

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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## Samaren Roy

I met Samaren Roy in Kolkata during 2005 along with my friend Mr. Isanaka Muralidhar. Mr Samaren was pretty aged by that time. He welcomed us heartily to his residence and entertained us with snacks.

Samaren had been in correspondence with me for a long time.

He worked in American consul office in Kolkata and retired during early 1950s. He was always interested in M.N. Roy and did lot of research about Roy's early phase. Then he published a couple of books on Roy as Communist and then Roy as Samaren claimed that M.N. Roy was the first Communist in India. It was Roy who founded the Communist Party of India in exile from Tashkent in early 1920s. Samaren also called Roy as a restless brahmin!

When I published the research biography of Evelyn Trent, the first wife of M.N. Roy, then Samaren was fascinated towards my work and requested for a copy. I sent one to him. I was critical of Roy's attitude towards his first wife. Roy divorced her mercilessly from Europe in 1925. Till then Evelyn played a major role in his life.



### Chat with Samaren in his house in Kolkata

Regarding birth date of M.N. Roy there was difference of opinion between Sib and Samaren.

Samaren travelled frequently to USA and established cultural contacts with Bengali associations in Dallas, Teas state.

He told me several interesting facts about M.N. Roy. I was fortunate that I could meet him. Later, during 2007 he expired. I am glad that I could preserve the picture with him.

**Dr. Narisetti Innaiah**

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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*November 2019*

*THE RADICAL HUMANIST*

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# A Judgment devoid of Justice

**Editorial :**  
**Mahi Pal Singh**

The judgment by the five judge bench of the Supreme Court in the historical Ayodhya land dispute delivered on 9th November 2019 seems to be a compromising judgment devoid of justice. The whole of 2.77 acres of the disputed land, on which stood the Babri Masjid till 6 of December 1992 when it was illegally demolished by the vandals of the Hindutva outfits, the fact accepted even by the apex court, has been awarded to those very outfits who are supporters of the Hindutva. Does this award not grant legality to the demolition of the Babri Masjid and award those who had indulged in that dastardly act although the Court itself has described the act of demolition of the Masjid as an “egregious violation of the rule of law”? Also remember that some unknown miscreant had put the ‘idol’ inside the Masjid in 1949 in the darkness of the night stealthily and it should not be difficult to imagine who those miscreants were.

There is no doubt in the fact that the judgment is based more on faith than facts. The bench has relied more on the statements of pilgrims and elderly people of olden times that they had heard from their elders that worship by the Hindus did take place on the disputed land although not a single witness has stated that he saw such worship taking place there. The Supreme Court’s verdict says they don’t have evidence to say that a temple was demolished and a mosque was built. The very fact of the Babri Masjid standing there till its demolition on 6 December 1992 could not attract the attention of the bench as evidence of substance.

The Hindutva outfits including the ruling BJP, the RSS, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Shiv Sena and the like have every right to celebrate the occasion. They had been declaring since the very demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 – ‘*Mandir Vahin Banayenge*’ where the Masjid stood once. They had also been declaring that

‘Ram Mandir is a matter of faith and no court can adjudicate on that’, hinting thereby that they would respect the verdict of the court only if it was in their favour as against the declaration by the Muslims, who have all along been saying that they would respect the judgment whatever it is. It is acceptance of the adverse judgment with grace which puts them on a higher pedestal.

It is a compromising judgment because it brings about a compromise formula to solve the long standing dispute - by asking the government to grant the Muslims 5 acres of land in Ayodhya for the construction of the Mosque. The Muslims seem to be compromising their position with the reality of the judgment which has gone in favour of the majoritarian stance. They can only wish that the court had relied more on hard facts than mere faith. They can also sit in peace at home because they need not fear for their lives and property which would have been in serious jeopardy if the judgment had been reversed and the court would not have the wherewithal to get its orders implemented and control the mayhem the Hindutva forces would be created, particularly given the fact that Hindutva governments rule the State of U.P. and the Centre. That is something which gives relief not only to the Muslims but also to the peace loving people among the majority community. Justice or no justice, at least for ensuring that vandalism, riots and carnage do not take place in the country in the wake of the judgment on Ayodhya dispute the sagacity and practicality of the bench of the apex court deserves appreciation. That does not, however, make the judgment a fair and justifiable judgment. It will provide some relief to the Muslims and other peace loving people of the country if the perpetrators of the crime of demolition of the Babri Masjid are duly punished at the earliest possible. 🌈

## Articles and Features :

# What the Supreme Court's Ayodhya Judgment Means for the Future of the Republic

*The main beneficiaries of the Supreme Court's verdict on Saturday are organically linked to the main accused in the crime of demolishing the mosque. And that's not good for India.*

**Siddharth Varadarajan**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court's verdict in the Ayodhya matter has settled the 'title suit' in favour of the main Hindu plaintiff – essentially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad – but it is clear that there is much more at stake for the country than the ownership of 2.77 acres of land on which a mosque stood for 470 years until it was demolished in an act of political vandalism unparalleled in the modern world.

The Supreme Court has undone some of the dangerous 'faith-based' logic of the high court and acknowledged the manner in which Ram idols were planted in the mosque was illegal and that the mosque's demolition in 1992 was "an egregious violation of the rule of law". Yet, the forces responsible for the demolition now find themselves in legal possession of the land. The site will be managed by a trust that the government will set up. And the government and ruling party have in their ranks individuals who have actually been chargesheeted for conspiring to demolish the mosque.

For more than a quarter of a century, 'Ayodhya' has served as a metaphor for the politics of revanchism – one which combines the deployment of a manufactured mythology around the figure of Rama, with mob violence, majoritarianism and a spectacular contempt for the rule of law.

The aim of this politics is to upend the republic with its premise of equality for all citizens and replace it with a system in which

India's religious minorities, to begin with, and then other marginalised sections of the population, are forced to live in perpetual insecurity.

If India's democratic institutions had been robust, the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 should have permanently ended this politics instead of merely marking the end of its first phase. Today, that politics has reached a new high water mark, presumably not its final one given the fillip a large section of the national media and now the Supreme Court have given it. Armed with the court's imprimatur, the Sangh parivar will do its best to erase the taint of mob justice – which has been the strength but also the weakness of its movement. In August, BJP leaders boasted of how they had used Article 370 to kill Article 370. Now they hope to use law to kill justice.

We can pretend all we like that the Supreme Court was only adjudicating a civil dispute. In reality, there was nothing 'civil' about what a judge on the bench had called "one of the most important cases in the world". The dispute cannot be divorced from the politics which has driven it.

The title suit in the Babri Masjid matter has been going on in one form or the other since 1949, mainly in the local courts of Faizabad, where Ayodhya is located. It took on national salience in the 1980s, thanks to the cynical politics of Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Bihari



Vajpayee, Rajiv Gandhi and now forgotten villains like Vir Bahadur Singh and Arun Nehru.

BJP leaders conspired to demolish the mosque on December 6, 1992 and a Congress prime minister, Narasimha Rao, allowed them to get away with the crime. So did the Supreme Court judges of the day. Twenty-seven years later, the demolition case continues to linger. Even when all the evidence is recorded and arguments made, the outcome is uncertain since it is no secret that the prosecuting agency – the Central Bureau of Investigation – has wilfully dropped the ball.

Justice S.A. Bobde was right in observing in his interview to *India Today* – shortly after being named as the next Chief Justice of India – that there have been governments of all political persuasions in power at the Centre since the Ayodhya case first emerged in 1949. Yet the fact that the case ended up being fast-tracked at a time when the party in power today is one which openly asserts its partisanship on Ayodhya should be reason enough to worry us about happens next to the Republic. We already have a draft citizenship law which explicitly excludes Muslim refugees. A law has been passed that criminalises the abandonment of wives by Muslim men but not men of other religions. It is not a coincidence that the only part of India where the constitutional protections of liberty and free speech do not apply is a Muslim majority region, Kashmir.

### **Possible scenarios**

While legal analysts had expected the five-judge bench to deliver a nuanced verdict that would not lend itself to shrill triumphalism by either side to the dispute, the clarity of the court's ruling in favour of the temple will boost the morale of the Sangh parivar.

The fact that the ruling party – and hence the government – is committed to the construction of a Ram temple at the site of the Babri Masjid means the path is now clear for

speedy implementation of the project. The court has asked for the government to constitute a board but apart from insisting on the inclusion of a representative of the Nirmohi Akhara – the third claimant to the title suit – it does not appear to have even sought the exclusion of individuals and organisations implicated in the 1992 demolition.

Even before the verdict, when there was a chance that court might uphold the Sunni Waqf Board's claim, there was never any question of the Babri Masjid being rebuilt at the same site. Had they won, there would have been enormous pressure on the plaintiffs to give up their claim to the land. Indeed, in the fag hours of the Supreme Court hearings, the Waqf board chairman signed on to a controversial 'mediation' proposal under which he consented to the withdrawal of the appeal against the high court judgment in exchange for assurances that no other Muslim places of worship would be taken over thereafter. The other Muslim plaintiffs immediately cried foul. The fact that the main 'Hindu' plaintiffs – essentially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad – were not even prepared to sign on to such an assurance is a sure sign that this "most important case in the world" will likely be followed by others.

The Supreme Court has asked the government to allocate five acres for the construction of a mosque at a suitable place in Ayodhya, forgetting that the case's significance was not about the availability of a mosque but whether it is permissible for anyone in India to use violence to dispossess a person or a community. Sadly, that question now appears to have been answered, implicitly, in the affirmative. Worse, the dispossession is acknowledged and 'compensated' with five acres elsewhere but those who did the dispossessing are still allowed to enjoy the benefits of their crime.

Bizarrely, the court has declared that while there was some evidence of Hindus

worshipping at the disputed site, there is no documentary evidence of namaz prior to 1857 so hence by the “balance of probabilities” it is giving the land to the Hindu side. It should be readily apparent that this logic can also be applied to other mosques which the Hindutva organisations claim. Once the Ayodhya temple has been milked of all political mileage, the Sangh will up the ante elsewhere.

None of this should surprise us since we were never dealing with a civil dispute between litigants operating on a level playing field but a naked power play. One in which the political agenda of the ‘cultural’ Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is not hidden and the biases of the Uttar Pradesh and Central governments are on open display. That is also why the Supreme Court’s insistence on mediation was so misplaced.

#### **Fate of criminal case**

Although the apex court chose to prioritise the title suit, fast tracking it to conclusion, it is not clear how the bench intends to firewall the demolition case from its verdict on the


‘property dispute’.

In his interview to *India Today*, Justice Bobde denied the court was attempting to legislate on matters of faith. He agreed with the suggestion that it is a “title dispute” but added: “The only thing is, what is the character of that structure, that is one of the issues. But even that structure doesn’t exist anymore.”

Shouldn’t one of the issues then also have been why “that structure” – i.e. the Babri Masjid – “doesn’t exist anymore”?

The main beneficiaries of the Supreme Court’s verdict on Saturday are organically linked to the main accused in the crime of demolishing the mosque. If the Ayodhya case is really one of the most important cases in the world, it is so because of the violence it is associated with. Can this case really be settled, then, without punishing the leaders responsible for that violence?

The five-judge bench represented an impressive array of judicial wisdom. Sadly, their judgment offers no pointers on this fundamental question.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 9 November 2019. 

## **Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist**

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Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to: **mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com**, or **theradicalhumanist@gmail.com** or post them to: E-21/5-6, Sector- 3, Rohini, Delhi- 110085.

Please send your digital passport size photograph and your brief resume if it is being sent for the first time to the RH.

A note whether it has also been published elsewhere or is being sent exclusively for the RH should also be attached with it.

**- Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist**

# **‘Don’t make my Kashmir a graveyard’: Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami**

Interview by: Archis Mohan

**‘The decision of August will have to be taken back. This is our resolve. When it will happen, how it will happen, the judge of our case are the people of this country.’**



*A masked Kashmiri man with his head covered with barbed wire attends a protest during restrictions following the scrapping of the special constitutional status for Kashmir.*

*Photograph: Danish Ismail*

**Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami**, 72, a four-time legislator of the Jammu and Kashmir assembly and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, was recently in Delhi for a check-up at AIIMS.

In an interview to **Archis Mohan/Business Standard**, Tarigami talks about the situation in Kashmir and how it needs to be addressed.

**What is the situation on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir?**

The situation is very painful. It is unbelievable for those who have not experienced it before. It is a terrible period for Kashmiris. It could have serious implications on the future of our country, its polity and ethos.

Life has been paralysed. Schools, colleges and universities are open but without teachers and students. We have seen turmoil earlier as well.

For the past 30 years, since 1989, there is virtually bloodbath going on, lots of violence and destruction. But the shock and distrust that our

population is facing now is unprecedented.

The entire community of the people of Kashmir, irrespective of earlier divides, like mainstream and separatist, this or that group, strongly feels that we have been humiliated. Those who have stood for the country’s unity, who have sacrificed, faced bullets, as also the common people, feel betrayed today. Here lies the danger ahead. It needs to be taken care of urgently.

**But isn’t lack of protests in Kashmir a sign of normalcy?**

How many times have you seen protests inside Tihar jail? Come visit Kashmir and see for yourself. I am not cooking up stories. I am a responsible citizen.

A basic principle of democracy is to make the government accountable. In our case, Article 370 has been abrogated arbitrarily. The Constitution in J&K has been dismantled, the state itself bifurcated but they claim they are integrating the people of J&K with the rest of the country. Is this integration?



I do not know my fate when I return to Kashmir. Many of my comrades are either in detention camps or under house arrest. Young boys are languishing in jails and their parents have no idea about their whereabouts.

At least provisions of the Constitution of India, fundamental rights should have worked in J&K. Shouldn't I have the freedom to express my pain, know the reasons for my detention?

The Constitution of India is non-existent in J&K today because of the whims of the leaders ruling the country today. They talk as if the people are willing to suffer. If that is true, then let people in Delhi experience life without internet for a week.

The government claims there is normalcy since there is no bloodshed. Yes, there is silence in the graveyards. Don't make my Kashmir, our Kashmir, a graveyard.

#### **How is the political situation?**

Only one political party is functioning. Rest of the political parties have to fold their hands and sit. It is like martial law.

We appeal to the people of this country, those parties committed to some sort of secular democratic ethos, please come out of your slumber before it is too late. There is disappointment with the democratic forces in the rest of the country.

But the decision of August will have to be taken back. This is our resolve. When it will happen, how it will happen, the judge of our case are the people of this country. We are hopeful of getting justice from this highest of all courts.

Our disappointment is that Parliament should have at least had a proper debate on Article 370 and 35A. If you had to sever ties with us at least you should have asked us our views. This relation is mutual.

We were not informed, instead put in jails. Their slogan is *sabka saath, sabka vikas* and *sabka vishwas*. Kashmir is the new laboratory of *vishwas*. Let them hold assembly polls in

Kashmir if they think they can form a government there.

#### **How has the livelihood been affected in the last 80-days?**

You can well imagine. We have three main sectors. Carpet weaving is our traditional craft and business. There is no work for the weavers. No raw material is available. Lakhs earn their livelihood through carpet weaving and trade. There is no internet so they cannot sell to buyers abroad.

The story of Pashmina shawls is the same.

Our second sector is tourism. In the run-up to August 5, Amarnath *yatris* were asked to leave (*by the local administration*). Tourists were dragged out of the hotels and forced to leave. It was said there was a terrorist threat.

Then much of our apple crop rotted as it could not be transported out of Kashmir. Daily wagers have no work. Public transport is not plying. Shops are open but barely for a couple of hours each day.

The view of streets deserted for most part of the day differ strikingly from those shown on television in the rest of the country. Those TV visuals portray as if there is a traffic jam akin to Delhi's Chandni Chowk.

#### **There are now concerns in Jammu and Ladakh about outsiders taking up jobs and buying land.**

The Ladakh MP (*Jamyang Tsering Namgyal of the Bharatiya Janata Party*) recently said in his speech in Leh about the region's unique culture, and the need to save it. Now he remembers culture when Articles 370 and 35A, which guaranteed protection of this uniqueness, have been removed.

The Kashmiri Pandits, since they were educated and concerned at people from Punjab buying land and taking up jobs in J&K in those days, launched an agitation during the regime of Maharaja Hari Singh. A law was implemented, which was the origin for

Article 35A.

People of Jammu have for years been told that the Kashmiris eat up a lion's share of the resources. But what have the people of Jammu got with this? The same questions, that of protection of their lands and jobs, confront them.

Moreover, there can be differences between people of J&K, of Leh and Kargil, but we want

day will be Eid for us, Diwali, for us, the day when those separated for years will embrace each other. Some people have erred and we believe the Kashmiri Pandits have suffered hugely.

**Do you fear Kashmir will escalate into more violence?**

We cannot be sure about the future, but the



*A man sleeps next to parked Shikaras on the banks of the Dal lake in Srinagar.*

*Photograph: Danish Ismail*

to live together and sort out our problems together. We are hopeful of the future. The problem is complex, but if the government believes that there is silence, and silence is a sign of acceptance, they would be hugely mistaken.

**What about the question of Kashmiri Pandits and their return?**

First of all, a tragedy is a tragedy. The Kashmiri Pandits have experienced a big tragedy; there is no doubt about it.

And they are part of the bigger tragedy of Kashmir itself. Kashmiri Pandits should return to their homeland and their homes.

But this atmosphere that the Centre is creating is further widening the divide.

The day when they return to Kashmir, that

youth is in deep distress. We are worried and appeal to the people of Kashmir, particularly the youth, that whatever provocation there is from authorities, whatever the wrongs of the Government of India — the constitutional fraud, the betrayal — violence is not an option for the people of Kashmir.

We appeal to them to not fall in the trap of those who want us isolated and defeated.

Our real strength lies in our unity, in the solidarity of other democratic sections in the rest of the country.

Our real strength lies in democratic peaceful protest, and violence in every form must be and has to be unacceptable to all the shades of opinion.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, November 04, 2019 🌈

# A 'Normalcy' of Compulsion in Kashmir

*As businesses suffer and detained young men's families still wait for their release, people have no choice but to go back to work to make ends meet.*

**Shakir Mir**

**Srinagar:** Two weeks ago, when the Centre resumed postpaid mobile services in Kashmir, traffic movement saw a remarkable upsurge in Srinagar city. Around Lal Chowk, store owners lifted their shutters half-mast, buyers crowded the markets and footfalls started to climb. It seemed as though the city centre had returned to life after more than two months of a crippling shutdown.

The resumption of mobile phones brought much of the connectivity back on track: Wholesalers could now ring up dealers and ask them to deliver stocks; retailers called their customers to confirm that they were indeed trading; brides-to-be thronged salons; tailors hunched over their machines once again.

Everyone who had the opportunity to resume their business again, did. For over two months, life in Kashmir had come to a standstill. The shutdown was spontaneous. The demands were clear: the reading down of Article 370 has been unacceptable to the people. More than 80 days into the shutdown, the resentment hasn't worn off. But in the face of mounting economic distress, which is now clearly reflecting across the Valley, public resolve has begun to wear thin.

We have seen this before. People across Kashmir erupt after a certain provocation and prolong the shutdown for months at a stretch, before their spirits begin to flag and they eventually capitulate.

This is an abiding trope in the Kashmiri repertoire which the Centre fully understands, and around which it seems to have decided to weave its current policy. The government appears determined to weed out all forms of dissent and impart fear at an elementary level – forcing the press to cower, threatening

agitators with draconian laws and heightening surveillance.

The restriction on communication is likely to become a long-drawn measure, evidenced by the recent story in the regional Urdu press in which officials sounded 'worried' that an escalation in attacks by militants was coinciding with the reopening of mobile networks. Short of any coherent policy, it is banking on people's ability to tire out and remain both fearful and confused about the new state of affairs. It's only on the back of this collective fatigue that the government intends to script a new story of 'normalcy' in Kashmir.

§§§§§

At Srinagar's Tourist Reception Centre, the traffic movement is extraordinary. It often ends up in jams, which have been a rarity over the last two months.

Right underneath a newly constructed flyover, a man clad in jacket and a cap waves his hands, calling for passengers. He has filled half of his vehicle and needs a few more riders before he sets off for Jammu. "I will speak but don't use my name," he mutters under his breath. He motioned to his aide to finish the work before proceeding to lead me to a secluded place.

He is among 340 members of the Tempo Traveller Agency Union Kashmir who make two trips back and forth from Srinagar to Jammu every week. "Now we are just making one trip in 12 days," he says. "Previously I made Rs 5,000- 8,000 per trip. Our income has come down to zero. It is not that we are blind to the situation in Kashmir. I had borrowed money from friends. We were and still are ready to marshal a strong protest – one that decisively ends the dispute once and for all. I have been

a part of the resistance from a very long time.”

He seems very well-versed with the news cycle and understands that Kashmir forms a centrepiece of Modi’s policy to lure voters. “They win votes by telling Indians that we have conquered Kashmir. Because we are a Muslim-majority region, we appear like a mini-Pakistan to them. The more they humiliate us, the more they feel content that they have given Pakistan a bloody nose.”

The honking and clanking at this teeming junction grows louder. It’s here that camera persons working with Delhi-based channels stand to shoot visuals. “They think that a lot of traffic naturally implies normalcy,” he says. “But our longing to see things stabilise stems from fact that we face enormous financial strain. For instance, I don’t think I will be able to pay the school fees of my children. We feed 340 families here. We all come from the lower- to middle-class segment. We alone can’t become the carriers of resistance in Kashmir. That’s not a sincere expectation.”

It’s unclear why Kashmiris from all walks of life end up retreating into self-inflicted shutdowns as a means of registering protest, from which they eventually yearn to withdraw. The most reasonable explanation has been that most moderate and non-violent forms of protests are disallowed in Kashmir. If permitted to take out a march, Kashmiris may well coalesce into an interminable horde – exactly the one that was witnessed in the 2010 summer during Eidgah *chalo*. Such gatherings could potentially spell disaster for the authorities. They also prompt international inquiries.

Second, any kind political mobilisation that allows Kashmiris to articulate their demand for the right to self-determination is not only prohibited, but also punished. This naturally opens up room for only two kinds of responses to emerge that can decisively impose costs on what Kashmiris see as the state’s intransigence: violence – stone pelting or terrorism – or

spontaneous shutdowns in which all Kashmiris take part for as long as they can.

“The stress level is at such a scale that some businesses in Kashmir may never open up again,” says Nasir Khan, president of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries. “The situation is not conducive for development. Much of the shutdown by the business community in Kashmir is voluntary and if there are attempts to reopen, it’s because traders are trying to survive and not profit.”

Khan also said that the KCCI has supported the J&K High Court Bar Association’s petition challenging the legality of reading down Article 370.

§§§§§

Before August 5, the deafening blackness of night at Dal Lake was tempered by a colourful flickering of lights from the hundreds of decorated houseboats which hosted visitors. Now, the scene looks dreary and desolate. The darkness of the evening, once it descends, empties out the streets. Houseboats turn off their lights and traffic stops.

I visit the area in morning. The shops are open briefly and they will close soon. Most people here turn out to be locals who have some errands to run. I disembark on the middle of the road, near a makeshift kiosk which sells cigarettes. Abdul Ghaffar sports a salt-and-



pepper goatee. “I don’t do this work normally,” he says. “I row a shikara in the lake but our season ended. I am selling cigarettes because I have run out of money.”

*Abdul Ghaffar selling cigarettes on the banks of Dal Lake. Photo: Shakir Mir*



Rowers like Ghaffar – as many as 20,000 – are having a tough time. They rack up much of their income during the brief summer time. This year has been ruinous. Ghaffar is earning up to Rs 100 per day, making less than half of what he earns every month. His shikara needs refurbishing every season, otherwise its efficiency will be affected. “I feel tormented when I think about it,” he tells me. “I have two daughters who study. I don’t know whether to spare the money for their education or spend the amount on household expenses.”

Ghaffar doesn’t say much about his political beliefs. “Everyone knows what our demands are. We have a history which is different. But if you have resolved to make decisions that hurt people, you’re playing with fire. Now we don’t even know how it plays out in the long run. If anyone says they know, they are lying. Everything is uncertain. If I don’t even do this, who is going to feed my family?”

§§§§§

Kashmiris are guided by the belief that shutdowns and protests will yield results if they persevere. But they may not, as long as the shutdowns are not accompanied by civil agitations. While Kashmiris may not understand this, the authorities governing them do.

“Unlike 2010 and 2016, this time the state didn’t wait to see people respond. It straightaway imposed a siege,” says Parvez Imroz, a human rights defender and recipient of the Rafto Peace Prize 2017. “The emphasis on normalcy has been an enduring motif of state discourse in Kashmir. After the eruption of militancy, they tried to project the 1996 elections as evidence of normalcy. They did it post 2008, 2010 and 2016 as well. But we saw what happened eventually.”

“This time, the stakes are even higher. To Kashmiris of all stripes, it is now an existential struggle. Look at the statements of Indian state’s functionaries. They normally say that

the Gujarat pogrom was a Newtonian reaction to Godhra, but in Kashmir they say with confidence that nothing is going to happen. The Indian government believes that while the laws of physics apply elsewhere, they can be altered in Kashmir’s context. Any reaction that erupts in Kashmir will be the one which is likely to take state by surprise. India still awaits its Bastille Day in Kashmir.”

The present bout of political repression is not yet quantifiable, but what everybody understands and has experienced is that it’s been more pervasive and intense this time around than it was in the past. It appears as though normalising things has become a widespread economic and existential imperative in Kashmir, but far from arriving at unanimity over it, Kashmiris are fragmented. And it is often in these divisions that discord is seeded, reflecting in stone throwing attacks, personal brawls and heated exchanges.

A fractured public opinion allows the state to project a neat dichotomy between ‘obedient’ and ‘irreverent’ Kashmiris – a playbook from which the national media has also become a deft-hand at taking a page. Thus it becomes easier to bat off questions about the state’s role here and focus instead on the nature of ‘irreverent’ Kashmiris, all of whom are vulnerable to ‘indoctrination,’ perpetually ‘misguided’ and numerically ‘marginal’ – a ‘vocal minority’, to use a term which has gained a lot of currency.

Last week, I was surprised to find tremendous support for the shutdown in areas of the old city on the death anniversary of Mehraj-ud-din Bangroo, a veteran Lashkar militant who was killed last year. Though normal in south Kashmir, it’s quite rare for a slain militant to be commemorated in Srinagar a year after his death.

Posters eulogising him had sprung up along a stretch extending from Fateh Kadal all the way to Karan Nagar – neighbourhoods which



had not seen any pro-Azadi activity for a long time. Since then, there has been a redeployment of paramilitary men in these areas.

“A period of impasse is underway in Kashmir,” says Irfan Mehraj, a Kashmiri editor. “Repression is not new here. It’s not a historical discontinuity either. It was always fine-tuned according to the needs and yet we saw the eruption of civil disobedience every time. If even after 30 years of trying this technique, there’s still a threat of civil unrest in Kashmir, then it speaks more of the failure of repression than its usefulness. Kashmiris are still coming to terms with what has happened. We are yet to see how they will react once the full import of things dawns upon them. As of now, they are troubled by disruption of their livelihoods and curbs on connectivity.”

§§§§§

On the same day when Srinagar was rushing headlong into this ‘normalcy’ of compulsion, I decided to visit the restive Pulwama district in south Kashmir. The scenes were a far cry from those that I witnessed in the city. At Kakapora, where five roads lead out of the main town square, everything was closed.

People frequently showed up along the roads waving their hands for a ride. In the absence of public transport, they had come to terms with hitch-hiking as a normal way of travelling. It did not occur to them that they might run late, get stuck on a deserted stretch of road or worse still, run into a military convoy upon whom militants mounted an attack.

The siege has inflicted an unprecedented disruption of civic life in Kashmir. The public appears suspicious of one another. They do not talk generally but when they do, the conversation is quite restrained. If you happen to be a reporter in pursuit of a story, people will be wary. They are likely to probe your frame of mind, study your political predisposition first and then answer

accordingly. The responses are guided more to confirm the pre-existing beliefs of the inquisitor, especially if they are outsiders, than to reveal people’s earnest thoughts about the situation.

I arrived at Pahoo, one of many idyllic villages that dot that pastoral landscape of south Kashmir. At her house, Zahida Mir bends to stare into her phone. She has gripped it with both hands. Two days before the Centre ended J&K’s special status, her brother Fayaz Ahmad Mir (27) was bundled into a van by military men and whisked away. “They arrived at 11:45 pm,” she remembers. “They scaled the wall, called my father and asked for my brother. Then they took him.”

Strangely, worry does not show up on her face. She is quite composed and relaxed. Either she does not care or the depredations of state clampdown, arriving as they were, one after another, have calloused her emotions until she no longer feels affected by them. Fayaz drove a tractor on the orchards for a living. The family never expected that the vehicle that has been their source of income would one day become a source of misery. “He was detained on August 3 and we visited police station Kakapora after that,” she said. “We were told that Fayaz would be released on Eid day but that did not happen.”

When the family went to look for Fayaz one more time in the police station, they were informed that he had been shifted to a jail in Bareilly. It is from there that their hardships began to grow. “This tractor,” she gestured towards the compound where the vehicle is normally parked. “It was loaned out for Rs 8 lakh. Every month Fayaz is supposed to pay Rs 8,000. When the word about his arrest went out, the guarantor for his loan came to our house demanding the sum of Rs 16,000 – the two month EMI.”

The family arranged for the money and paid it in full. But that’s not the end of it. The family

feels trapped in painful uncertainty. "Not only are we not earning currently, but whatever little income we have is spent to repay the instalments. We don't know when Fayaz will be released. It's this vehicle through which he earns. We cannot even sell it. Our father is a labourer. He doesn't earn much."

My choice to visit Pahoo wasn't without reason. Two days before, I was touring the narrow lanes of Srinagar's old city when a young boy slipped out of nowhere and started walking next to me. He hung his head down and did not talk, as if to escape detection. "What's the matter?" I asked. He did not speak until we were out of sight of a CRPF party picketed nearby. "I am from Pulwama," he said. "I am attending to a small business matter here but my real reason for being here is something else."

The day I visited Pahoo, villagers told me that close to 50 homes out of 600 had faced night raids. This has struck horror in the minds of youth, some of whom had fled to parts of Srinagar. "I want you to accompany me to my


store," he urged. "I don't have an ID card and I don't want to end up like my neighbours."

Sowing season is underway in Kashmir, which means that it is during this time of year that tractor pullers like Fayaz get to earn. But the likelihood of his protracted incarceration has forced his family to give up hope of a stable life.

The family is also shelling out a large sum to pay for their travel to Bareilly and Fayaz's legal expenses. "We met him in Bareilly. He looked weak and his face seemed puffed up. There, the officials warned us against speaking about politics of any kind."

Fayaz is a postgraduate in Arabic and was trying to raise money to complete his doctorate in the same subject. "He had such dreams," his mother said. She opened the iron gate and walked into the compound, before her face turned sorrowful and she began weeping bitterly. "How do I get my son back? It is as if a calamity has befallen on all of Kashmir."

**Shakir Mir** is a Srinagar-based journalist.

Courtesy *The Wire*, 29 October 2019 

## **"Selections from The Radical Humanist" on the website**

*'Selections from The Radical Humanist' Volume I (1970 to 2005) and II (2006 to 2018) containing articles by all-time greats like M.N. Roy, (Justice) V.M. Tarkunde, Prof. Sib Narayan Ray, (Justice) Rajindar Sachar, (Justice) R.A. Jahagirdar, Kuldip Nayar and others on democratic freedoms, radical humanism, human rights, and emancipation of the downtrodden are now available at the website [www.lohiatoday.com](http://www.lohiatoday.com) on the periodicals page where 'The Radical Humanist' magazine is put every month. The two volumes are also available at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) and have been accessed by more than 1750 people from various Indian cities and across the world from more than 41 countries. Readers may download these volumes from there and read whenever they like.*

**- Mahi Pal Singh**

# Freedom or Slavery

**N.D. Pancholi**

When Prime Minister Mr. Modi on 8th August 2019, after turning almost whole of the erstwhile J&K State into a prison, was addressing the nation elaborating the benefits which now people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh would receive as a result of the abrogation of article 370 of the Indian constitution which article, according to him, had proved an hindrance to the development of that state, an anecdote cited by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in early 1977 in a public meeting began to replay in my mind. That context was the sudden and dramatic declaration on 18th January, 1977 by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, announcing that general election to the Parliament would be held in March 1977. The 'Emergency' declared in the country on the midnight of 25/26 June 1975 was continuing. More than one lakh political activists and their leaders who were in jail were being released. Opposition political parties hurriedly united to meet the challenge but they thought that they were not going to win as a little time was given to them for preparations, they lacked funds and many of their main activists were still in jail. Nevertheless Jayaprakash Narayan, their leader, put the choice before the people in simple terms: 'slavery or freedom'; 'authoritarianism or democracy'. Contrary to all suppositions, massive crowds began to throng the public meetings of the opposition. Then onward the opposition leaders made 'freedom' and 'democracy' main plank of their public speeches.

My replay was a public meeting in Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in his superb oratorical style, was narrating the anecdote: 'There was a dog in the village, looked weak and half fed. One day he wandered into a city. There he met a city dog who had a strong body, looked very weighty and healthy. The

village dog asked how it was that city dog was so strong and weighty. The city dog proudly replied that he had a master who gave him milk, good food and took care of all his necessities. The city dog then asked the village dog why the latter was so weak. The village dog replied that in the village some time he got his food and some time he starved. On this reply the city dog invited the village dog to stay with him under his master who would look after him well. Suddenly the village dog noticed a strap around the neck of the city dog and inquired as to what was that for. The city dog replied that the strap was to enable his master to keep him chained whenever the master wanted and that many a time he was kept chained. On hearing this, the village dog panicked and ran back to his village telling the city dog that he was better off in the poverty of his village. The massive crowd cheered and clapped in approval of the village dog. The message was loud and clear: If there was to be a choice between 'development with slavery' and 'freedom with poverty', the people would choose the latter.

Due to their loss of civil liberties the people felt suffocated and expressed their protests in various ways. One instance I must cite. Prabhakar Sharma, a sixty five year old Sarvodaya worker, immolated himself on 11 October, 1976 in protest at Surgaon outside Wardha in Maharashtra. Before immolating himself he had sent a letter to Mrs. Gandhi giving reasons for his action in which he quoted Gandhi's words from Young India: "We must be content to die if we cannot live as free men and women."


As the election campaign developed, massive crowds attending public meetings of the opposition showed to where the wind was blowing. Mrs. Gandhi in her speeches tried to convey to the people that opposition was working

at the behest of foreign powers which are inimical to India, that opposition movement under Jayaprakash Narayan was a disruptive movement endangering India's stability, security, integrity and democracy, that her 20 Point Programme would lead to the economic development of the people and in such conditions civil liberties and democratic rights could be kept at the back seat. But her public meetings lacked crowds. The coterie of Sanjay Gandhi and Bansi Lal felt perturbed and wanted to postpone the elections but Mrs. Gandhi firmly ignored them. She had realized that she was likely to lose the battle; nevertheless she squarely allowed her controversial decision of proclamation of 'emergency' to be tested through an electoral process where people were free to express their will. She lost and accepted her defeat in a dignified manner, but in the process she strengthened democracy.

Kuldip Nayar, in his book 'Emergency Retold' rightly remarked: "Whatever Mrs.

Gandhi's compulsions, by deciding to go to the polls, she conceded that no system could work without the consent and concurrence of the people. In a way she paid tribute to their patience and suffering, because they were the ones who finally won – the illiterate, the poor, the backward."

Mr. Modi and Mr. Amit Shah claim that the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh have happily welcomed the decision of abrogation of article 370. This of their claim will always remain unconvincing and unacceptable because the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh have not been given any opportunity to express their will on such claims. And will of the people can be ascertained only through their representatives duly elected in a free and fair election which alone are an indispensable text of a legitimate system.

**N.D. Pancholi**, is an advocate and Vice President, People's Union For Civil Liberties. Mob. 9811099532 

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# Kashmir: ‘Private Visit’ Of European MPs Was NSA Doval’s Brainchild, Sources Say

*BJP leaders admit the real audience for the carefully choreographed visit is voters in India, rather than the international community.*

Smita Sharma & Aman Sethi



*European Union lawmakers wait to take a local shikara ride in the Dal Lake, on 29 October, 2019 in Srinagar.*

*The “private” visit was planned and largely executed at the direction of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.*

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — The “private” visit of 24 predominantly right-wing European Union parliamentarians to Kashmir was planned and largely executed at the direction of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval with the blessings of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Office, two well-placed government sources told this reporter.

This visit, a BJP leader said, was only the first of several such proposed visits to Kashmir.

At the surface, the visit was orchestrated to look like it was organised by a private British citizen called Madi Sharma, founder of the Women’s Economic and Social Think Tank (WESTT), and supposedly paid for by another Indian think tank called the International Institute of Non-Aligned Studies, according to an invitation to sent to British politician Chris Davies.

In reality, Indian officials said the visit was a carefully choreographed junket to push back against a perceived “liberal bias” of much of the international community’s reception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s decision to scrap

Article 370 of the Constitution (which granted Kashmir special status), blanket the region with thousands of troopers, and arrest large numbers of civilians including several prominent politicians. A Reuters report dated September 12 has put the number of arrests at at least 3800.

While India’s foreign minister Dr. S. Jaishankar was in the loop, officials in the Ministry of External Affairs were largely uninvolved in the visit, these sources said. A third source pushed back at this characterisation, stating that Jaishankar had floated the idea of bringing members of the European Parliament to Kashmir when he visited Brussels on August 30 this year.

“The NSA has no presence in Europe, so the MEA would have to have been involved,” this source said. Yet, the Indian government’s decision to use Madi Sharma and her NGO — who clearly stated she was organising a “prestigious VIP meeting with the Prime Minister of India” in her email to EU parliamentarians — suggests much of the outreach was handled by Ajit Doval and the



Prime Minister's Office, rather than Indian diplomats.

The purpose of this delegation, the sources said, was to cultivate voices to "shout back" at critics of the Modi government's Kashmir policy. The fact that some of these voices belonged to xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic European politicians, a source in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party said, was largely irrelevant.

In August 2017 for instance, Polish MEP, Bogdan Rzonca — who is part of the delegation — tweeted, "I wonder why there are so many Jews among those performing abortions, despite the Holocaust." Rzonca subsequently apologised for the remark.

Amongst the 24 MEPs who finally boarded a plane to Delhi, are representatives of the UK's Brexit Party, France's National Rally, Poland's far-right The Law and Justice (PiS) party, and representatives of Italy's Lega Nord. The Italian delegation also has representatives from Forza Italia and the social-democrat Democratic Party.

Senior BJP leaders appeared unconcerned that courting such controversial supporters could chip away at India's image — carefully crafted over decades of diplomacy — as a pluralistic, diverse, democracy.

"Liberal biases are strong. We need to catch some low hanging fruits. Western media has a bias. It cannot worsen further. We have nothing to lose," said the BJP leader on conditions of anonymity. The government is clear that the 'coordinated tour' is a first among several regardless of the political storm.

"We should continue doing such efforts. We have to give a perspective to the right people who matter without having any expectations. Only cumulative efforts will lead to positive

outcomes," another BJP leader said.

### **Pakistan Concerns**

The decision to orchestrate this private visit of MEPs, government officials said, was sparked by need to push back against what they characterised as "robust lobbying" by European politicians of Pakistani origin.

"The Pakistanis have Labour by the balls," said one official, in an attempt to explain why none of the United Kingdom's mainstream Tory or Labour parties sent a representative. In a press note shared with *HuffPost India*, the office of Chris Davies of the UK's Liberal Democrats said he had initially agreed to come, but his invitation was rescinded when he insisted he be accompanied by independent journalists.

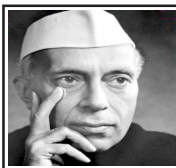
"From the very first moment the visit sounded to me like a PR stunt intended to bolster Narendra Modi," Davies said in the statement circulated by his office. "I think the actions of the government of India in Kashmir are betraying the best principles of a great democracy, and I believe the less notice that the rest of the world pays to the situation the more pleased they will be."

"Davies wanted to meet the separatists," claimed a BJP leader dismissing Davies' absence as inconsequential.

Many of the MEPs who agreed to come, another official said, came from countries where small and dispersed Pakistani expatriate populations are not a solid voter block.

Ultimately, a BJP leader admitted, that the primary purpose of the visit was not to convince the international community, as much as to give the BJP's domestic audience the impression that foreigner leaders supported Prime Minister Modi's decision to abrogate Article 370.

Courtesy **HuffPost**, 30/10/2019. 🌈



*Slogans are apt to petrify man's thinking... every slogan, every word almost, that is used by the socialist, the communist, the capitalist, the communist, the capitalist. People hardly think nowadays. They throw words at each Other.*

**-: Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru**

# Out of my mind: Govt's dozen own goals on Kashmir

*The episode involving the European Parliamentarians shows that the government does not believe in its own propaganda that all is well.*

**Meghnad Desai**

The decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5-6 was a stunning success.

All is fair in love and war. Governments are entitled to do whatever is within constitutional limits according to the political belief of their ruling party and normal rules of conduct. Others may not like it, but then they did not win the confidence of the people. What is unforgivable is incompetence. The saga of Article 370 began at the top as a brilliant manoeuvre.

The decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5-6 was a stunning success. Somehow the government seemed to have found a window of opportunity when, with the J&K government out of office and hence the responsibility for any change in Article 370 falling on the Central government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah found a sequence of adjustments to various articles in the Constitution to make the most profound change in Article 370.

Modi and Shah had cut the Gordian knot. The de facto situation of J&K not being truly autonomous was now legally secured. As used to happen in the past, mobile telephones were shut down, public meetings banned, curfews imposed. Now, however, we were promised that these bans would not last. The promise was that business of the government would improve and healthy and prosperous Kashmiris would be empowered. New governments would be established.

This was however not a priority. The eyes of the government were firmly fixed on Pakistan and the United Nations. The avoidance of any official censure by the UN Security Council was adroitly managed by the government.

Ninety days have passed since then. There is even now no normalcy. What is obvious is that

whatever scheme the top echelon of the government had in mind has not been delivered by the lower rungs, from the Governor down.

The episode involving the European Parliamentarians shows that the government does not believe in its own propaganda that all is well. Whoever dreamt up this clumsy and transparently flawed programme should be sacked. It is not just one but a dozen own goals. It has exposed a serious gap in international diplomacy.

It has been obvious for some time that there is a serious dearth of talent in political personnel below the top two. The PMO also has not been up to the challenges that the PM sets for it, as was obvious in the demonetisation case. The Article 370 saga has been allowed to harm India's reputation thanks to a lack of foresight.

An urgent policy intervention is needed. Chanakya's sequence of *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand* and *Bhed* seems to have been reversed. *Dand* has been used at the outset. But *bhed* has failed as the MEP (Members of European Parliament) fiasco shows. *Daam* has been promised but not delivered. What remains is *saam*. There is a need to display confidence in the rightness of the policy if indeed it is believed and, I am sure it is, that the policy was correct and in the interest of J&K.

Relax the curfew completely, release all prisoners, face the crowds of protesters and show the world that they remain a minority. Allow anyone and everyone to visit Kashmir as indeed now, after the abrogation of Article 370, they have the right. Let the world come openly rather than report furtively. Somehow people believe furtively obtained news more than its truth value. It hurts India.

Courtesy **Indian Express**,  
November 3, 2019 

# Losing the Kashmir narrative

**Tavleen Singh**

India has compelling reasons for the abrogation of Article 370. But, so far, they have been put before the world so badly that it is Pakistan that has taken control of the narrative. (Express photo)

Two video clips I saw on social media last week came as proof for me personally that Article 370 would have had to go sooner rather than later. The first showed Pakistani children playing at becoming suicide bombers. With the sound of verses from the Koran in the background, small children lined up to embrace an older child before he crossed the dusty field in which they played and disappeared in a fake explosion. The second showed ISIS widows and wives in a camp in Iraq the day after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed. They screamed that a new leader would be born soon to deal with infidels. They wore black burqas and black gloves and spoke from behind veils that totally concealed their faces. They said it was the will of Allah that the jihad continue till all infidels be killed. Their dress code reminded me that they have sisters like Asiya Andrabi in Kashmir.

India as a victim for decades of jihadist terrorism has every reason to be worried about this kind of Islam spreading through Kashmir. And, it has been spreading slowly but surely for many, many years. It has changed the nature of Kashmiri Islam and it has changed the objective of the armed insurgency from 'azaadi' to establishing an Islamic state in Kashmir governed by the Shariat. This transformation of the 'freedom movement' did not begin after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, it began long ago. Last week, on the day that the former state of Jammu & Kashmir lost not just its special status but its status as a state, senior Congress party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad declared publicly that there was no

'Kashmir problem' till 2014. He lied. Our Kashmir problem began in 1947 and was so badly handled by Congress prime ministers that even as the historical problem faded, a new one was born out of bad policies and terrible mistakes. Most of them made in Delhi. Not in Srinagar.

Having said this, it also needs to be said that the Kashmir tour that those random European legislators were treated to last week was a ludicrous public relations farce. Since the abrogation of Article 370, all attempts to win India's case internationally have been absurdly farcical. Right from that first attempt by our National Security Advisor to show 'normalcy' in Srinagar by hosting a supposedly impromptu buffet lunch for a handful of locals in an ominously deserted street.

India has compelling reasons for the abrogation of Article 370. But, so far, they have been put before the world so badly that it is Pakistan that has taken control of the narrative. Every time a new story appears in some important western newspaper about torture and repression in the Kashmir Valley, spokesmen of the Indian Government dismiss it as prejudice and Pakistani propaganda. Perhaps.

But, when are we going to start telling our side of the story better? When are we going to explain to the world that India can simply not afford to have an Islamic caliphate take birth within her borders? This was beginning to happen in Kashmir right under the noses of Kashmir's 'mainstream' political leaders and they were unable to stop it. Sadly, 'liberal' journalists and human rights activists on our side of the border were reluctant to admit that we were dealing with something more serious than a 'freedom movement'.

( To be Contd....on Page - 34 )

## We Need Action, Not Meditation In Foreign Lands

**Yashwant Sinha**

Within days of the drone attack on the Saudi oil facilities, diesel and petrol prices in India went up by Rs. 2 to 2.50 per litre. Since prices are now revised on a daily basis, consumers did not feel the pinch all at once. It affected people like slow poison does. So there was no protest at petrol stations or elsewhere. Even the political parties in opposition let it pass without protest.

Gone are the days when increase by even a rupee in petroleum product prices used to lead to '*morchas*' on the streets against the government. The media is replete with stories of attacks on people, even in the national capital, by anti-social elements, leading to loss of money and even life. We hear or read about them but let it pass.

The government of India is directly responsible for law and order in the capital. We have witnessed how even the policemen in Delhi are feeling insecure and have come out on the streets to protest. It is a virtual revolt by an armed force but forget Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even Home Minister Amit Shah has not uttered a word to reassure people on the issue.

The economy is in a mess; people are losing their jobs; prices of essentials are soaring; purchasing power in the hands of the people is dwindling but we take it in our stride.

A new study conducted by reputable economists shows that in the aftermath of demonetization in November 2016, economic growth declined not by 2.50 per cent as former PM Manmohan Singh had predicted but by 3%. The PM, who had offered to be tried publicly if demonetization failed, does not talk about it anymore.

We also keep quiet.

An attack takes place on a convoy of security personnel in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir,

scores of them are killed, months pass, there are glaring security lapses, yet the matter is allowed to subside; we shoot down an F-16 aircraft of Pakistan in an air battle, complain to the Americans about its misuse by Pakistan, nothing happens and we keep quiet.

Freedom of expression and freedom itself is threatened; we accept it as normal. The fundamental rights of our citizens in Kashmir are severely compromised for days on end; we are unaffected; no, we go ahead and celebrate it in the rest of the country. The government makes it its main election issue in state elections; we stand up and applaud.

The minorities are targeted; we are silent. There is a clamour for NRC in every state ruled by the BJP, the Home Minister thunders that all infiltrators would be thrown out of the country by 2024 while at the same time the prime minister assures the prime minister of Bangladesh not to worry as it is our internal matter.

Where will the non-citizens go? To detention camps as are being planned in Assam? The government dishes out pure untruths on a daily basis; we accept them as gospel truth. Institutions of democracy are being compromised, yet we are unmoved. The private '*sarkari*' channels praise each and every action of the government and are out to destroy whatever feeble opposition is left; independent-minded media persons lose their jobs yet we are not bothered. The list goes on endlessly. Our silence is deafening. Fear stalks the land.

In my travels across the country, when I point these out to my audiences, the pet question is, 'Yes, what you are saying is true but how are they winning election after election', or 'what or who is the alternative?'

First of all, winning elections is no certificate of constitutional morality. We have seen in this country and elsewhere that leaders often claim innocence on the ground that they have won their election. Popular mandate does not mean obliteration of all illegalities committed by them. So it is not difficult to challenge this argument.

The question of an alternative however is a serious one. Joseph de Maistre, a French thinker of the 18th century said 'every nation gets the government it deserves'. 'It also gets the Opposition it deserves;' I may add. More than the shenanigans of the government of the day, it is the opposition parties which are failing the people. They are in complete disarray after their loss in the Lok Sabha elections. They are a dispirited, demoralised lot with no will to fight the government either in parliament or on the streets. They consider their duty done by tweeting or commenting on Facebook or other social media platforms. They no longer go out to the people. Their leaders have lost their élan

Even the surprising results of the Maharashtra and Haryana assembly elections have failed to raise their spirits. This lot will not do. We need action, not meditation in foreign lands. We urgently need a young leader who is prepared to go out there and fight the forces of evil.

But most of all, the people need to wake up to the dangers which are facing the country.

Marx had said that religion is the opium of the masses. If the opium of religion is so potent, imagine how potent is the combination of pseudo-religion and hyper nationalism, however distorted it may be. It is this opium which is being fed to the people on a daily basis. So, they are continuously in a trance.

The Kargil conflict lasted three months. It occupied national attention completely for those three months as the coffins came home and our brave Jawans captured peak after peak in that inhospitable terrain. Ultimately we won

an outstanding victory. Elections to the Lok Sabha were held soon thereafter. The BJP had 182 seats in Lok Sabha in the 1998 elections; it had the same number in 1999. Not one more seat was added to its tally. Why? Because we did not make 'national security' an election issue. And you conduct one aerial strike, make it your most important election plank and just look at the results of the 2019 elections? I was visiting my village in Hazaribagh during the elections. A family came to visit me along with their child. After settling down, they told me, "Sir, see what the child has to say about elections." Then they asked the child to tell me whom he was going to vote for in the elections. The child said without hesitation that he would vote for Modi. When asked why he would do so the child said, "Because he defeated Pakistan." I was flabbergasted. I asked the parents how old the child was. 'Four years,' was their reply. Need I say more about how the rulers have captured the minds of the people?


This is the blunt truth.

Their narrative, supported by all the means of communication, has succeeded in capturing the minds of the people. They are intoxicated by the 'opium' of religion and nationalism. The moment they come out of it they are fed a fresh dose of this 'opium'.

There are no red lines today. Everything is fair in love and elections. So abolition of Article 370 and 35A were the most important issues for the BJP in the recently held assembly elections of Maharashtra and Haryana. Elections must be won at any cost. The fight, no doubt, appears impossible to win at this time. But somebody has to light a candle, even single-handedly.

The time to do so is now.

*Yashwant Sinha, former BJP leader, was Minister of Finance (1998-2002) and Minister of External Affairs (2002-2004)*

Courtesy **NDTV**, November 06, 2019 



# Is Uttar Pradesh Turning Into a Police State?

*The manner in which members of the fourth estate are being targeted reflects the same mindset visible in the indiscriminate police encounters.*

**Sharat Pradhan**

**Lucknow:** Freedom of expression may be a fundamental right of every citizen and more so of the fourth estate. But that does not seem to be the order of the day in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, where a government with a thumping mandate appears to be becoming increasingly intolerant towards any kind of criticism in the media.

Criticism – which is one of the basic tenets of any democratic system – is most unwelcome to UP cops, who not only take affront to any criticism, but also turn vengeful. Targeting journalists seems to have become a daily occurrence for the khaki-clad force in some UP districts, including the state capital, where a young well-known freelance scribe Asad Rizvi was last week booked under sections 107, 116 and 151 of the CrPC. Upon inquiry, he was told by the concerned inspector, “There are mild sections used purely as a preventive measure, why are you worried?”

All that Rizvi had done was highlight the failings of the police, which surely cannot be construed as an act that could lead to the apprehension of a breach of peace, for which he was charged. That he was being targeted by the local cops, first came to light when a sub-inspector knocked at his house one evening to warn him. “I have been sent by Inspector of Chowk Kotwali; you must check your writings; you are painting the police in poor light”, was the curt warning. The FIR that followed confirmed the prejudice of the police, whose sword is now hanging above the young journalist's neck.

Asad's case is not an isolated incident of police intimidation.

Last month, five journalists were booked

under the Gangsters Act by the Noida police. When some hue and cry was raised, the Noida SSP moved heaven and earth to label the scribes as “imposters”. Four of these journalists were charged with “exercising undue pressure on the police for making personal gains”.

The Noida police has been particularly notorious for its apathy against media persons. Even senior cops are not hesitant when it comes to displaying their indifference or antipathy against those who do not toe the line of the cops. Last week, when a woman scribe of a top national daily was mugged while she was cycling on the streets of Noida, senior superintendent of police Vaibhav Krishna refused to meet the victim. As if to add insult to injury, the SSP also failed to take any action against the two ruffians who assaulted the helpless journalist.

Earlier, five journalists were booked in Bijnore after they reported that Dalits were being prevented from drawing water from a public hand-pump in Basi village under the district. The scribes were charged with posing danger to social harmony, creating caste tensions and danger to national security.


In September itself, journalist Pawan Jaiswal was booked for “criminal conspiracy” simply because he released a video showing school children in a Mirzapur village being fed roti and salt under the mid-day meal scheme. The district magistrate of Mirzapur went to the extent of justifying the action against the journalist by pointing out, “Pawan Jaiswal is a print journalist so why did he shoot a video? He could have taken still pictures but the fact that he made a video which went viral, he deserves to be booked for criminal conspiracy.”

Provoked by the brazen charges, even the Editors Guild condemned the incident and termed it as “a cruel and classic case of shooting the messenger.” The guild also demanded immediate withdrawal of the criminal case against the scribe.

The manner in which members of the fourth estate are being targeted reflects the same mindset visible in the indiscriminate police encounters that have left some 67 alleged criminals dead. While the police officially

described each one of them as “hardened criminals”, mostly carrying some bounty over their heads, insiders alleged that at least half of them were petty offenders who were gunned down in cold blood after being made to look big-timers by declaring a bounty on their heads. Interestingly, the encounters are listed among the government’s “achievements”.

**Sharat Pradhan** is a senior journalist in Lucknow.

Courtesy *The Wire*, 28 October 2019. 

## The Right to Information Is Dead. Here Is its Obituary

*New rules recently notified giving the Centre power over Central and State information commissioners are intended to ensure RTI appeals go the government’s way.*

**M. Sridhar Acharyulu**

*We were celebrating October 12 as RTI formation day. But just 12 days later, we are now compelled to mourn the sad demise of the institution of an independent information commission. On October 24, 2019 the Centre notified destructive new rules.*

The suspense and mystery on the Narendra Modi government’s real impact on the right to information is now over. The damage to the autonomy of all information commissioners in India is more than what was expected. Not only has independence been cut, the institution – and its chief – have been made subordinate.

It has the longest title: “The Right to Information (Term of Office, Salaries, Allowances and Other Terms and Conditions of Service of Chief Information Commissioner, Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission, State Chief Information Commissioner and State Information Commissioners in the State Information Commission) Rules, 2019 (shortly referred as RTI Rules 2019)”. The rules brazenly show how the Centre took over power from state governments.

### Important changes

1. Central information commissioners and state information commissioners have been equated with serving civil servants, who are placed in the same pay grade. The chief central information commissioner is equated with a cabinet secretary while all other information commissioners have been equated with officers of the same grade in the service of the Central or state government, respectively.

2. Information commissioners are paid less than the chief information commissioner, which creates a hierarchy which was deliberately avoided in the original Act. Information commissioners then become subordinates of the chief, who is made a subordinate of the government.

3. Rule 22 gives the Central government the discretionary power to relax any of these rules about any class or category of persons in the future.

4. Rule 21 gives absolute power to the Central government to decide on any other allowances or service conditions not specifically covered by the 2019 Rules, and its decision will be binding.

5. Rule 23 makes the Central government the final arbiter about the interpretation of these rules.

### **Major illegalities**

1. The Amendment Act 2019 and Rules 2019 destroy the independence accorded to information commissions within the whole scheme of the 2005 RTI Act, which cannot be taken away by amending a couple of sections.

2. The Centre's control over state information commissions is against the federal character of the constitution, which is its basic structure and to amend which parliament has no power.

3. The Central government is not spending any of its funds on the salaries and allowances of state information commissioners. Hence, the Centre extending complete control over the salaries and term of the state information commissioners is not only unreasonable, arbitrary but also illegal and unconstitutional as it destroys the federal structure.

4. The state ICs are being paid out of the Consolidated Fund of the concerned State. The Centre has no control over the manner of use of funds from the state's Consolidated Fund, except when the state is placed under President's Rule. It is unfortunate that without understanding this encroachment into powers of the states by the Centre, the ruling parties in three states – Biju Janata Dal (Odisha), YSR Congress Party (Andhra Pradesh) and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (Telangana) supported the Bill that diminished their powers.

5. The amendment and rules have not been preceded by consultations with stake holders – information commissioners – states, civil society and the MPs. This is in flagrant violation of the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy of 2014 that requires all draft rules to be placed in the public domain for comments/suggestions of people. The draft of rules or Bill was not made available in the public domain and no consultations were held.

6. The contemplated subordination of

information commissioners was not informed even to both houses of parliament and is a clear breach of parliamentary privileges.

### **The Fear of RTI**

The Right to Information is a small but significant and powerful right of citizens to seek government files that and facilitates the enforcement of his other rights. The power of the information commission is also small – to direct the government officer to share a page or show a file. Imagine the fear this right has generated in the minds of politicians and bureaucrats, that they want only persons loyal to them to chair the commission so that their fake degrees or corrupt deeds are not exposed. This could probably be the sole objective and profound reason for this destructive amendment and the formulation of the new rules.

### **Making CIC subordinate to the government**

The Act and rules of 2019 have the effect of indoctrinating complete subordination into the institution of the information commission, making the RTI not workable. While the RTI Amendment Act 2019, destroyed the commission's independence, the rules completed the job by indoctrinating subordination.

Between the lines of these rules, one finds how the CIC has been degraded from his statute-guaranteed-status equal to a chief election commissioner – which is *pari materia* to judge of Supreme Court – into the lower level of secretary, reminding him that he will work under superiors.

Most CICs were practically subservient though the Act wanted them to act independently. Now, subordination and loyalty as qualifications for the appointment of ICs has been legalised. That is a real jolt to the independence of the commissioners, which was accorded after much deliberations, consultations, hearings and approval by the Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC).

The PSC found it apt to give CICs the same stature as a CEC, making him first among equal information commissioners. Collectively, the commissioners were expected to protect the citizen's right of access to public records without fear of those in high offices. This capacity has now been taken away.

### **No place to non-bureaucratic Commissioners**

The fourth rule empowers the Centre to appoint bureaucrats who are still in service for three years. From the date of their appointment, they will be considered to have retired.

*Retirement from parent service on*



### **Making ICs subordinate to CIC**

After making the CIC subordinate to the PMO and DoPT, the Centre also made the individual commissioners subordinate to the chief. This was not envisaged by the original RTI Act, 2005.

The chief was first among equals earlier, but is now the boss. It was a clever way to weaken the commission and the commissioners. The 2019 rules reduced the salary of the ICs from Rs 2.50 lakh to Rs 2.25 lakh, to make it clear that the chief will be of secretary rank and the commissioners would have a joint secretary rank. Other rules equated them with bureaucrats drawing that amount of salary in the Indian Civil Services. The equality inter-se the commissioners, which facilitated some independent bold decisions, will be impossible now.

*appointment.—The Chief Information Commissioner or Information Commissioners, as the case may be, who on the date of his appointment to the Commission, was in the service of the Central or a State Government, shall be deemed to have retired from such service with effect from the date of his appointment as Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission.*

This revealed the Centre's intention to appoint former civil servants only to this office. The rule ignores and sidelines the mandate of Section 12(5), which requires the government to select commissioners from different fields of social activity. There is no provision stipulated for the commissioners to be selected from non-bureaucrat fields like journalism or academics.



### Centre's control over state ICs

With the promulgation of the rules 2019 from October 24, the Centre will be empowered to twist the hands of CICs, ICs at the Centre and also the state ICs. This will end the federal scheme of distribution of powers under the original RTI Act, 2005. With Rule 13, it also paved the way for the bureaucratisation of the state commissioners officially and reduced the possibility of non-bureaucrats getting into this office.

The rules made under the amendment kill the spirit of the original RTI Act, which is against the norm that the rules cannot overtake and violate the original Act under which they were made.

The Centre also retained the residuary power to fill the gaps (Rule 21) and power over to give final interpretation (Rule 24). Besides, it has also given itself the power to relax further these rules (Rule 22), which could be used to incentivise commissioners who are loyal to the rulers rather than the rules.

### The dilution

Unfortunately, no government wants a strong information commissioner who implements the provisions of the RTI Act because scrutiny of files has caused much embarrassment.

In 2005, the political leadership of the government was made to understand the need to give citizens this right to strengthen democracy. But it was strongly opposed by bureaucrats, who continuously obstructed and resisted the RTI draft from being passed.

After its commencement, some of those anti-RTI officers occupied the posts of commissioners and passed several anti-RTI orders facilitating departments from rejecting

disclosure requests.

Very few non-bureaucrats have been selected as commissioners. RTI activist Shailesh Gandhi was made the commissioner on the advice of L.K. Advani, when he was the leader of opposition. That was possible because the selection committee for shortlisting ICs included the leader of the opposition (Section 12(3)(ii) of RTI Act 2005). (The author was selected as CIC from field of law by the UPA government in 2013, based on an application with biodata.)

The selections showed that the Central and state governments preferred to fill 90% of the slots with bureaucrats, ignoring eminent persons from fields envisaged in Section 12(5) such as law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance. The objective of the Act to make the commission a body representing all walks of life was totally ignored. In fact, even bureaucrats who have improved transparency and the quality of honest administration were also rarely chosen to be commissioners.

Speculation suggests that as bureaucrats increasingly were made ICs and enjoyed higher privileges, even the senior-most officers felt some heartburn. This could be a reason for continued attempts to reduce the status of ICs. But in the process, an important right has been diluted. The author hopes that this amendment and the rules will not stand judicial review, if civil society highlights these issues in the courts.

**M. Sridhar Acharyulu** is a former central information commissioner and dean, School of Law, Bennett University.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 28 October 2019. 🌈



*When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.* - : Nelson Mandela



# Government Shuts Down J&K Human Rights Commission, Information Commission

*The state commissions have been ordered shut despite the fact that many Union Territories have equivalent bodies.*

The Wire Staff

**New Delhi/Srinagar:** The Jammu and Kashmir administration – which is directly controlled by the Narendra Modi government in the Centre – has shut down seven government commissions, including those dealing with human rights, the right to information, the rights of the disabled, and allegations against public functionaries.

An official order issued Wednesday said a total of seven state commissions would cease to exist with effect from October 31. No reason for their dissolution has been given.

The commissions being wound up are the:

- Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC)
- State Information Commission (SIC)
- State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRC)
- State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC)
- State Commission for Protection of Women and Child Rights (SCPWCR)
- State Commission for Persons with Disabilities (SCPwD)
- State Accountability Commission (SAC).

All that the official order, issued by the state's General Administration Department said was that "consequent upon repeal of the acts related to these commissions by the Jammu and

Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, sanction is hereby accorded to the winding up of these commissions, with effect from October 31, 2019".

It is not clear what the status of matters these commissions have taken up or issued orders on will be. However, the term of all officeholders – chairpersons, presidents and members of these commissions – will come to an end the same date.

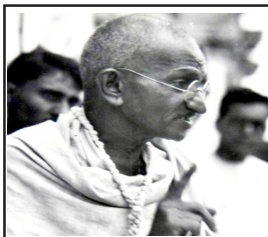
October 31 is also the date that the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be bifurcated into two Union Territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Many Union Territories – Puducherry and Delhi, for example – have commissions of the kind that the latest order has abolished so it is not clear why the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are to be deprived of, say, a regional human rights commission.

The GAD order asked the secretaries of the seven commissions to handover the possession of the buildings housing their respective offices, along with furniture and electronic gadgets, to the director of the estates department.

The secretaries shall transfer all records pertaining to their respective commissions to the concerned departments, the order stated.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 24 October, 2019. With inputs from PTI 🌈



*Many People, especially ignorant people, want to punish you for speaking the truth, for being correct, for being you. Never apologize for being correct, or for being years ahead of your time. If you're right and you know it, speak your mind. Even if you are a minority of one, truth is still the truth.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

# Institutions weakened, economy crippled

M. Suresh Babu

## *The credibility of the RBI, the CSO and the Niti Aayog has taken a beating in recent times due to political interference*

Nobel laureate Oliver Williamson pondered over an important question, around 25 years ago: “Why are the ambitions of economic development practitioners and reformers so often disappointed?” According to him, “one answer is that development policymakers and reformers are congenital optimists. Another answer is that good plans are regularly defeated by those who occupy strategic positions. An intermediate answer is that institutions are important, yet are persistently neglected in the planning process.”

The question and all the three answers assume relevance in the context of India’s recent economic performance. The slowdown in GDP growth rate has been dissected, digressed and disowned by analysts, commentators and policymakers. However, the diagnosis is far from complete and the growth engine is running out of fuel. Both the demand- and supply-side factors have been central in all the analyses, but the crucial role of institutions in shaping the outcomes of both the factors in this episode of slowdown has been neglected. This has resulted in a series of banal policy measures for reviving growth.

A market-centred economic model necessitates creating and sustaining credible institutions that further the efficiency of market mechanism. Given the possibility of ‘market failures’, such institutions assume a larger role in the economy in shaping expectations and decisions. Journalist Henry Hazlitt grouped the pillars of market economy into private property, free markets, competition, division and combination of labour and social cooperation. Institutions are needed to strengthen these foundational pillars are a prerequisite for

markets to work.

The credibility of three such important institutions — the Reserve Bank of India (RBI); the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO); and the Planning Commission/NITI Aayog — has taken a beating in recent times.

### **Erosion in RBI’s autonomy**

The RBI, which was clamouring for more autonomy, has been systematically brought under the ambit of the Central government. Starting from the sidelining of the central bank on the important issue of currency demonetisation, the attempt has been to steadily erode the central bank’s independence. A three-pronged strategy resulted in this — first, the RBI was bypassed on matters relating to currency; second, its role as regulator of the banking sector was questioned when banks faltered; and, finally, its reserves were siphoned. The net result has been that the RBI has been reduced into an institution which presides over a limited space of monetary policy, that is, inflation targeting.

It is also interesting to note that the only major policy tool available in the RBI’s armoury is cutting repo rates, which the central bank did four times this year. The last time the RBI made so many back-to-back cuts was after the global financial crisis over a decade ago, when most major central banks were desperate to revive economic growth. However, rate cuts alone could not help India’s economy this time, as banks, saddled with bad debt, were slow to reduce lending rates. This provides a classic case of an institution’s weakening, leading to questions on its role and credibility.

Markets, which work on information and expectations, rely on official data to arrive at decisions. In an era of ‘big data’, we find that

India's official data procuring and publishing agency has been crippled. Often we find that the official series, ranging from national accounts to unemployment, has been smothered with repeated revisions and change of data definitions. When data that needs 'approval' before release, as in the case of the unemployment data, questions are bound to arise on the credibility of the numbers. The veracity of the data is to be tested by researchers and the public who consume the data and not by 'approving agencies'. It is altogether another matter that had we had admitted that the rate of unemployment was high, perhaps more private investment could have come due the expectations of finding labour at lower wages. Such a possibility was shut out by an attitude of denial on the part of the government.

#### Space for course correction

NITI Aayog presents the case of an institution that lost its character in the process of transformation. By abolishing the erstwhile Planning Commission and transforming it into the NITI Aayog, the government lost the space for mid-term appraisals of plans and policies. Course correction and taking stock of the economy have now become routine exercises, with uncritical acceptance due to a lack of well-researched documents.

As another Nobel laureate, Douglass North, opined: "Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction." Institutions are formed to reduce uncertainty in human exchange. Together with the technology employed, they determine the costs of transacting (and producing). While the formal rules can be changed overnight, as has been practised by the present government, the informal norms change only gradually.

In this context, it is useful to focus on understanding and reforming the forces that keep bad institutions in place, especially political institutions and the distribution of political power. This requires understanding the complex relationship between political institutions and the political equilibrium. Sometimes, changing the political institutions may be insufficient, or even counterproductive, in leading to better economic outcomes as has been the case in India in recent times. The use of high-quality academic information, which the present establishment lacks, is valuable both to think about these issues and generate better policy advice.

**M. Suresh Babu** is a Professor at IIT-Madras

Courtesy **The Hindu**,  
September 27, 2019 

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## OPINION :

# **The flawed Westminster model of parliamentary democracy**

Vivek Dehejia

*This form of ‘people’s rule’ places checks on those in power that work only as well as the institutions enforcing them*

Winston Churchill famously made a remark to the effect that democracy is the worst form of government, except when compared to all the alternative systems such as civilian dictatorship or military rule. He ought to have added that democracy’s Westminster variant is the worst form of democracy, except when compared to other systems such as presidential or proportional representation.

With a majority government and the ability to issue a party whip, the prime minister and his or her cabinet can be described as constitutional oligarchs in a Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. Their power is kept in check only by what is constitutionally permissible. What is more, if such a government is dominated by the prime minister, and the cabinet is little more than a rubber stamp, then this system is effectively reduced to a constitutional dictatorship, in which those whose advice is listened to are officials or advisers in the prime minister’s office, the most influential of whom whisper directly into the ear of the prince, to borrow a phrase from Niccolò Machiavelli.

The crux, therefore, is the constitutional framework within which a Westminster parliamentary system operates. In particular, many decisions taken *de facto* by the prime minister (head of government) and cabinet must be ratified *de jure* by the constitutional head of state—who is the monarch in the UK, the governor general in Canada, and the president in India.

That this may prove an insufficient check is best illustrated by the recent prorogation crisis in the UK, in which the prime minister, Boris Johnson, advised Queen Elizabeth II to “prorogue” or suspend Parliament to stave off a parliamentary vote on “Brexit” that he was almost certain to lose. The queen acquiesced, and this touched off the greatest constitutional crisis that the UK has faced since the forced abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936. However, another British institution of recent provenance, its supreme court, subsequently declared the prorogation illegal, rebuked the prime minister, and recalled parliamentarians to Westminster—thus establishing an important precedent.

Interestingly, the prorogation crisis in the UK ended very differently from a similar crisis in Canada in December 2008. The then prime minister, Stephen Harper, whose government was in a minority position, sought prorogation from the governor general, Michaëlle Jean, to avert a confidence vote that he was certain to lose against a coalition of opposition parties. Jean granted the request, and parliament was prorogued until late January 2009. By that time, the opposition coalition had crumbled, and Harper survived a confidence vote. Harper’s government subsequently sought, and successfully received, the governor general’s permission to prorogue parliament in December 2009, and this lasted until March 2010. Neither prorogation was successfully challenged in Canadian courts.

The lesson is that constitutional checks on the otherwise unfettered powers of a majority government work only as well as the institutions that ostensibly provide those checks. In the UK, the monarch is a hereditary ruler, while in Canada, the governor general is appointed by the government, as are the members of its supreme court, as also the members of its upper house of parliament, making Canada, in theory, the least democratic among major Westminster-model countries. By contrast, India is, in theory, among the most democratic, as members of the Indian Supreme Court are picked by a collegium, the President is elected by an electoral college, and members of the Upper House are indirectly elected by state assemblies.

Commenting on the prorogation crisis in the UK and its eventual resolution, the *Financial Times* wrote on 24 September in an unsigned leader: “The UK system cannot allow a cabal around the prime minister to determine by itself the ‘will of the people’ and attempt to implement it, while sidelining those whom the people elected to represent them. This is the road to tyranny.”


These words are apposite. We might reflect on what they mean for India’s particular brand of Westminster democracy. Indira Gandhi’s period of Emergency rule (1975-77) was, on paper, constitutional, declared so by a supine Supreme Court and President, and it ended not because it was declared unconstitutional, nor

because of popular protests, but because Gandhi herself decided to end it and present herself to Indian voters, and for reasons not fully understood—since there was little, if any, external pressure on her to do so.

There is a larger point here. Authoritarianism may thrive under the cloak of democracy, ironically, more easily than it does when it is out in the open. In Canada and the UK, prorogation evoked little, if any, public protest, and only in one case (the UK), as we have seen, was it constitutionally overturned. In the case of India’s Emergency, as reportage of the time suggests, the general reaction was more of resignation than of protest. Indeed, the truth is that apart from a few of her most vociferous critics, most Indians came to accept the reality of the Emergency as a “new normal” within a few months. As noted earlier, the decision to end it was Indira Gandhi’s.

Democracy is much more fragile than is widely believed. Indeed, the putative democratic legitimacy of would-be authoritarian leaders may prove more damaging to democracy in the long run than any overtly authoritarian tendencies. One wonders how Churchill—who extolled democracy for the British but thought Indians unfit for it—might have reacted.

*Vivek Dehejia is a Mint columnist*

Courtesy **Live Mint**,  
20 Oct 2019 

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## Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science

**Dr. Narisettii Innaiah**

It is great surprise that M.N. Roy (Manabendranath Roy) wrote his monumental theory: Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science with special reference to the problem of Determinism. In the field of philosophy there was lot of discussion on this subject. When science took up the subject, the whole thing changed.

During his six years of prison life in India where he suffered as ordinary cell life he lost

his health and endured somehow. From prison Roy corresponded with scientists with the help of Allen and friends. He expressed his doubts and sent them to various scientists in Europe. Roy developed his theory based on available material and somehow completed the script. He could write 5 thousand pages. After release the whole manuscript was typed and preserved by Ellen. Now the text is available



in Nehru museum library in New Delhi.

I did my Ph.D on the topic: Philosophical consequences of Modern Science with particular reference to the problem of determinism. While referring to the available scientific literature, I sought the help of Professor Amritlal Bhikku Shah. He at once sent me the whole script copy of M N Roy. I was overwhelmed with that. I took notes extensively and returned the script to Shah. Now it is not yet printed but manuscript is available with the Nehru library in Delhi.

Out of this book of Roy, summary was prepared by Roy himself and printed under the title: Philosophy and Science. It is only brief summary.


Problem of space time, problem of beginning and end of universe, and other topics are relevant now. It is ongoing subject and

scientists are involved in this research. It requires special study of problem of relativity, New Quantum Theory, cell biology, cosmology, and naturally enters into the curious topic of freedom and determinism.

A.B. Shah told me that Roy's thesis requires much editing based on modern research because it is ongoing subject.

After release from jail, Roy was fully involved in politics and practically no time to take up serious research into scientific subjects. Whenever he could find little time, he published scientific articles in Marxian way and Humanist way. Even that is sketchy.

None of the radical humanists except A.B. Shah entered into the science subjects. Daya Krishna touched few topics and left at that.


Now Roy's manuscript has to be edited before publication. That is Himalayan task. 

**Contd. from page 21 ...**

## **Losing the Kashmir ... : Tavleen Singh**

What is even more worrying is that instead of a responsible, mature effort to counter Pakistan's false narrative on Kashmir, what we have seen from the Modi government is a childish kind of triumphalism. Where is the need to make the abrogation of Article 370 an issue of 'national honour'? Where is the need for senior ministers in Modi's cabinet to keep boasting about his "56-inch chest"? They do him no good when they talk like this because now that Jammu & Kashmir have come under direct rule from Delhi, every time there is a new act of jihadist violence, it will be blamed on Modi personally. The Chief Minister of West Bengal has already blamed him for the murder of five Bengali workers who have become the most recent victims of jihadist terrorists in Kashmir. Why they are still operating freely is a question for the Home Minister to answer.

Last week, the Prime Minister said while paying tribute at the Statue of Unity that he has ordered built, that by abrogating Article 370 he has fulfilled Sardar Patel's dream of uniting India. "Peace and development will now prevail in Jammu and Kashmir," Modi said while standing beside one gigantic foot of the Statue of Unity. We must hope and pray that he is right. It is what everyone wants, including the people of the state that is now not a state but a Union territory. Sadly, the steps taken since August 5 have been less than convincing.

Courtesy **Indian Express**, November 3, 2019 

*He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. he who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.*

**- Martin Luther king, Jr.**

# Evelyn Trent Roy

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah



*Evelyn Trent was a mystery in political circles for a long time. That mystery was solved for the first time with the publication of this book by Dr Innaiah Narisetti.*

M.N. Roy the philosopher-revolutionary at international level married Evelyn Trent in 1917 in USA. She was a Stanford University graduate who played intellectual role in the life of M.N. Roy and International Communist Movement in the Soviet Union, Mexico, and Europe. Her name was known as Shanti Devi only.

M.N. Roy wrote his Memoirs which was serialised in The Radical Humanist weekly from India and later as a book in Bombay. But surprisingly he did not mention her name nor about his married life with her. Hence the mystery remained and even close associates of M.N. Roy are not aware of Evelyn Trent.

But things cannot be camouflaged for long. In the history of Communist Party of India the role of Evelyn Trent came out, because Muzaffar Ahmed recorded her role. Evelyn was the founder member of Indian Communist Party in exile at Tashkent during 1920. Earlier Evelyn Trent travelled along with M.N. Roy to Mexico where they founded the Communist Party for the first time outside the Soviet Union. That was big eye opener to Lenin, who was the international leader of the Communist Movement at that time. On his invitation both Roys travelled to Soviet Union in 1919 and there Evelyn taught in the international political school. She contributed articles under the name: Shanti Devi. She looked after the

international journals: 'Masses' and 'Imprecor' from Europe when Roy was busy travelling. Dhan Gopal, poet from India and a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru was in Stanford University by 1910 who introduced Evelyn to M.N. Roy.

Evelyn, the 8th child of her father Mr Lamartine, mining engineer, was a brilliant student. Again for reasons not known to the public, M.N. Roy and Evelyn separated in 1925 and she came back to USA where she settled and died in 1970.

Several eminent scholars on political science interviewed Evelyn through Robert C. North, the political science professor in Stanford University. But she preferred to remain anonymous. M.N. Roy was supposed to be a truth teller but he did not tell the truth about his first wife. He married Allen later and lived in India.

Dr. Innaiah Narisetti undertook the task of research on Evelyn and gathered several valuable papers about her. The Institute of Social Science at Amsterdam supplied him some papers. He also interviewed the son of Evelyn Trent's sister namely Mr. Diven Meredith in Los Angeles during 1990s.

This book with all the available record is first of its kind in the world; which is now available as e-book at Kinige.

Press.com weblog 

# In Man's Own Image

By Ellen Roy and Sibnarayan Ray

## Part II

Simplified by Vinod Jain

### Man's Place in History

Let us now trace the history of man's unfoldment. It is at the same time the history of restrictions which has so far prevented man's potentialities from manifesting themselves in finer forms. Freedom is not a newly arisen urge in man or invented by us. All progress in human civilization has been achieved in this pursuit. This urge can be traced in primitive man as well as in pre-human organisms.

In man self-adaptation and shaping of environment reached unprecedented levels. His erect anatomy gave him many advantages. This was not possible for animals. The changes in his vocal organ made it possible to develop a complicated system of sound symbols, language and speech. Unprecedented development of the cerebral cortex gave man indefinite possibilities. It made social organization, science, morals, technology etc. possible.

The rise of erect man made the human organism a storehouse of indefinite potentialities. Man has also grown into something more than any other unit in the physical world, something more than any other biological organism. This emphasis on man's distinction need not be made dependent on the negation of evolutionary continuity. The process of unfolding, however, has not always been continuous or happy, unhampered or harmonious. There have been many obstructions both from environment and from man's own inadequacies. There have been endless conflicts between man and nature, man and his creations.

The restrictions on man may be roughly classified into three major groups:—

The first group of restrictions may be described as the natural or environmental. They come primarily from the miserliness, indifference or

destruction of the physical environment from the human point of view.

The simplest outline of human civilization may be traced along the graph of nature's neutrality and man's persistent endeavor to overcome that neutrality. But when man's endeavor to conquer and control nature took the form of science and technology and based all other similar endeavors (e.g. aesthetic, moral, etc.) on scientific knowledge that the real perspective of such conquest opened up for the first time on a grand scale before him.

The second group of restrictions may be described as *organic or physiological*. In the process of evolution man has come to inherit limbs, organisms etc. which are of no use in the new setting. His aquatic antecedents have left most embarrassing and even mortal marks in his breathing and blood circulation apparatus. He also has certain organic imperfections he suffered at the missing link stage.

The third group of restrictions are however much more complicated and consequently more difficult to combat. These restrictions are man's own creation. They are primarily result of man's response to nature. Among these are human ideals and systems of ideas.

Ideas, abstractions, symbols, measurements, forms of syntax began to have greater and greater influence on human response to circumstance. As more and more men began to live together and as larger and larger tracts of the physical universe began to impinge on the human organism, man began to note greater and greater uniformities as well as multifold varieties among the uniformities. The consequence of this process was the emergence of the physical sciences, of logic and mathematics, and also in a partial sense of the fine arts and various ethical systems.

When man is described as essentially rational, at least three distinct but mutually interrelated attributes may be implied. First: that as part of the entire physical universe human behavior is also governed by the laws of that universe. Lawgovernedness which implies uniformity, relation, coherence, etc., is the foundation of rationalism.

Second: man alone can be fully conscious of the laws and logic of that process. It is this consciousness of the complicated pattern of uniformities in the universe and the consequent ability to guide his response and, to an increasing extent, to control the sources of stimulation on the basis of that knowledge which constitutes the distinctive character of human rationality.

Third: man's knowledge of the laws of nature including himself is the basis of his morality. Morality is, generally speaking, the application of knowledge to the most harmonious and least painful satisfaction of human needs.

Today progressive people all over the world are thinking in terms of concrete and practical ways by which power may be evenly distributed among all the people. Laws, institutions, conventions, morals, have all undergone revolutionary changes wherever man has realized his power as the creator of the same and has tried to improve his own creations to meet his needs more satisfactorily.

But before one can devote oneself to the construction of better institutions and morals, it is necessary that he should have a certain attitude to life. The question of attitude is crucial. Without what we may describe as the humanist attitude to life it is impossible to think of reconstructing the social pattern through human endeavor to satisfy human needs. The humanist attitude is to be sharply differentiated from the religious attitude to life. The humanist attitude consists in recognizing man's potential ability to reshape his circumstances; in considering the happy and harmonious development of the individual as the final aim of human activity; in

recognizing science and reason as the most dependable means for the attainment of that aim and for the realization of his creative potentialities; in considering institutions, morals, laws and all social constructions as no more than instruments to ensure maximum freedom and welfare to larger and larger number of individuals. It is only on the basis of such an attitude that any activity about the ways and means to improve man's condition through purposive human effort can become at all fruitful.

It may be helpful if we very briefly indicate the nature of the humanist interpretation of social history. Man, it has been said, is the root of mankind. This would mean that society, culture, science, religion, morals, economy etc. are all result of human endeavour—that they are not given as a gift by any super-human force. Among the early humanist philosophers, the ablest and most consistent was certainly Epicurus who endeavored to construct an evolutionary materialist interpretation of social history and ethics and was much maligned for it.

The humanist interpretation on the one hand takes into account all these diverse factors of history and considers social evolution as an integral process; on the other, It points out that this integral logic indicates a probability of the human influence ultimately deciding the whole pattern of social development. It thus reconciles the positive elements of both the romantic and the materialist interpretations of history. The secret of man's control over environment is to be found in human brain. *The brain*, it says, *is a means of production and produces the most revolutionary commodity* which is idea or knowledge.

The struggle for freedom begins with the formulation of a revolutionary programme. The philosophy of revolution must spread among the common people, must go to orient their whole outlook of life, must permeate the whole pattern of interpersonal relationship. A person with a free attitude to life can alone be an active agent in

making life really free for him and others.

What is the essence of this philosophical revolution from the point of view of individual adjustment? One, the individual ceases to depend upon any extra human agency to bring about his unfoldment as man. Two, he recognizes for himself that man alone is the maker of his destiny.

Three, he allows no other authority to influence or determine his judgment and belief except that of experience and reason. Four, he constantly endeavors to achieve coherence and harmony in his understanding as well as in his conduct.

It seems therefore that a philosophical revolution involves a radical readjustment in the outlook and attitude of a decisively large section of the common people. As the common sense proverb goes, the test of the pudding is in eating. Similarly, the test of an idea is in its practice.

This above is the second phase in a humanist movement for freedom. The first one, we had seen earlier, is an approximately correct formulation of a scientific philosophy in the contemporary context. The third and socially the most obvious phase in the movement for freedom is to translate it into institutional forms.

The humanist approach to the logic of

Institutions is quite different from totalitarian interpretations. Institutions are man-made. They are potentially open to constant reshaping through cooperative individual effort.

There have been views in history that suggest social intractability and individual powerlessness as absolute (with regard to institutions).

Humanism on the other hand thinks that man's ability to use his environment to help in his development comes from two sources: 1. Man's growing knowledge and, 2. the widening possibilities of cooperation between man and man in creative work on the basis of that ever-accumulating store of knowledge. This goes a long way in helping man do away with his so called powerlessness.

Here we should also discuss the role of truth in human life. We may start on a simple and common sense definition of what is truth.

Truth, we may simply say, is the content of human knowledge. Having no evidence of divine wisdom we must admit that truth is an empirical concept and hence is subject to the limitations of empirical knowledge. Truth helps man in all that he does.

To be continued.... 

## **A political ideology will never succeed unless preceded by a social philosophy**

**[Vidya Bhushan Rawat]** This conversation with Dr R M Pal was conducted at his Greater Kailash residence more than a decade back. Though he was not fully well yet he remained mentally active all through his life. He was answering questions and wanted to do many things before leaving. The video of this conversation has already been made available but we know many time people follow the transcript more than the videos and hence we decided to release this transcript today. Dr Pal passed away on October 13th, 2015. As a leading human rights intellectual, he spoke of his minds, his differences and his efforts to put caste agenda in the human rights circles which was always looked by contemporaries with suspicion. This interview along with many others are part of my book "Contesting Marginalisations: Conversations on Ambedkarism and Social Justice", available with People's Literature Publication. For more information about the book, Mr Vivek Sakpal can be contacted. Sharing here this interview for the wider interest of the people who are fighting against caste discrimination and communalism.

[https://countercurrents.org/2019/10/vidya-bhushan-rawat-in-conversation-with-dr-r-m-pal/?fbclid=IwAR1eD1T1\\_qndgbt7JtrwkkRaDMgwsZf01w01eZWnEpy9vbp2O4Q32B3xPo](https://countercurrents.org/2019/10/vidya-bhushan-rawat-in-conversation-with-dr-r-m-pal/?fbclid=IwAR1eD1T1_qndgbt7JtrwkkRaDMgwsZf01w01eZWnEpy9vbp2O4Q32B3xPo)





## Suman Oak Passes Away...

Prabhakar Nanawaty

At the ripe age of 90 years Suman Oak, a staunch rationalist, radical humanist, and a very humane, liberal and dependable person for all rationalists and humanists breathed her last on 25 Oct 2019 peacefully on her bed. It was a very long association with her which will be felt in due course of time by all of us who knew her close quarterly. It was her serene and unassuming personality which made everyone of us to communicate with and listen to her attentively. Her soft spoken language was a musical to ears and tonic to our brains.

Like all her rationalist friends and followers, she used to say that rationalists do not swear by any set of principles or tenets like other systems of philosophy and therefore do not degenerate into any dogma or religion. It is a mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of 'reason' and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience independent of arbitrary assumptions or authority. She had a very long association with Indian Rationalist movement which reached its climax in 70s with full activities, vigour and enthusiasm. She knew many of the stalwarts of that era like Justice RA Jahagirdar, Justice VM Tarkunde, GG Parikh, Indumati Parikh, MK Samant, SN Ray, Narayan Desai, ..... to name a few.

While I was going through the folder in which her writings were saved on my hard disc, I could remember very hearty and lengthy discussions about the issues on which she was writing. She never had any inhibitions about the topics she had chosen to write and express her frank and clear opinions so that readers were guided to follow a correct path. The topic may vary from small note on ANiS to any controversial topic like perils and disasters of Nuclear Reactors in India or Trans-

sexualism. She had a very balanced view on the issue of active participation of women in the organizations and movements. According to her assessment she vehemently opposed to the remarks that there is gender bias in the male dominated structure. But she agreed to that women still being comparatively less educated, not much appreciated when they leave home for long and their own priorities, i.e. placing home and family above everything else. The attention of women is not seen by the rationalists as one of biological inferiority. Their alleged "helplessness" is seen as resulting from larger problems pervading this society which are transmitted through tradition, culture and religion in particular even among the desirous female activists. In her writings (and even in the translations too!) she never judged others with yardstick of "I am right and others are wrong". Besides she was never afraid of self-criticism. She wrote an article in the *International e-journal of Rationalism* with statement that can be read as a reflexive self-criticism that addresses this point:

"The community action groups do not have conceptual clarity regarding faith and mythology. They criticize the culture, religion and mythology of the indigenous people. Instead they should analyze facts and appreciate literary and moral values present in them. .. The enthusiastic workers engaged in this activity and mostly from the highly educated middle class. They cannot declass themselves and their lifestyle conflicts with the lifestyles of people among whom they work. They do not understand that people can think in ways other than their own."

She was an educationist by profession and wrote books and booklets on the education system prevailing in India and particularly education in so called progressive Maharashtra. She proposed a very good, practical and convincing solutions to the woes of primary education. She had a very

good writing flair both in English and Marathi. She wrote a few books for National Book Trust. If she could have opted, she could have made a distinctive career in the literature field. But she chose a trodden path of rationalism. In fact she liked her writings and enjoyed the work to full extent.

Mere glance at the articles she wrote for various English progressive magazines will indicate the vast number of subjects she covered during her lifetime. For example, some of the titles she covered were: *Television and our Value system, Religious Minds and Human Sufferings, Karma Theory, Fatalism, Science and Superstition, Spiritual Industry, Social Basis of Rationalism, Rites, Rituals and Festivals, Socialization of Science* etc. These articles gave a lot of insight about the subject. None of them were academic or run-of-the-mill type. Readers of the article were enlightened and enjoyed the intellectual discussions after reading her articles.

She wrote a very comprehensive book on Hindu 'Rites, Rituals and Festivals' in which she traces the origin of these traditions, the myths about these events, their methodologies in earlier times, and corrupted version at present and usefulness and follies. She also drew biographical sketches of eminent personalities like VM Tarkunde, RA Jahagirdar, B. Premanand, etc. Her article on 'Sainthood' of Mother Teresa forced readers to relook into the whole process of Sainthood in general and mother Teresa in particular. Her long association as co-editor of Thought & Action, an English e-quarterly of ANIS was quite memorable.

She had a very good command over both Marathi and English languages and she could easily communicate with readers using proper diction, syntax and peculiarities of both the languages. If one reads her translated articles without knowing the other language, he/she will feel as though the article was written in that language only. This really helped while translating

the writings of Dr Narendra Dabholkar. In fact most of the articles translated by Suman Oak were delivered speeches of Dr. Dabholkar. But Suman Oak molded these Marathi speeches into English articles in such a fashion that no one could suspect that their original can be traced somewhere else. The essence (and beauty too!) of the Marathi language appearing in Dr Dabholkar's speech came out very fluently in English language too. She could narrate various aspects of rationalism, superstitions, faith, scientific outlook, phony godmen, spiritualism, astrology, Vaastushastra etc in English language as described by Dr Dabholkar in his Marathi speeches. Someone like Suman Oak's potential was really required to propagate the thought and ideas of Dr Dabholkar to English speaking readers.

She also translated books like *Charvak's Philosophy* (written by Sadashiv Athavale), *Superstition: A Rational Discourse* (written by Yadneshwar Nigale), *Manav Vijay* (written by Dr. Sharad Bedekar), *Our Companion Philosopher Guide: The Buddha* (written by Narayan Desai) etc to cite a few. She took pain in translating Sanskrit verses appearing in Charvak's Philosophy to support the logic. She was very particular while translating the text quite objectively without any additions/deletions of her own. She generally adhered to the timings stipulated by authors/publishers and went out of her way to deliver the written material in neat handwritten/typed format. Her efforts in translating English text into Marathi of *Disenchanted India* (ethnographic Ph D thesis by Johannes Quack), *Science and Religion* (Edited by Paul Kurtz) and Website material of *antisuperstition.org* were quite laudable and appealing to Marathi readers.

'A Case for Reason', a gigantic three part volume written by Dr. Narendra Dabholkar in Marathi and translated by Suman Oak was posthumously published by Amazon. This can be termed as her pioneering work in English translation. She took painstaking efforts to

complete the translation during her frail health conditions. She could capture essence of various aspects of anti superstition movement, its philosophy, rational and human aspects as envisaged by the original author. The movement of eradication of superstition has many aspects and many dimensions. No other movement as multidimensional and multifaceted as the movement of 'Eradication of Superstition' exists in Maharashtra or even anywhere else in the country. One of the obstacles that the students and workers of this movement have to face is the absence of a logical and properly organized exposition on it. This translated book by Suman Oak in English attempts to remove that obstacle. Suman Oak highlighted the orderly exposition of this subject in detail and that too quite convincingly.

She wrote a very touching obituary of Capt Laxmi, (of Azad Hind Sena of Subhashchandra Bose) who donated her body to a teaching hospital without performing any prevailing religious rituals. In this context Suman Oak was not praising Capt Laxmi for her exceptional courage shown on the battleground but for her courage to donate the body. In fact Suman Oak's this article reflects her mind on subjects like traditions, rituals after death etc with references Indian mythological and epic stories.

At the end she too willed to donate her body to the hospital. Accordingly her son Arvind Oak and her family donated the body to AFMC Pune. Thus she lived and died as a staunch rationalist to the word and spirit.

We all miss her!! 

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## Faith in Freedom of Expression

Reviewed by **Dipavali Sen**

***On LEADERS and ICONS from JINNAH to MODI*** by Kuldeep Nayar, Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2019; hardbound, pp 184; Rs 499

At the Indian Renaissance Institute we all miss Kuldeep Nayar (1923-2018). But this book brings him back once more. He speaks to us again.

As Mark Tully has mentioned in the Foreword, he stood among the very tallest of Indian journalists. In this hardbound but slim volume we have his candid observations on leading figures of India over the decades, leaders who have grown into icons. Kuldeep Nayar was not an abrasive or aggressive journalist but had a remarkable ability to get along with people and thereby cull frank admissions by them. Tully rightly draws attention to his admiration for the leaders of the Independence movement and his passionate belief in secularism as the principle which should guide Indian democracy. He also points out the sadness with which Kuldeep Nayar ended this book and his life.

Kuldeep Nayar's prose is so simple that his astute observations do not wound or hit. It is a marvel in itself. No point wishing we could all write like

that! The opening article (Mahatma Gandhi) says: "I rushed to Birla House where the security was rudimentary..."

The Mahatma's body, swathed in white khadi, was lying on a raised wooden platform. I walked on the path which the Mahatma had traversed from his room only a few years earlier to the venue of prayer. The grass had been trampled upon and a few drops of blood glistened in the receding light.

I have often gone back to the same hallowed place. It makes you feel terribly emotional .....".(p22)

He describes the 'Frontier Gandhi' as "looking disillusioned and helpless" and clearly says: "We did not help him. So it was a double betrayal" (p 30)

I certainly did not know what Kuldeep Nayar reveals about Jinnah. He had wished to retain links with India. Prime Minister Nehru had asked him about what should be done with his

impressive properties in Aurangzeb Road, Delhi, and Malabar Hills, Bombay, Jinnah had answered that he proposed living in India for periods of time every year! (p40)

Kuldip Nayar is bold enough to write: “Nehru’s weakness was his daughter, Indira Gandhi...This was thinking on the lines of Mughal kings...” (p 52). But he ends his chapter with “For me, he represented all that India was after Independence” (p 56).

Kuldip Nayar, ‘lumbo’ to the next Prime Minister, expresses his admiration for Lal Bahadur Shastri’s austere living and recalls how, with their car stopping at a railway crossing, he had delighted in having roadside sugar cane juice.

Kuldip Nayar does not mince words as he describes how Indira Gandhi had in course of time become more and more “dictatorial and paranoid” (p 74). But he also tells us that when he had met her he had found her to be an informal person and even struck up a friendship with her. So much so, that when she had her hair cut short, she asked him how she looked. “I told her, ‘Indira, you were beautiful before and now you look even more beautiful.’” (p 70)

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Kuldip Nayar says, “was brilliant and he wanted people to recognize that” (p 92). He notes with disappointment that upon Bhutto’s hanging, there were demonstrations in Delhi but the Pakistanis “were afraid to protest in public” (p 95). He describes Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as “a fatherly figure, not given to drinking or womanizing” (p 102). He tells us how he had “struck up an easy personal relationship” with Sheikh Abdullah (p 108). To Jaiprakash Narayan, he gives the title of “the outstanding hero who won us the second freedom in 1977 (p 115). He records how, till the end, ‘JP’ believed in thinking out a new economic policy to suit India’s genius (pp 12 6-7)

He refers to the “huge reservoir of goodwill for India” that existed with B.P. Koirala and his Nepalese Congress Party colleagues (p 131). He frankly says that Ratan Tata “is not a patch on


JRD” (p 135).

When it comes to Khushwant Singh, Kuldip Nayar says he is “forlorn” at his passing away (p 144). Talking of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he reveals how it was he who, at a civic reception in Lahore in 1999, made Vajpayee drop a prepared speech in English for one in his own words, drawn both from Urdu and Hindi. The speech is remembered even today and had been made at Kuldip Nayar’s suggestion (p 164).

He talks of Manmohan Singh with understanding, though, of course, he describes him as Sonia Gandhi’s “stalking horse” (p 172). He boldly points out how the present government has made fun of him and draws attention to Manmohan Singh’s essential honesty and humility (p 173).

In the piece on Narendra Modi (written before his second term), Kuldip Nayar writes that he finds the minorities feeling insecure and warns against concentration of power (p 177-9).

The front cover has photographs of Nehru, Gandhi and Bhutto, but what is Meenak Kumari doing there in the sets of *Pakeezah*? She figures in the book – along with Noor Jehan – because she too is an icon, an influence on the public mind. The great poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, with his Leftist ideology and mostly non-Muslim friends, is the other icon Nayar mentions from the world of art and literature. ‘The Nayar Family’ provides an Epilogue that intimately describes his study and routine, with Wednesday being his ‘deadline day’. His last month, we learn, was spent almost fulltime on this book, meant especially for his three small great grand-children.

The next-to-next-to-next generation certainly needs to be told about the leaders and icons from the Mahatma to Faiz, Jinnah to Noor Jehan. But those who, like me, are getting their memories dim with time, would also feel refreshed and restored upon reading this book. They would rediscover a faith that Kuldip Nayar always stood for – a faith in freedom of expression but without any violence. 

## Selections from The Radical Humanist' hits 155 not out

**Readership of 'Selections from The Radical Humanist', Volumes I & II at academia.edu hits 155 (60 Indian & 95 foreign) cities across the world and still going strong.**

**The two volumes are also available at: [www.lohiatoday.com](http://www.lohiatoday.com)**

Sr. No. City & Country	Sr. No. City & Country	Sr. No. City & Country
1 Abu Dhabi (UAE)	53 France	104 Milan, Italy
2 Accra, Ghana	54 Ghaziabad, India	105 Mirpur Khas, Pakistan
3 Ahmedabad, India	55 Goharganj, India	106 Morristown, NJ, the US
4 Aligarh, India	56 Gorontalo, Indonesia	107 Mountain View CA US
5 Allahabad, India	57 Göteborg, Sweden	108 Mumbai, India
6 Amherst, MA, the US	58 Guararema, Brazil	109 Muzaffarpur, India
7 Amsterdam, The Netherlands	59 Guatemala, Guatemala City	110 New Delhi, India
8 Arizona State University	60 Guntur, India	111 New York, the US
9 Auckland, New Zealand	61 Gurdaspur, India	112 Nigeria
10 Aurora, IL, the US	62 Gurgaon, India	113 Noida, India
11 Balurghat, India	63 Guwahati, India	114 Novi, MI the US
12 Bangalore, India	64 Hama Bouziane, Algeria	115 Olney, MD, the US
13 Bangladesh	65 Helsinki, Finland	116 Padaebom, Germany
14 Barnala, India	66 Howrah, India	117 Pattambi, India
15 Bellville, South Africa	67 Hyderabad, India	118 Pérama, Greece
16 Bénin, Nigeria	68 Indore, India	119 Perambalur, India
17 Benoni, South Africa	69 Irvington, NJ, the US	120 Phoenix, Mauritius
18 Beograd, Serbia	70 Islamabad Pakistan	121 Poona, India
20 Berhampore, India	71 Izmir, Turkey	122 Port Moresby Papua New Guinea
21 Bhandara, India	72 Jaipur, India	123 Pretoria, South Africa
22 Bhilai, India	73 Jakarta, Indonesia	124 Princeton, NJ, the US
23 Bhimavadiaram, India	74 Jalpaiguri, India	125 Pune, India
24 Bhopal, India	75 Jammu, India	126 Ridge Spring, SC, the US
25 Bhubaneswar, India	76 Jhelum, Pakistan	127 Rohtak, India
26 Bilaspur, India	77 Jodhpur, India	128 Rome, Italy
27 Boston, MA, the US	78 Johannesburg South Africa	129 Saint-cloud, France
28 Brighton, The United Kingdom	79 Jorhat, India	130 San Antonio, TX, The US
29 Bronx, NY, the US	80 Kanpur, India	131 San Salvador, El Salvador
30 Brooklyn, NY, the US	81 Karachi, Pakistan	132 San José, Costa Rica
31 Budva, Montenegro	82 Karaikudi, India	133 Sao Jose Do Rio Preto, Brazil
32 Buffalo, NY, the US	83 Katsina, Nigeria	134 Seattle, WA US
33 CA US	84 Kenya	135 Secunderabad, India
34 Cairo, Egypt	85 Kigoma, the UR of Tanzania	136 Sirajganj, Bangladesh
35 Cameroon	86 Kolkata, India	137 Sonapat, India
36 Cape Town, South Africa	87 Kota, India	138 Springfield, MO, the US
37 Chandigarh, India	88 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	139 Streatham, The UK
38 Chennai, India	89 Krugersdorp, South Africa	140 Stockholm, Sweden
39 Cheyenne, WY, USA	90 Lagos, Nigeria	141 Surat, India
40 Chirala, India	91 Lahore, Pakistan	142 Suva, Fiji
41 Chittagong, Bangladesh	92 Lepe, Brazil	143 Sydney, Australia
42 Coimbatore, India	93 Lima, Peru	144 Tenkasi, India
43 Cote D'Ivoire	94 Loganville, GA, the US	145 Thrissur, India
44 Dehradun, India	95 Lonavala, India	146 Toledo, OH US
45 Des Moines, IA, the US	96 London, UK	147 Trivendrum, India
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48 Dubai, the UAE	99 Malabar Hill, India	150 Walworth, NY, the US
49 Enfield the U.K.	100 Mandi, India	151 Wellington, New Zealand
50 Europe	101 Medan, Indonesia	152 West Bengal, India
51 Faridabad, India	102 Melbourne, Australia	153 Wilmington, DE, the US
52 Footscray, Australia	103 Middletown, OH US	154 Wynberg, South Africa
		155 Zambia



## **As Ladakh Separates from J&K, Protests Break Out in Kargil**

*October 31 was the third day of strikes in  
the region located close to the Line of Control*



**A procession of protesters in Ladakh on October 31**