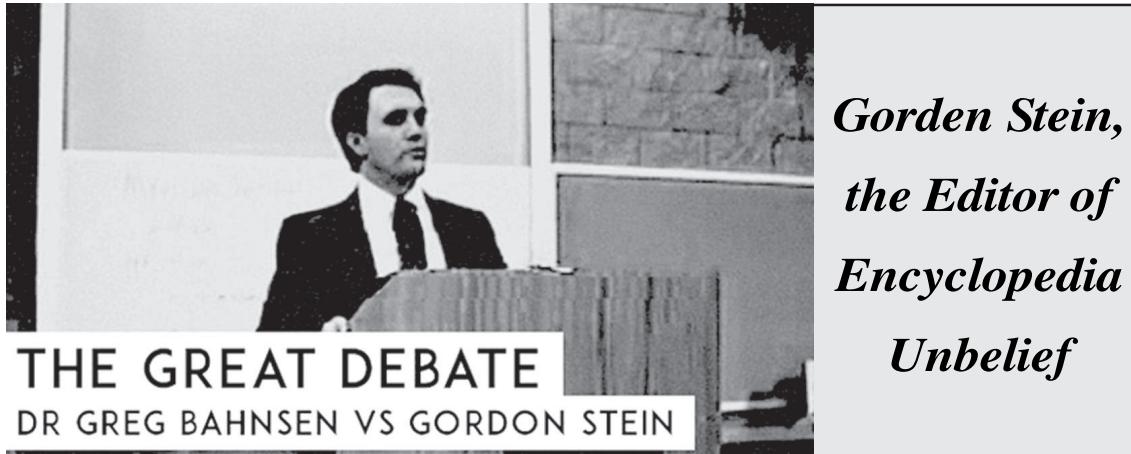
The Radical Humanist on Website

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

- Mahi Pal Singh

Two Encyclopedias on unbelief by Humanists Many Humanists from India appear in the Encyclopedia Unbelief

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah



The humanists, rationalists, sceptics and agnostics are very active in USA. They have brought out two Volumes of Encyclopedias of Unbelief.

The earliest one came out under the editorship of GORDON STEIN (1941-1996). He edited American rationalist magazine and was quite active in exposing the paranormal frauds.

Stein worked with Paul Kurtz in the Centre for Inquiry. I came into contact with him during those days.

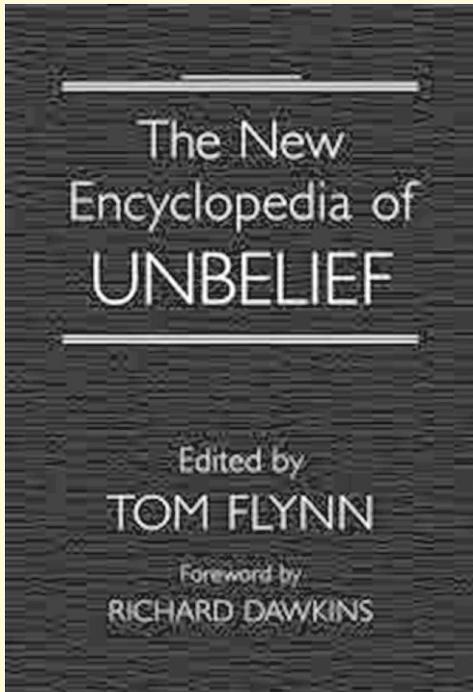
Earlier Gordon wished to publish Encyclopedia Unbelief and contacted A.B. Shah (Amritlal Bhikku Shah) in India for suitable contributors to the Encyclopedia. Shah suggested my name and at once Gordon contacted me and requested for contribution to the Encyclopedia. I agreed and wrote two lengthy articles covering the Humanist, Rationalist, and Atheist movements in India. The first one was a three page article on Indian humanists, atheists and rationalists. Gordon was happy with the matter and published it in the volume. It is now available with amazon.com. I am in the company of illustrious writers like Asimov, Hazel Barnes, Germaine Bree, Paul

Edwards, Antony Flew, Paul Kurtz, Richard Martin, Martin Marty, Kai Neilsen, James Randi.

Later I came in touch with Gordon Stein in Center for Inquiry, Buffalo. They organised the inauguration of Robert Ingersoll's museum in Dresden. The inaugural function was arranged in Rochester, New York. My Aramalla Purnachanda (who helped humanist centre at Inkole, Andhra Pradesh) and I participated in the function. Gordon was happy when I briefed him about Ingersoll lovers in India and the popularity of Ingersoll literature. Gordon aimed to collect all publication on and about Ingersoll throughout world. After the function we all stood at a street corner, where the sign boards indicate state and church. One street is named as church and another as state. We stood there symbolically to indicate the need for separation. Timothy Madigan (professor of philosophy in Rochester), Tom Flynn (editor Free Inquiry) and others were there in the function. It was historical. The Ingersoll Museum is continuing its activities since then.

It is most unfortunate that Mr Gordon Stein died of cancer in 1996.

Encyclopedia Unbelief (latest)



Tom Flynn

Under the editorship of Mr Tom Flynn (editor of Free Inquiry) the new Encyclopedia was published. It is not simply the revised version of the earlier one, but an entirely new one. Again Tom Flynn the editor asked me to contribute and I wrote detailed and elaborate articles to it. It covers the recent developments of Humanist, Atheist, Rationalist, and allied movements in India. It is now available with amazon.com. The most happy news is that the famous evolutionary scientist Mr Richard Dawkins wrote preface to it. 100 authors wrote articles in it. I am proud to be in the company of authors that are include in it: Joe Barnhart, David Berman, Sir Hermann Bondi, Vern L. Bullough, Daniel Dennett, Taner Edis, the late Paul Edwards, Antony Flew, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Peter Hare, Van Harvey, R. Joseph Hoffmann, Susan Jacoby, Paul Kurtz, Gerd Lüdemann, Michael Martin, Kai Nielsen, Robert M. Price, Peter Singer, Victor Stenger, Ibn Warraq, George A. Wells, David Tribe, Sherwin Wine.

In this Volume brief information is provided on Indumati Parekh, Manabendranath Roy and Solomon Abraham from India.

Paul Kurtz (1925-2012) the humanist leader who inspired the compilation of the two Encyclopedias is no more. But his inspiration and spirit is being continued by other humanists.

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