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# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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## **Editorial :**

# **Yet Another Politically Motivated Communal Riot**

**Mahi Pal Singh**

North-East Delhi once again witnessed a politically motivated and abetted communal riot from 23rd February to the night of 25th February 2020, exactly the kind of communal anti-Sikh riots that shook Delhi in 1984, which was also politically motivated and abetted, in which more than 3000 Sikhs were brutally killed and their homes burnt. The latter was abetted by the Congress leadership and some of its prominent leaders were actively involved in it while the former has been abetted by leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party as were the Gujarat riots of 2002. In all the three riots people of the minority communities were targeted and the police were either silent spectators or were complicit in the crime. The size of the affected area or the number of the victims of the current Delhi riots differs, but the ferocity and brutality of the crime and the complicity of the police and political leadership do not. It is a fact, whether we accept it or not, that the people by themselves are not communal minded and want to live in peace with people belonging to other communities but the leaders of various political parties spread hatred and promote communal enmity for their narrow political ends.

In the recent Delhi riots more than 50 people have died, about 500 got injured and hundreds of houses and shops were gutted, most of them in Shiv Vihar and Chand Bagh, both predominantly inhabited by Muslims. The number of the dead would have been in hundreds if the people of these areas had not fled to safer places when they saw the rioters approaching in large numbers.

A video telecast by BBC News on NDTV channel on 3rd March 2020 showed how brutally some communal rogues in uniform beat

up Faizan, who later succumbed to the grievous injuries inflicted on his body, along with some other youths,. They behaved like fully trained Hindutva fanatics, exactly in the manner the PAC personnel did in Hashimpura and Maliyana in U.P. long ago when they picked up only Muslims, loaded them in trucks and threw their bodies in a canal after shooting them dead, knowing full well that nobody in the government will even try to enquire into their role, let alone charging them with the brutal attack on the youth and murder of young Faizan. That is why they were seen aiding and abetting some rioting crowds to attack some other people. Some of them were even spotted throwing stones along with the rioters. The Home Minister, Mr. Amit Shah, defended the police for this incident while speaking in the Lok Sabha saying that they were doing so to control the rioters on the other side. However, we do not know how he would defend the policemen breaking CCTV cameras fixed on an electric pole with their lathis and those policemen who were sitting idly in large numbers barely 200 metres away from a spot where arson and killings were taking place. Police inaction and complicity is also evident from the fact that almost all of the 3500 SOS calls made by people in distress remained unattended by the police. Will the Home Minister, Mr. Amit Shah, ever order an inquiry against the rogue policemen and take action against those who acted illegally? – Never, because how can he take action against the same police personnel whom he praised in the Lok Sabha.

It is surprising that the Home Minister defended the police supposedly for controlling the riots within 36 hours whereas many former

IPS officers and a former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Mr. Najeeb Jung along with almost all the media have criticised the police for its complete inaction for two days during which worst of riots were taking place, large scale burning of houses, shops and even of mosques and killing of people were taking place. He did not tell the house why he did not give orders to the police to control the riots within an hour or two or call in the army to do so. The police has been criticised for its complete inaction for two days because, obviously, its highest officers were not giving necessary orders to it because they knew the mood and intentions of their political masters very well and they did not want to annoy them. After all, the police commissioner who was to retire within a couple of days would be looking to get an appointment to a plum post after retirement more than his responsibility to stop the communally motivated riots, motivated by the leaders of the ruling BJP itself.

The BJP leaders like Parvesh Varma, Member of Parliament from West Delhi, Anurag Thakur, a minister in the Modi government etc. had been making communally charged hate speeches and raising slogans that had the potential of giving rise to violence against Muslims.

They had been spewing venom against those protesting against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), particularly the predominantly Muslim women-led protest at Shaheen Bagh in which women have been braving the extreme cold of winter and continuing their protest most peacefully for three months for which the whole country is saluting them, and the protest marches of the students of Jamia Millia Islamia University, the BJP leaders giving the slogan of 'desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maro saalon ko' during the Delhi Legislative Assembly election campaign – hinting thereby that those protesting against the CAA, particularly Muslims, are 'gaddars' and need to be shot dead. And the

call had immediate effect. Bullets were fired at the site where Jamia Millia Islamia University students were protesting by supporters of the BJP. After all their leaders had given them the call to do so. The leaders knew full well that their party and government would not act against them for giving that call. It is clear from the mid-night order of transfer of Justice Murlidhar of Delhi High Court within hours of his asking the Delhi police why they had not filed FIRs against the leaders who had made hate speeches, and whose transfer had no doubt been recommended on 12th February, 2020 by the collegium, and he was due to be transferred to the Punjab and Chandigarh High Court on 7th March 2020, This was an act of moral support by the BJP government to these leaders, and Kapil Mishra, a defeated BJP candidate of the Delhi Assembly election, whose hate speech in the presence of a Deputy Commissioner of Police who remained a mute spectator, became the immediate cause of igniting the communal riots. When Justice Murlidhar had asked the government advocate why FIRs had not been registered against political leaders for hate speeches, Tushar Mehta, the Solicitor General, had replied in the Delhi High Court that atmosphere was not 'conducive' for registering FIRs against them. That reflected the government's stand on the issue. Nobody knows whether he meant that the atmosphere would not be 'conducive' for that so long as the BJP government is there to provide support to them. That is the reason why no FIRs have still been registered against these and other hate-mongers. And perhaps that is the reason why the Prime Minister has not expressed any sorrow or regret on the riots till date and the Home Minister found time to do so for the first time only after about a fortnight, while addressing the Lok Sabha. Perhaps all the hate speeches leading to the riots is a well thought out strategy to silence and crush dissent and opposition to the CAA, NPR and NRC in

which along with people of other communities and students a large number of Muslims are also taking part throughout the country. The exercise of CAA and NPR, intended to lead to the NRC, is so dear to the BJP government that it is bent upon crushing all opposition to them and at all costs instead of honouring the opinion of such a large number of its citizens because its ultimate aim is the promotion of the Hindutva ideology by segregating as many Muslims as possible whether foreign, foreign of Indian origin or Indian.

The Delhi riots and the partition role of the Delhi police have figured in the media all over the world and brought a bad name not only to the police, the political leadership of the country and the country as a whole. The thekedaras of Indian cultural pride did not feel ashamed when their leaders and political followers indulged in the gruesome burning and killing; nor worry about the country's falling prestige in the international arena. The Home Minister on whose orders the Delhi police acts, or decides not to act, did not take responsibility for the Delhi riots. He even had the temerity to defend the Delhi police while almost everybody, except the BJP leadership and its supporters, has criticised it for its inaction and partition role.

The only saving grace during and after the riots has been that some good people gave shelter to the possible victims within their homes and saved their lives and even fed them for quite a few days irrespective of their religious identity though their homes from where they had fled to save their lives were burnt down to ashes and their belongings either looted or burnt by the rioters. Such acts of human kindness based on humanistic considerations are what keep the hope alive even in the face of extreme hatred and brutality shown by some misguided and fanatic elements. However, efficient police action and effective justice administration system is necessary to restore the confidence and sense of safety in the minds of the victims who have lost their near and dear ones and also their homes and means of livelihood. As in all other cases of grave human right violation by government agencies, the role of the higher judiciary will be crucial in cases related to the Delhi riots also. As that has also not come up to the expectations of the people in the recent past, its role in future in the ongoing cases will also be watched very minutely by human rights activists and legal and constitutional experts. 

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# On the birth anniversary of M.N. Roy: MN Roy: An Unmatched Political Philosopher

*A revolutionary at the age of 14, Roy travelled the path of Marxism and finally reached a destination called 'new humanism'. His birth anniversary falls on March 21.*

**Anurag Bharadwaj**

The Manbendra Nath Roy or MN Roy we know of, was born on the campus of Stanford University in the United States at the age of 29. Until then, he was Narendranath Bhattacharya, who had left India to travel across the world, participating in movements.

When he left India in search of arms to fight the British, it is said, he assumed a new name to dodge the police and CID in India. Reminiscing in his memoir, Roy says that the day after he landed in the US, newspapers carried headlines such as "Mysterious Alien Reaches America: Famous Brahmin Revolutionary or Dangerous German Spy?"

Roy is counted among the foremost 20th century philosophers. He advocated a political renaissance to rejuvenate the country with morality and physical realism—his term for materialism. He was the father of neo-humanism, with his contribution to Indian politics and development of communist thought considered formidable.

He occupied leading positions in modern India's great movements of nationalism, communism and 'new humanism'. Though among his Indian contemporaries, he was often regarded a failure, as his views did not find support within nationalist schools. To understand Roy in brief, one has to divide his life into three parts.

## **Roy, the Internationalist**

Noted writer P Rajeswar Rao notes in his book, *The Great Patriots of India*, that Roy did not feel much of a sense of debt to his birthplace and cut off links with his family early on.

As destiny would have it, after he landed in

America, he was arrested in connection to the Indo-German Conspiracy. He jumped parole and escaped to Mexico where he became non-official advisor to Mexican revolutionary, President Jose Carranza. In turn, Carranza helped him in carrying out his political activities. Roy was instrumental in founding the first communist party outside the Soviet Union, in Mexico.

While in Mexico, he wrote about world peace being more conditional upon the liberation of the colonies than upon the overthrow of capitalism. His political work in Mexico made Lenin interested in him as a symbol of a future 'revolution in the East' and he was invited to Russia. Roy, yet, was to advocate that nationalism is mere emotional upsurge and has no political or cultural basis.

Roy did not concur with Hitler's 'socialism' either. He was among the few who declared that the treaty of non-aggression between Germany and Russia in the Second World War would be broken soon. He had also predicted the possibilities of the Cold War. Thus, to many, Roy was the first international political leader, before Jawaharlal Nehru. His associate, GD Parikh, had expressed the view that Roy was the first Indian thinker to appreciate the significance of the major breach in the citadel of imperialism by the forces generated by the second World War.

## **Roy as an Indian Freedom Fighter**

Roy's role in India's struggle unearths astonishing similarities and stark differences between him and Gandhi. Gandhism arose in India almost at the same time as Marxism

entered the political sphere and modern Indian political thought has been largely influenced by the interaction of these two ideas.

However, the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, never advocated a casteless society. Though Gandhi spoke of abolishing untouchability, he did not openly disown the caste system.

Roy's radical humanism was neither of nation, nor of class or even caste. He advocated that though the Industrial Revolution changed Europe altogether, but in India, the craft industry was replaced by machines, only for the interests of British society. According to him, the machine age in Europe forced the hunt for raw materials which created colonies, including India. Roy believed that due to this, the development of an urban proletarian society was delayed in India; or, there was no reason why the country would remain untouched by the Industrial Revolution.

Roy's views on the role of bourgeoisie in colonial countries are to be found in the supplementary thesis on the national and colonial question which he prepared for the Colonial Commission of the Second Congress of the Communist International. Even Lenin submitted his theses on the same topic.

Roy differed with Lenin on the particular social force in the colonial countries that should be assisted by the communists. Roy proposed assistance to proletarian parties of the colonies and through them to the revolutionary movement in general. Whereas Lenin's ideas meant that the Communist International should support parties such as the Indian National Congress, Roy's views could have meant supporting other parties to further the cause of liberation.

Roy felt that the possibilities of a revolution for independence in India are very slim. According to him, the British government was aware of the anger spreading among the people, and before it turned into a revolution, it would make concessions to bourgeois society. Echoing Roy's view, socialist Ram Manohar Lohia once

said that India's freedom movement was fought and won by the proletariats and its fruits were enjoyed by the bourgeoisie.

British writer and intellectual Phillip Spratt, who had spent considerable time in India, believed that "Lenin wanted to destroy the bourgeois world... [while] Roy... maintained that Indian bourgeois would not revolt but would gradually acquire *de facto* power."

When Roy returned to India in 1930, he was arrested by the British on charges of conspiracy. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison, which was later reduced to six years. It's interesting to know that the great scientist Albert Einstein appealed to the British government for his release as he was highly impressed by Roy's article, *Philosophy of Modern Science*.

After his release, Roy and his wife Ellen joined INC. He became a Gandhian, but not for long. This sudden change of thought in his ideas was due to Gandhi's role in controlling massacres. Spratt writes, "Roy was deeply moved...henceforth a new respect for Gandhi showed in his writings". Though he was an admirer of Gandhi's personal qualities and leadership abilities, yet he did not believe in Gandhism.

According to him, Gandhi's ideas represented an attempt to re-establish the old spiritualism in India. He opined that Gandhi's doctrines got coinage due to persistent cultural backwardness in India. Roy also believed that Gandhi's leadership inadvertently played the role of cooling the fires of a rational revolution amongst the masses. He felt that Gandhi's Quit India Movement against the British would amount to favouring Hitler and that if the latter won the ongoing war, colonies like India would drift further from freedom.

In 1939, Roy launched Radical Democratic Party and in its parliamentary session held in 1946, a 22-point agenda was adopted that served as the basis for his 'radical humanism' ideas, which occupied the later part of his life.

A lesser-known fact is that he played a pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution. Socialist Acharya Narendra Dev was of the view that Roy prepared the Karachi Proposal Draft that is the basis of the Directive Principles of the State Policy, but Nehru did not accept this.

In his book, Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation, the American historian Granville Austin credits Roy with introducing the idea of socialism in the Indian Constitution.

### **Roy as Humanist**

According to experts, when he became disillusioned with Marxism, Roy started leaning towards liberalism. Largely, it was after the Second World War. He delved into “neo-humanism” from here on, launching in 1948, the Radical Humanist Movement in India and writing

several books on it. Neo-humanism believed in endless possibilities of freedom and, like Gandhi, Roy emphasised the importance of means to achieve this goal. To him, freedom of man lies in the expansion of knowledge as well as aspirations.

Roy held the view that each ideology is based on already-available knowledge that is bound to a pre-determined goal and urged people to develop a scientific temperament and rationality. In his discourse on material philosophy, he surmised that nothing is permanent, sacrosanct or eternal, and that man, to change the world, must change himself in the process.

**The author is a freelance journalist. The views are personal.**

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# Delhi Violence: Of ‘Terrorists’, ‘Traitors’ and Totalitarianism

Ali Khan Mahmudabad

The BJP should not seek to hide its divisive politics behind the tragic death of Hindus in the recent violence in Delhi. But then again, its entire ideological foundation rests on two pillars: victimhood and revenge. The ideological progenitors of the BJP, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS (*Râshtriya Swâyamsevak Sangh*), premised their politics on portraying Hindus as the victims of centuries-old machinations by ‘outsiders’, and most notably by Muslims.

A cursory analysis and history of the genesis of Hindutva-right wing Hindu nationalism demonstrates the manner in which fear and anxiety have been systematically deployed to propel a politics that thrives on hate.

- **A cursory analysis of the genesis of Hindutva-right wing Hindu nationalism shows the way in which fear and anxiety have been systematically deployed.**
- **The old allegation of ‘treason’ has been echoed in recent months by various members of the BJP.**
- **Members of civil society have echoed the BJP’s fear-mongering, with the editor of *Swarajya* claiming, in a tweet that was later deleted, that Hindus are in a ‘civilisational war’.**
- **In the aftermath of the Delhi violence, there has been an effort by both the media and BJP to portray the violence as one between equal sides.**

## Dog-Whistle Politics & the Age-Old Allegation of ‘Treason’

VD Savarkar was the intellectual forefather of Hindu Nationalism, and his portrait today

hangs in the Indian Parliament. He became notorious, as Vinayak Chaturvedi argues, for his open call to “Hinduize Politics and Militarize Hindudom”, and “for his anti-Muslim and anti-Christian politics, and for his advocacy of violence in everyday life.” MS Golwalkar (1906-1973), the second *sarsanghchalak* or head of the RSS, an organisation that continues to provide ideological direction to the BJP and claims Prime Minister Modi as a lifelong member, wrote about Indian Christians and Muslims that “they are born in this land, no doubt. But are they true to its salt? ... No.”

He goes on to say: “They have also developed a feeling of identification with the enemies of this land. They look to some foreign lands as their holy places. They call themselves Sheikhs or Syeds... So we can see that it is not merely a case of change of faith, but a change even in national identity. What else is it if not treason, to join the camp of the enemy leaving behind the mother nation in the lurch?”

*It is exactly this old allegation of ‘treason’ that has been echoed in recent months by various members of the BJP.*

The slogan that came to define the BJP’s campaign in Delhi was ‘*desh ke ghaddaron ko, goli maaro saalon ko*’ or ‘Shoot the bastards who are traitors to their country.’ This slogan was used in public rallies by BJP MPs, ministers, and of course, online by the BJP’s IT cell. The dog-whistle politics are clear, and although no one overtly says that Muslims are the ‘traitors’, the implication is clear. In the aftermath of the protests against the citizenship law, there has been a concerted effort by senior members of the BJP to portray the protesters as ‘anti-nationals’, ‘traitors’, and most recently, as ‘*jihadis*’.

### **Fanning the Flames**

The prime minister claimed that he could recognise these protesters from their ‘clothes’, a reference no doubt to the veils and skullcaps worn by Muslims. The chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, spoke about how those protesting should be ready to take bullets, and certain members of parliament and other office bearers lamented about how it would have been better if Muslims had left India for Pakistan in 1947. Indeed, members of civil society have echoed the BJP’s fear-mongering, with the editor of right wing news portal *Swarajya* claiming, in a tweet that was later deleted, that Hindus are in a ‘civilisational war’. Similarly, Narsinghanand Saraswati, a Hindu priest from Dasna in Western Uttar Pradesh said on the evening of the violence: “If we don’t remove an evil like Islam from society, how will we survive?”

In an earlier statement he also said: “when your religion needs, you should fight a war. And to pick up arms for religion is not a *paap* (sin) but *punya* (virtue).”

*There have been some provocative Muslim voices too, but the fact remains that it would be naïve to ignore the asymmetry in power between those who preach hate from positions of power and those who do so as ostensible opponents of the BJP.*

Of course, the politics of both simply reinforce each other.

### **Building an Atmosphere of Hate & Distrust**

Given the atmosphere of hate and distrust that the BJP has deliberately created over the last few months in particular, and over the last few years in general, it is not surprising therefore that the recent violence in Delhi followed a provocative speech by Kapil Mishra, a member of the BJP, on the eve of President Trump’s visit to India. Having lost his own election, Mishra threatened that he would have a protest near Jaffarabad Metro Station cleared

if the police did not do so.

Previously, in December 2019, Mishra had used the slogan “*desh ke ghaddaron ko, goli maro saalon ko*” at various pro-citizenship law rallies, and in January, he was banned from campaigning by the Election Commission for provocative statements, including a tweet in which he wrote: “Pakistan has entered Shaheen Bagh. Mini Pakistans are being created in the city. The law of the land is not being followed in Shaheen Bagh, Chand Bagh and Indralok. Pakistani rioters are occupying Delhi roads.”

*The equivalence he draws between Indian Muslims protesting for their rights and Pakistanis is, as was seen above, not something new to the BJP.*

Importantly, in the aftermath of the recent violence and ironically at a ‘peace march’, it was again this slogan that was raised at a so-called peace rally Kapil Mishra attended in Delhi. The hashtag that accompanied the gathering was #DelhiAgainstJehadiViolence. Narasinghanand Saraswati, the aforementioned priest, praised Kapil Mishra for standing up against ‘jihadis’ in Delhi.

### **Delhi Riots: Not An ‘Equal’ Show of Strength**

In the aftermath of the violence, there has been a concerted effort by both the media and the BJP to portray the violence as one between equal sides. However, the fact remains that it was not an equal show of strength.

Notwithstanding the admirable and indeed, heroic stories that have emerged of how local Hindus, Sikhs and Dalits have resisted the State’s onslaught and protected their Muslim neighbours, it appears that the events of last week were meant to terrorise a section of the population. The complicity of the Police was perhaps best illustrated by the callous way in which they made demands that young Muslims sing the national anthem while at the same time abusing and beating them. One of the young men subsequently died.

## Communal Polarisation: Towards An Increasingly Shrill Rhetoric

As a number of states go to polls in the coming year, what is increasingly clear is that the BJP will up the ante as far as communal polarisation is concerned. The violence in Delhi was a signal to the AAP party, winners of the Delhi election, and indeed to all the Opposition that the BJP thinks they still control the street because they think they control the State's institutions.

*As their rhetoric becomes more shrill and the campaigning becomes more vicious and venomous, it will be more important than ever to remember that the violence was a means to an end, that is, political goals.*

More importantly, the mask that the BJP has used to hide its totalitarian political ideology from the world must be ripped off, and their long and consistent genealogy of violence and hate must be exposed. Until this is done, the cycle of violence will simply continue.

*(Ali Khan Mahmudabad is an Indian historian, political scientist, poet, writer, and assistant professor in the dual fields of history and political science at Ashoka University. He tweets @Mahmudabad. This is an opinion piece and the views expressed above are the author's own. The Quint neither endorses nor is responsible for the same.)*

Courtesy The Quint, 6 March 2020. 

## An Appeal For Donations

### For Republishing books written by M.N. Roy & other Humanist Literature

Indian Renaissance Institute has embarked upon republishing/reprinting the large amount of books & other material written by M.N. Roy as most of them have gone out of print, though requests for these books continue to pour in into our office. Connected humanist literature will also be published. Following books, at the first instance, require immediate publication:

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# Ground Report: Delhi Police Actions Caused Death Of Man In Infamous National Anthem Video

**The sequence of events that led to Faizan's death suggests some members of the Delhi Police actively participated in the communal riots.**

**Anumeha Yadav**



*Faizan, who was a tailor, had recently started a poultry business.*

**NEW DELHI** — Faizan, the 23-year-old Muslim man who was filmed as he was brutally assaulted by policemen who forced him to sing the national anthem between beatings, died after the Delhi Police illegally detained him for over 36 hours and denied him urgent medical attention, *HuffPost India* can establish.

Since news of Faizan's death was made public on February 28, the Delhi Police has sought to deflect responsibility by claiming they never took Faizan into custody.

*HuffPost India* spoke to policemen, eyewitnesses, doctors, legal volunteers and Faizan's family members who contradicted the police account, and established that Faizan's untimely and violent demise was a direct consequence of police actions over a three-day period from February 24, when Faizan was first assaulted, to February 26, when he finally succumbed to his many injuries at 11 pm.

“For two days, he clamoured for aid locked

up inside and they did not let him go,” said Faizan's sister Sonam who, like her brother, goes by one name.

“His body had turned blue all over when they released him,” Kismatun, Faizan's 61-year-old mother, said. “He had stitches on his ear and on his head. The policemen had hit him, putting a baton inside his throat. He was in so much pain that he could not even gulp liquids such as water or milk when we got back home.”

Another young man, assaulted and humiliated by the police in the same incident that claimed Faizan's life, has similar injuries but is terrified of seeking medical attention as he fears the police's reprisal. *HuffPost India* is withholding his name to protect him.

The Delhi Police's actions during last week's communal riots, which have claimed at least 42 lives in the national capital, have come under increasing scrutiny. Much of the criticism thus

far has focused on the police's seeming inability to stop the violence. Videos of policemen assaulting civilians have been explained away as an attempt to bring the violence under control.

Now, the following sequence of events leading to Faizan's death suggests some members of the Delhi Police actively participated in the communal riots, and bear direct responsibility for at least some of the deaths and violence that unfolded between February 23 and February 27 2020. The Delhi Police reports to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah from the Hindu-rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP's Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, and Delhi elections candidate Kapil Mishra have been accused of giving inflammatory speeches shortly before the riots, in a petition before India's Supreme Court. Opposition parties have demanded Shah's resignation in light of the Delhi Police's actions during the riots.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North East Delhi) Ved Prakash Surya did not respond to this reporter's phone calls and SMS requests to comment on *HuffPost India*'s findings. DCP Surya also did not respond to questions of whether the police would formally enquire into the circumstances around Faizan's death.

**He was in so much pain that he could not even gulp liquids such as water or milk when we got back home - Kismatun, Faizan's 61-year-old mother Assaulted, forced to sing national anthem**

On February 24, a sit-in protest against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act in Kardampuri, a neighbourhood in northeast Delhi, had completed its 45th day when residents say they were showered with rocks from across the road.

The stone-pelting in Kardampuri was part of a wave of riots sweeping across this part of the city. As the mostly Muslim residents occupying the road looked up, they say they

saw policemen standing with a group of men who were flinging the rocks.

Faizan's mother Kismatun, who was part of the sit-in protest, told *HuffPost India* that her son had reached the protest site to look for her.

At about 4 pm, said the unnamed young man cited above, men in police uniforms began violently beating him and other men, including Faizan, outside the Kardampuri mohalla clinic.

"A policeman speaking in a thick Haryanvi accent, who was not wearing a badge, forced us to sing the national anthem if we wanted Azaadi," he said.

Azaadi, or freedom, has become a rallying cry for many protests against the CAA.

"One of the injured men could not sing it properly," said this young man who was an eyewitness and a victim of the violence. *HuffPost India* is withholding his identity to protect him from further police reprisals. "The policemen started getting angrier and started screaming and shouting, saying that if we do not even know the national anthem, what 'Azaadi' do we dare for?"

All this while, one of the policemen standing atop them made multiple video clips, he added.

One of these videos quickly went viral. The authenticity of the video has been confirmed by fact-checking site *Alt News* by comparing it with a second video of the same incident shot from a different angle.

"The policemen put a lathi in the mouth of one of those injured, choking him. They thrashed me till I was barely conscious and then dragged me on the road towards a Gypsy," the victim said. "The skin on my left temple and eye got scraped off from the friction on the road, as they dragged us for a few metres. They were treating us as if we were beasts, not human."

*HuffPost India* can confirm that this eyewitness and victim is currently bed-ridden and still bears visible injuries of his violent assault.



***The first eyewitness, who was beaten up along with Faizan, is currently bedridden: Anumeha Yadav***

After they were assaulted in the street, the men — including Faizan, and the eyewitness who spoke to *HuffPost India* — were driven in a police Gypsy to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital. A preliminary medical examination was conducted, and Faizan received stitches to his head.

*HuffPost India* has not been able to access a copy of Faizan's medico-legal certificate prepared by GTB hospital, but has ascertained the certificate's number, D-23-113844272, from Narendra Rana, Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Delhi Police, deputed at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital. Faizan's family told *HuffPost India* that the hospital was yet to give them a copy of the certificate. A medico-legal certificate, or MLC, is a legal document issued in cases where injured patients are brought to hospitals.

Once Faizan and the other men received very basic first aid, the eyewitness said, they were driven to the Jyoti Nagar police station and placed in the station's lock up.

On the morning of the next day, February 25, Faizan and the eyewitness were kept in the same cell. The two men did not know each other from before, the eyewitness said.

*HuffPost India* spoke to a second eyewitness who said he was in the same cell in the

Jyoti Nagar Police Station as Faizan and the first eye-witness.

"Both of them could not even walk as they had injuries all over, I had to help both of them go to the toilet on February 25," this second eyewitness said. "Inside the lock-up, Faizan tried to drink water but he kept vomiting. He got more and more uneasy through the afternoon."

This second eyewitness said he was not in the "national anthem video", but he was also assaulted by the Delhi police on February 24.

"When the stone-pelting and tear



gas shelling started on February 24 afternoon, I hid in a public toilet to save myself," the second eye-witness said. "A few policemen saw me come out of the toilet and started thrashing me on the road. I was not in the national anthem video. The police put me in a bus and brought me to Jyoti Nagar where I was locked up. The next morning, Faizan and the other man were shifted into the same cell as me."

*HuffPost India* is withholding the name of this second eyewitness as well to protect him from police reprisals.

# In photos: CAA supporters attack Muslims at Delhi protest, hurl stones and petrol bombs

*The Delhi Police tried to quell the protests, but one policeman and a civilian died during the violence.*

Clashes erupted in Northeast Delhi between supporters and opponents of the Citizenship Amendment Act on Monday. The Delhi Police tried to quell the protests, but one policeman and a civilian died during the violence. Another police official was injured.

Pictures showed supporters of the Act jumping police barricades, pelting stones, throwing petrol bombs, attacking a Muslim man and damaging tents set up the anti-Citizenship Act demonstrators.



A man supporting the Citizenship Amendment Act throws a stone at those opposing the law, in New Delhi on Monday. (Photo credit: Danish Siddiqui/Reuters)



People supporting the Citizenship Amendment Act beat a Muslim man during a clash with those opposing the law, in New Delhi on Monday. (Photo credit: Danish Siddiqui/Reuters).



People supporting the Citizenship Amendment destroy the protest site used by those opposing it, in New Delhi on Monday. (Photo credit: Danish Siddiqui/Reuters)



A woman opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act is helped by a policeman after she was beaten by people supporting it, in New Delhi on Monday. (Photo credit: Danish Siddiqui/Reuters)

Courtesy Scroll.in, 25 February, 2020. 

# Tribute to the Shaheen Bagh women protestors

*These women have become a symbol for resistance and women's empowerment for the entire country*

**Nandita Haksar**

This year International Women's Day will be 25 years since the Beijing Platform for Action which aimed at removing the systemic barriers that hold women back from equal participation in all areas of life, whether in public or in private.

Women have made marginal progress but their struggles for equality have intensified. This year's theme is generation equality: and in India no other protest exemplifies this than the sit in by Shaheen Bagh women. They have become a symbol for resistance and women's empowerment for the entire country.

Shaheen Bagh, one of the poorest parts of Delhi, home to daily wage workers and their families is the site of protest against the idea of citizenship based on religion – and in the forefront of this battle are the women; especially the Muslim women who have never before stepped out on the streets to assert their rights.

Shaheen Bagh is a densely populated neighbourhood the southernmost colony of the Okhla (Jamia Nagar) area, situated along the banks of the Yamuna. The people live under harsh conditions without electricity and no portable water.

Yet these men and women live in poverty and deprivation without protesting in the hope that one day their children will be able to study at the nearby Jamia Millia Islamia University. It is a focus of their dreams and hopes.

On December 11, 2019 the police indulged in barbaric acts of vandalism and beat up students at Jamia Millia Islamia who were opposing the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

A few days later, on December 14 some

women started a peaceful sit-in against the assault on the Jamia Millia University, the amendment to the citizenship act but also on the rising costs of commodities, increasing unemployment and poverty, and for women's safety. Most of Shaheen Bagh is a web of lanes but there is a major highway running past which the women blocked.

Soon the women were joined by other women, many young women who came with their children, older women and some who were past their eighties. As the protest grew it inspired the middle class people living in the surrounding areas and then people from all over Delhi and even further.

Eight busloads of farmers came carrying food for the protestors of Shaheen Bagh; students from other universities, teachers, artists who drew murals and singers who sang revolutionary songs, Sikhs who sang their religious songs and a librarian who helped with a library for the protestors. The librarian said the most sought after book was the Constitution of India.

Portraits of Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh, Tagore are hung up and the speakers on the dais include men and women from across ideological spectrum with slogans calling for 'Inquilab zindabad'. The protest is well organised but it has no leaders; perhaps that is one reason the police and the government have not been able to break it up.

Among the protestors was a young 24-year-old mother, Nazia who had fought with her family and insisted on walking two kilometers with her children to join the protestors. Nazia even got the other women to join and her husband, Arif supported her by dropping the

women to the site of the protest.

Nazia had two small children, a little girl and a four month baby boy, Mohammad Jahaan. He soon became a favourite among the protesting women who painted the tri colour flag on his little cheeks. The baby had a woolen cap with “I love India” embroidered on it.

The bitter cold took its toll and on January 30 little Mohammad Jahaan died in his sleep because of the bitter cold. His father said it was the Government’s decision to amend the citizenship act that had killed his son.

Nazia was not deterred. She continues to sit in protest against the Act which she and lakhs of Indians, Muslim, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus see as an attack on the dream of Indian secularism.

The BJP members felt threatened and intimidated by the protest and began attacking the protestors with words which hurt more than bullets. The words, allegations, false accusations and defamation reflected the hatred, prejudice and above all ignorance about the history of Muslims in India.

Most of the remarks show how the BJP conflates Muslims with terrorists; terrorists with Kashmir and Kashmir with Pakistan. Thus anyone protesting against the BJP or its Hindutva ideology is dubbed pro-Pakistan, pro-terrorist and anti national.

BJP MP, Parvesh Verma, on January 28 drew a parallel between Kashmiri militants and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protesters at Shaheen Bagh. He made Shaheen Bagh the centre of his poll campaign, Verma warned his audience that the protesters will “enter your house... abduct your sisters and mothers, rape them, kill them the way militants had treated Kashmiri Pandits”.

Another BJP leader, Kapil Mishra, called Shaheen Bagh a “mini-Pakistan”.

In his first public meeting on the eve of Delhi Legislative elections, on February 3, 2020 the Prime Minister said that Shaheen Bagh protest

was not just a protest against a law. Modi said the protest was a part of a political design to break the unity of India. The response of Shaheen Bagh protestors was to invite the Prime Minister to meet them and have a cup of tea. They even had a huge red teddy bear with “Modi tum kab aage” on it. The Prime Minister did not respond to the invitation for chai and charcha.

The BJP and its supporters have used every trick in their bag to malign and defame the protestors at Shaheen Bagh including circulation of fake videos, defamation, vilification and when they lost the Delhi election Delhi witnessed violence targeting Muslims – murder, destruction of property reminiscent of the Partition of India.

The women of Shaheen Bagh continue their protest despite the threats, intimidation and the violence.

What gives these women their inspiration, their strength and their determination? In nearly every interview the women, whether it is the grandmothers or the young mothers like Nazia they say the reason they are protesting is because they are fighting for the future of their children.

They do not want their children to be declared “doubtful citizens” because they do not have some document or other; they do not want their children to become stateless or their families torn apart with parents in detention centres like those in Assam.

These women are fighting for their right to be recognised as citizens of India; with the right to equality, liberty and dignity. They are fighting for the future of their children; but also for a secular, inclusive India where every community feels they belong equally to India.

The protest at Shaheen Bagh is an assertion of citizenship; when the Government does not listen to its citizens then it is the duty of citizens to protest and make their voices heard.

(To be Contd....on Page - 21)

# ‘Anti-Muslim Prejudice is in Modi’s DNA’: Karan Thapar Interviews Tavleen Singh

Karan Thapar

In an interview, the author of ‘Messiah Modi?’ speaks of how her disappointment in Modi turned to disillusionment and how India is “on the verge of becoming an illiberal democracy”.



In an outspoken and critical interview which will upset the BJP government and enrage its supporters, Tavleen Singh has repeatedly compared the Narendra Modi government, its legislation and its attitude to Muslims to Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s. She calls the Citizenship Amendment Act “India’s first Nuremberg law”. She repeatedly speaks of Modi’s attitude and treatment of Muslims alongside Hitler’s treatment of Jews. She says just as Hitler’s Nuremberg laws singled out Jews and treated them differently to other Germans so, too, does the Citizenship Amendment Act single out Muslims and treat them differently to other Indians.

In a 42-minute interview to Karan Thapar for *The Wire* on her recently published book *Messiah Modi?*, Singh says that she has known for a long time that anti-Muslim prejudice is part of the DNA of the RSS, whom she calls the “alma mater” of Narendra Modi. She now fears that anti-Muslim prejudice is also part of Narendra Modi’s DNA. She says there were hints of this when he was chief minister of Gujarat and refused to wear a skull cap or compared the

killings of Muslims in 2002 to a puppy being run over by a car. Those hints have become hard to refute when you look at his treatment of Muslims, particularly in Kashmir and through the CAA, in his second term.

She concludes the interview by saying that India is “on the verge of becoming an illiberal democracy” and although you can trace the process back to earlier governments it has sharply accelerated in the last six years under Narendra Modi. The change that she hoped for under Modi when he was elected in 2014 is not the change that India has experienced.

Singh says her attitude to Narendra Modi, which was one of admiration and support in 2013-14, became one of disappointment when he announced demonetisation in November 2016. She said this showed his “megalomania”. Worse, it was grounded in his “ignorance”. She says demonetisation was done simply to prove that he could do it without any consideration of its economic consequences and without consulting experts who could have differently advised him. The fact that even the cabinet was not informed

was, she says, another illustration of how he was using power like a “megalomaniac”.

However her disappointment in Modi turned to disillusionment with the lynching of Pehlu Khan in April 2017. She said this was “barbarism”. The worst part, she said, was the absolute unbroken silence from the Prime Minister. This suggested that he didn’t want to offend his supporters by criticising what they had done. So rather than speak up and say the right and proper thing, which is what would have been expected from the Prime Minister, he chose to keep silent and not annoy his supporters. Tavleen Singh also said that this reflected the DNA of the RSS who are “his alma mater”. She fears that Modi has absorbed the RSS’s dislike of Muslims. She fears it’s in his “DNA”.

On one occasion when she met the prime minister and asked why he was not speaking up, he told her that if he did he would have to do so on every occasion. She agreed that this meant he was failing to show moral leadership particularly when India needed it. She said this was because “he did not want to”.

She said there were two further developments that converted her initial disappointment with Modi into disillusionment. The first was the suit he wore in January 2015 with his name woven into the cloth. Till then she believed he had a spiritual dimension and was free of acquisitiveness and attachment to possessions. The suit showed that he was vain and even hypocritical.

The second was the appointment of Adityanath as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. The UP CM is unabashedly anti-Muslim and this appointment suggested that either this was not a problem for Modi or even that he agreed with such thinking.

However, it was two political events in the last six months of 2019 which tipped her disappointment into full-fledged disillusionment with Modi. The first was the way Article 370 was abrogated. While she agreed with the need to do so, Singh said Modi should have consulted

the Kashmiris. More importantly, he should have taken advice from experts who know the complexity of Kashmir. Instead, he had, like demonetisation “once again, acted in ignorance”.

As a result he had made the Kashmiri people raise questions about their attachment and commitment to India, he had given a fillip to Imran Khan and Pakistan’s anti-India propaganda and badly lowered India’s international image. She also felt that the use of Article 370 “as a test of patriotism” in the Maharashtra and Haryana elections was a big mistake. It also added to the targeting of Kashmiris by the rest of the country.

However, it was the Citizenship Amendment Act which completely shook Tavleen Singh’s faith in Modi. She called it “India’s first Nuremberg law”. She repeatedly spoke of Modi’s treatment of Indian Muslims alongside Hitler’s treatment of German Jews in the 1930s. She writes in her book “since the beginning of Modi’s second term it can no longer be said that Muslims have the same rights as other citizens”. In the interview she said that she feared Modi was now exhibiting his antipathy and dislike of Muslims whereas earlier he had been able to cover it up.

Finally, Tavleen Singh firmly and passionately denied that her disappointment and disillusionment with Modi was motivated by his treatment of her son Aatish and the fact he has been stripped of his overseas citizenship. She said all of that happened three-four months ago whereas her book has taken a lot longer to write. She also says that her columns in the *Indian Express* have shown (over the last three years) how her opinion of Modi has steadily changed. She said that whilst it was not true that she has turned against Modi because of his treatment of Aatish, it is, at least, partly true to say that Aatish has suffered mistreatment at the hands of the government because of her increasing criticism of the government.

The above is a paraphrased précis of Tavleen Singh’s interview to *The Wire*.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 17 February, 2020. 

# JNU stir: Why ‘anti-nationalism’ is an empty abuse that has no place in a free society

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar

Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. The current rant against ‘anti-national’ slogans at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) highlights the abundance of scoundrels among Indian politicians and television anchors. The notion that there can be only one concept of what constitutes a nation, and that every other view is anti-national, is intellectually empty at best and authoritarian at worst.

Agitating students of JNU have called Maqbool Bhat and Afzal Guru (Kashmiris executed for murder) martyrs, and attacked the notion that India’s judicial system delivers justice. Some demand Kashmiri self-determination. Some even call for the break-up of India.

## Gun vs Slogan

So what? You may disagree with these student slogans. But since when have students been a politically correct crowd mouthing patriotic hosannas? In all free societies, students have espoused all sorts of extreme positions, and must be free to do so. That is why they are called free societies.

Un-free societies are different. Communist China cracked down on Tiananmen Square and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt cracked down on Tahrir Square. But American students were at the very forefront of opposition to the Vietnam War. They rejected the government’s notion of patriotism.

Their right to dissent was not questioned even by those who condemned their views.

Oxford University is very establishment. But in 1933, the Oxford Union held a famous debate on the motion, ‘This house will in no circumstances fight for its King and country.’ The Union voted for the motion by 275 votes to 153. This ‘Oxford Pledge’ was later adopted by students at the universities of Manchester and Glasgow. This sent shock waves through

Britain. The students were denounced as morons, cowards, anti-nationals and communist sympathizers.

But none dreamed of arresting the students for sedition. That puts in perspective the authoritarian interpretation of sedition by the NDA government. Worse is the ranting of media stars who ask in outrage how any student dares call for the break-up of India. They seem singularly ignorant of what a free society means.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) seeks to break away from Britain and form a separate Scottish nation. Are SNP leaders jailed for sedition? No. They have an honourable place in society, have been granted one referendum, and may soon get another.

Welsh nationalists also seek a separate Welsh country. Nobody dreams of jailing them.

In Canada, the Parti Québécois has long demanded independence for Quebec province, and this is treated not as sedition but a legitimate democratic demand. In Spain, the state of Catalonia has long had powerful secessionist parties, which in the 2015 state election won 47.8 per cent of the vote. The Spanish government strongly opposes Catalan independence, but doesn’t jail dissenters. France does not jail Corsican secessionists. The list goes on and on. Free societies do not jail non-violent secessionists.

India does. And that raises the question whether India wants to be a free society. And if not, why not.

Spain tolerates non-violent Catalans, but cracks down on terrorists using guns to create an independent Basque territory in the north. Britain cracked down on the Irish Republican Army (IRA), even as it gave legitimacy to the

SNP. Free societies come down hard on those using or inciting violence, but bestow legitimacy on people advocating revolutionary change — even secession — through peaceful means.

#### **Son of a Gun**

They can hang a Maqbool Bhat for murder, but should not jail a JNU student leader for mere sloganeering.

India's sedition law has been misused grossly for jailing a Tamil folk singer, sundry cartoonists, demonstrators against the Kudankulam power station, and even some people who simply 'liked' a Facebook post.

To me, these are all anti-national acts for which those in power should be held accountable. I reject the anti-national definition of the government.

In 1971, millions of Bangladeshis fled to India after a Pakistani Army crackdown. The Press Information Bureau (PIB) organised a trip for journalists to the refugee camps in West Bengal. I went for The Times. The PIB complained to my editor that I had asked "anti-national questions".

I asked my editor what an anti-national question was. He had no idea. The PIB staff

had urged us to ask questions like "Is the Pakistan Army bad?" and "Are you happy to get refuge in India?" I went much further. I asked whether the influx of refugees had caused job tensions with local people. Whether it had caused any Hindu-Muslim tension. And whether the refugees might abandon the camps and inundate Kolkata.

These questions, apparently, marked me as a traitor. The Times, sadly, played safe by not publishing my report. Then, two months later, the government organised a War Correspondents course for journalists, since a war with Pakistan was clearly coming. The Times nominated me for the course. The government rejected me, saying I was too anti-national to be trusted.

Ever since, I have seethed with rage at politicians, officials and media stars who define what patriotism is and condemn all others as anti-national. I know fully what is and what isn't a free society. Patriotism is not merely the last refuge, but the first refuge of many scoundrels.

Courtesy **The Economic Times**, February 17, 2016. 

### **Tribute to the Shaheen Bagh ...**

Under the Indian Constitution it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals; to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom; to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood among all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional and sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

The protestors of Shaheen Bagh are exemplary citizens of India – and on this International Women's Day we should honour the women who have braved the cold, the hatred and vilification with so much love and courage. As in the past women protestors are not fighting for their rights only, they are fighting for a better world; a future for their children, their grandchildren.

The Shaheen Bagh women may not realise this but they are a part of a long and glorious history of women coming out on the streets to protest; whether it was the textile women workers in the USA fighting for better working conditions or the Russian women who fought for the right to vote – it is always the poorest, the disenfranchised and the oppressed women who have come out on the streets and fought for their rights and their right has always included the right to live in a better, a more just world.

Courtesy **The Navhind Times**, 8 March, 2020. 

### **Contd. from page 17 ...**

# Supreme Court Judge D.Y. Chandrachud Warns Against “Labelling Dissent As Anti-National”

**Justice Chandrachud said protecting dissent is but a reminder that a democratically elected government can never claim a “monopoly over the values and identities” that defines the country’s plural society.**

**Justice Chandrachud said Destruction of spaces for questioning destroys all growth.**

Reported by **A Vaidyanathan**,

Edited by **Vaibhav Tiwari**

February 15, 2020.

**New Delhi:**

Supreme Court judge Justice DY Chandrachud on Saturday described dissent as democracy’s “safety valve”, and said branding those who dissent as anti-national or anti-democratic “strikes at the heart of our commitment to protect constitutional values”.

“Employment of state machinery to curb dissent instills fear and creates a chilling atmosphere on free peace which violates the rule of law and distracts from the constitutional vision of pluralist society,” he said, addressing a gathering in Gujarat on the topic ‘The Hues That Make India From Plurality to Pluralism’, news agency PTI reported.

Justice Chandrachud’s remarks come amid protests at several parts of the country against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

“The destruction of spaces for questioning and dissent destroys the basis of all growth—political, economic, cultural and social. In this sense, dissent is a safety valve of democracy,” he said.

“The blanket labelling of dissent as anti-national or anti-democratic strikes at the heart of our commitment to protect constitutional values and the promotion of deliberative democracy,” he added.

Justice Chandrachud said protecting dissent is but a reminder that a democratically elected

government can never claim a “monopoly over the values and identities” that defines the country’s plural society.

He said attacks on dissent are strikes at the heart of dialogue-based society and that it is the duty of the state to protect freedom of speech and expression.

“The attack on dissent strikes at the heart of a dialogue-based democratic society and hence, a state is required to ensure that it deploys its machinery to protect the freedom of speech and expression within the bounds of law, and dismantle any attempt to instill fear or curb free speech,” he said.

Several people were killed last year in Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka after the anti-CAA protests had turned violent.

The government says the law makes it easier for persecuted non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to get Indian citizenship. Critics, however, say the law discriminates against Muslims.

On Saturday, the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court, which was hearing a plea by a Maharashtra man who wanted to protest against CAA, said people protesting against a law peacefully cannot be termed “traitors” or “anti-nationals”.

With inputs from **PTI** 

# NRC is a ‘necessary exercise’, Modi government tells SC, after months of playing it down

**In December, after protests erupted on the citizenship law, Modi had claimed that his government had never discussed any plans to conduct the NRC.**

**Scroll Staff**

The Modi government on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, said the National Register of Citizens is a “necessary exercise” for any sovereign country and it would have to carry it out as per the dictates of Indian law. The government made the submissions in an affidavit to the Supreme Court as its response to a batch of petitions challenging the Citizenship Amendment Act.

The government’s legal response comes after a series of flip-flops on the NRC, an exercise to create a list of Indian citizens and hence identify what Indian law called “illegal migrants”. After a year of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party making the NRC the plank of many election campaigns, Prime Minister Modi had in December claimed that his government was not thinking about the exercise and had, in fact, never spoken about it.

However, Modi’s statement contradicted the Bharatiya Janata Party’s 2019 manifesto that contained a promise to carry out the exercise. The President’s address to Parliament in the same year also included a promise to conduct an NRC. The President’s address is authored by the Cabinet.

In December, the government also approved a budget of Rs 3,900 crore for the creation of the National Population Register, a

door-to-door survey that is the first step of the NRC, as laid down in law. The exercise is scheduled to begin in April.

As part of its submission to the Supreme Court, the Modi government has now argued that the NRC is needed to identify illegal migrants. “It is submitted that the preparation of a national register of citizens is a necessary exercise for any sovereign country for mere identification of citizens from non-citizens,” it argued. “It is therefore, the responsibility entrusted on the Central Government, on a combined reading of the Foreigners Act, The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the 1955 Act to identify/detect illegal migrants and thereafter, follow the due process of law.”

The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act in December sparked off widespread protests across India that are still going on. The law puts in a religious filter for Indian citizenship, allowing non-Muslim illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan a chance to become Indians. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has at multiple times linked the CAA and the NRC, arguing that the CAA’s religious filter would mean only Muslims would have to undergo the NRC screening test.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 20 March 2020. 

*Nominating Judges onto Rajya Sabha or on other lucrative government positions immediately after retirement and inducting retiring army officers into central cabinet is clear and deliberate act of subverting and subjugating these institutions. There should be some law to put a stop to such practices that allure persons in Judiciary and army to compromise their independence and thus weaken democracy.*

**- Ramesh Awasthi**

# ‘Narcissist’, ‘A Hint of Megalomania’: What Observers Have Said About Narendra Modi

**Arun Shourie, Ramachandra Guha and Tavleen Singh have made some interesting remarks about the prime minister in recent years.**

**New Delhi:** In the last six years that Narendra Modi has been in power, a handful of India’s finest political commentators and close BJP watchers have tried decoding the man that the world is watching, using strands from his speeches, his silences and his mannerisms. They have endeavoured to find out what his vision, or lack of it, holds for the future of the country and the 125 crore people he often refers to in his public addresses.

How different is he as a prime minister when one places him alongside the other man to occupy the chair from the Bharatiya Janata Party, Atal Bihari Vajpayee?

In conversations with *The Wire* between July 2018 and February, 2020, three of India’s top political commentators – Arun Shourie, Ramachandra Guha and Tavleen Singh – have engaged in detail with Modi’s persona, personal and political.

Speaking at *The Wire Dialogue* in New Delhi in July 2018, Guha had called Modi “a study in self-love”.

“To get to the top of any profession, you have to have some strong self-belief. But what is extraordinary is...referring to himself in third person, the suit which had his full name, Narendra Damodar Modi, so I think it is all of this (self-love) that makes him. There was Lord Ram and there is Narendra Modi.”

He pointed to a crucial difference between Modi and Vajpayee, stating, “...Vajpayee ran a more collegial cabinet, consulted his colleagues, he had to do, partly also because he was in a coalition. But I think the real difference between Narendra Modi and any other prime minister

that we have had, ever, is that for successes, real or imagined, he is not willing to share the credit with anyone else. Not even with Lord Rama.”

In September 2018, a few weeks after Vajpayee died, Arun Shourie, taking part in the second *The Wire Dialogue*, commented, “Everything (for the Modi government) is an event, and the vulgarity of it – that you will compare a mere tax reform (GST) to Independence Day, to the independence of India. This is amazing. Even poor Atalji’s passing away had become yet another event for appropriation.”

Shourie, who worked closely with Vajpayee and was a minister in his government, added, “Everybody who worked with Atal ji will tell you that...just read what is being written about him (Vajpayee) in the last 10-15 days since he passed away and any of those ideals or any of those virtues he stood for or he personified can be detected in this (Modi) government.”

Shourie, in the conversation with Karan Thapar, saw Modi in terms of a ‘dark triad’, which he said was a combination of “insecurity”, Machiavellianism and ‘sociopathy’. Shourie said that insecurity is a personality trait he didn’t notice in Vajpayee, also describing Modi as a “Casanova” and a “narcissist who needs to keep looking at the pool to reassure himself that he is beautiful”.

Nearly a year and a half after Shourie’s analysis of Modi’s personality, *Indian Express* columnist Tavleen Singh, once an admirer of Modi, said he has “a hint of megalomania”.

**(To be Contd....on Page - 26)**

# What about Kashmiri Pundits? Three Decades of Exodus

**Ram Puniyani**

This January 2020, it is thirty years since the Kashmiri Pundits' exodus from the Kashmir valley took place. They had suffered grave injustices, violence and humiliation prior to the migration away from the place of their social and cultural roots in Kashmir Valley. The phenomenon of this exodus had been due to the communalization of militancy in Kashmir in the decade of 1980s. While no ruling Government has applied itself enough to 'solve' this uprooting of pundits from their roots, there are communal elements who have been aggressively using 'what about Kashmiri Pundits?', every time liberal, human rights defenders talk about the plight of Muslim minority in India. This minority is now facing an overall erosion of their citizenship rights.

Time and over again in the aftermath of communal violence in particular, the human rights groups have been trying to put forward the demands for justice and rehabilitation of the victim minority. Instead of being listened to those particularly from Hindu nationalist combine, as a matter of routine shout back, where were you when Kashmiri Pundits were driven away from the Valley? In a way the tragedy being heaped on one minority is being justified in the name of suffering of Pundits and in the process violence is being normalized. This sounds as if two wrongs make a right, as if the suffering Muslim minority or those who are trying to talk in defense of minority rights have been responsible for the pain of Kashmiri Pundits.

During these three, many political formations have come to power, including BJP, Congress, third front and what have you. To begin with when the exodus took place Kashmir was under President's rule and V. P. Singh Government was in power at the center. This Government

had the external support of BJP at that time. Later BJP led NDA came to power for close to six years from 1998, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Then from 2014 it is BJP, with Narendra Modi as PM, with BJP brute majority is in power. Other components of NDA are there to enjoy some spoils of power without any say in the policies being pursued by the Government. Modi is having absolute power with Amit Shah occasionally presenting Modi's viewpoints.

Those blurting, 'what about Kashmiri Pundits?' are using it as a mere rhetoric to hide their communal colour. The matters of Kashmir are very disturbing and cannot be attributed to be the making of Indian Muslims as it is being projected in an overt and subtle manner. Today, of course the steps taken by the Modi Government, that of abrogation of Article 370, abolition of clause 35 A, downgrading the status of Kashmir from a state to union territory have created a situation where the return of Kashmiri Pundits may have become more difficult, as the local atmosphere is more stifling and the leaders with democratic potential have been slapped with Public Safety Act, where they can be interned for long time without any answerability to the Courts. The internet had been suspended, communication being stifled in an atmosphere where democratic freedoms are curtailed which makes solution of any problem more difficult.

Kashmir has been a vexed issue where the suppression of the clause of autonomy, leading to alienation led to rise of militancy. This was duly supported by Pakistan. The entry of Al Qaeda elements, who having played their role against Russian army in 1980s entered into Kashmir and communalized the situation in Kashmir. The initial Kashmir militancy was on

the grounds of Kashmiryat. Kashmiryat is not Islam, it is synthesis of teachings of Buddha, values of Vedant and preaching's of Sufi Islam. The tormenting of Kashmiri Pundits begins with these elements entering Kashmir.

Also the pundits, who have been the integral part of Kashmir Valley, were urged upon by Goodwill mission to stay on, with local Muslims promising to counter the anti Pundit atmosphere. Jagmohan, the Governor, who later became a minister in NDA Government, instead of providing security to the Pundits thought, is fit to provide facilities for their mass migration. He could have intensified counter militancy and protected the vulnerable Pundit community. Why this was not done?

Today, 'What about Kashmiri Pundits?' needs to be given a serious thought away from the blame game or using it as a hammer to beat the 'Muslims of India' or human rights defenders? The previous NDA regime (2014) had thought of setting up enclosures of Pundits in the Valley. Is that a solution? Solution lies in giving justice to them. There is a need for judicial commission to identify the culprits and legal measures to reassure the Pundit community. Will they like to return if the high handed stifling atmosphere, with large number of military being

present in the area? The cultural and religious spaces of Pundits need to be revived and Kashmiryat has to be made the base of any reconciliation process.

Surely, the Al Qaeda type elements do not represent the alienation of local Kashmiris, who need to be drawn into the process of dialogue for a peaceful Kashmir, which is the best guarantee for progress in this ex-state, now a Union territory. Communal amity, the hallmark of Kashmir cannot be brought in by changing the demographic composition by settling outsiders in the Valley. A true introspection is needed for this troubled area. Democracy is the only path for solving the emigration of Pundits and also of large numbers of Muslims, who also had to leave the valley due to the intimidating militancy and presence of armed forces in large numbers. One recalls Times of India report of 5th February 1992 which states that militants killed 1585 people from January 1990 to October 1992 out of which 982 were Muslims and 218 Hindus.

We have been taking a path where democratic norms are being stifled, and the promises of autonomy which were part of treaty of accession being ignored. Can it solve the problem of Pundits? 

## ‘Narcissist’, ‘A Hint of Megalomania’... Contd. from page 24 ...

On February 17, in an exclusive interview to Karan Thapar for *The Wire*, the senior journalist who had recently published her book, *Messiah Modi? A Take of Great Expectations*, said what she fears is that Modi has absorbed the RSS's dislike of Muslims. She fears it's in his "DNA".

She said, "Megalomania is a dangerous quality in a man and I saw in it (the decision to go ahead with demonetisation), more than a hint of it."

On one occasion when she met Modi and asked why he was not speaking up, he told her that if he did he would have to do so on every occasion. She felt it meant he was failing to show moral leadership, particularly when India needed it. She said this was because "he did not want to".

Singh also referred to his personalised suit worn in 2015, saying that till then she believed he had a spiritual dimension and was free of acquisitiveness and attachment to possessions. The suit showed that he was vain and even hypocritical.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 18 February 2020. 

## **‘The Northeast’s fears of being swamped are genuine’: Nandita Haksar**



***Nandita Haksar: ‘We do not seem to realize that the cultural diversity of 220 communities in the Northeast is a resource for development’***

*A jumble of assertions has engulfed India over the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and plans for a National Register of Citizens (NRC). Similarly, the normally harmless exercise of updating the National Population Register (NPR) has now become controversial.*

*A majoritarian government with a brute majority in Parliament seems to have plunged the country into social turmoil of a kind not witnessed in the past six decades. Students are up in arms on the most docile of campuses and middle-class folk have been holding protests in the streets.*

*Civil Society spoke to Nandita Haksar on what to make of these developments. A civil rights lawyer, activist and a close observer of life and politics in the Northeast, Haksar’s is a clear and knowledgeable voice. Excerpts from a lengthy conversation at her home in Dona Paula in Goa where Haksar now lives with her husband, Sebastian M. Hongray, an author, human rights activist and a Naga.*

**As a human rights activist who has worked extensively in the Northeast on people’s rights, how do you see CAA-NRC-NPR?**

As a human rights lawyer I have one major

concern which goes beyond the current debates on the NRC in the Northeast or for the country as a whole.

The census has always been about collecting information for the purpose of

governance and control over population. The old census was a part of data collection; the new kind of census using new technologies (mainly based on artificial intelligence) leads to the creation of metadata. Edward Snowden has shown us how metadata is being used for worldwide surveillance. And he has also demonstrated how dangerous it is for citizens because there is no legal framework in place for the protection of individuals (or nations) who are victims of breach in data security.

Coming to the Northeast, we have seen how the collection of data for the NRC led to disenfranchisement of thousands of men, women and children and illegal detentions, families torn apart and people living with fear, insecurity and uncertainty.

There is no legal framework for redress of the grievances of the magnitude that we have seen with the NRC in Assam. There is no remedy for the 1.9 million people left out of the NRC in Assam except to approach lawyers individually and, till their turn comes, endure endless pain, insecurity and humiliation.

Courts are equipped to deal with individual violations of fundamental rights, not with violations on this massive scale.

As far as the Northeast is concerned, I have three or four things to say.

I first went to the Northeast in 1982. I remember the first petition filed by someone in Manipur against Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Half that petition was on the issue of Nepali migrants. It is true that India has a special agreement with regard to Nepali migrants but, from the perspective of Northeast tribal communities whether it is Nepali Hindu, Bangladeshi Hindu or Muslim or Chakma Buddhists, all these migrants threaten the fragile ecology and diversity of cultures in the Northeast.

In India many people in civil society have refused to acknowledge the problem as the tribal peoples of the Northeast see it. The

problem is simply this: many communities feel endangered by relentless migration from across the international border.

In 2011 my husband and I decided to drive across the Northeast for four months. We touched on all the borders. When we went to the Bangladesh border we could see people streaming in. While I feel deep empathy for migrants who are forced to leave their homes because of religious persecution, climate change, or economic deprivation, we also need to balance their interests with the interests of citizens. I see it as a conflict between human rights and humanitarian concerns.

However, the non-tribal communities living in the Northeast have other concerns. The Muslims living in the Northeast have faced discrimination and prejudice. They have also been targets of violence, the most well-known example is the Nellie massacre. But in Nagaland we saw how brutal and savage an attack on Muslims can be when Nagas lynched an alleged Bangladeshi and murdered him on suspicion of rape but did not so much as protest against a pastor from Kerala who had been involved in the rape and sexual assault of children under his care in Jaipur.

**And that is what the anger is about among the people of the Northeast?**

Yes. There is anger as well as insecurity. The tribal peoples of the Northeast, like the people in the rest of the country, have been very generous in welcoming refugees and migrants. For instance, in 1971, the erstwhile queen of Tripura opened her palace gates and welcomed Bangladeshi refugees, both Hindus and Muslims. As a result of that, the Tripuri became a minority. Tripura is an ancient kingdom with a long history.

Today, the queen's son, Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma, with great dignity, has asked the Supreme Court to implement an Assam-like NRC to stop illegal infiltration into the state. He wants to say that he belongs to a

kingdom which did welcome refugees but nobody wants to become a minority in their own home — culturally and politically. So I would like to stress that the arrival of migrants into the Northeast is a genuine problem. The people of the Northeast are voicing a genuine concern.

Against this background, the idea of extending the NRC to the rest of India or even the CAA and the NPR is disconcerting. The experience of the NRC, the building of detention centres and so many people incarcerated in the Northeast expose the fact that all these laws are not being made in the interest of the people, Northeast or otherwise, but for some other agenda.

The prime minister has said the people of the Northeast would be protected by Inner Line Permits and so on, but again the Inner Line Permit so far does not apply to states with a border with Bangladesh, that is, Tripura and Meghalaya.

So the Northeast leaders are asking either for National Registers as a way to document the illegal migrants or asking for Inner Line restrictions as a means to protect themselves from migrants and outsiders (which includes Indian citizens). But when they demand an NRC they seem to be in conflict with those who are protesting against an NRC on the ground that it is a tool for discrimination against Muslims. We have often seen bitter conflicts between tribal communities such as the Bodos and Muslims. And in the Northeast each community is backed by armed insurgents so the conflict becomes deadly.

For instance, in Manipur there are more than 20 armed groups representing Nagas, Kukis (mostly Christian), Meitei (representing Vaishnav and Sanamahi) and Meitei Muslim or Pangals (Muslims of Manipur).

#### **What do you do then?**

As members of civil society we can only try and understand the problem, disseminate

information and when necessary protest on the streets as so many people, mainly students, have done. Besides students, Muslim organizations such as the Popular Front of India have also mobilized Muslims to join the protests.

We need conversations on the nature of citizenship in an era of globalization. We also need a law for the protection of refugees taking asylum in our country, which is transparent and non-discriminatory. There is also need for a policy for the protection of migrants, both within the country and from outside.

None of these policies will work unless the government at the centre is committed to democratic values and promotion of human rights.

#### **Do you think this phase is damaging our prospects of building a modern state?**

I think part of the problem is global. We adopted the capitalist model of development, which creates wide gaps between the rich and poor, rural and urban. It leads to concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Some of the injustice and inequity of a capitalist model was mitigated by the idea of a welfare state. But there has been a roll-back of the welfare state and now development does not serve the interests of the people. The vulnerable sections of society like the communities of the Northeast suffer the most.

In this model it is still possible to see the Northeast's enormous cultural and ecological diversity as an economic resource but that has not happened. In these circumstances, identity movements are the response to the threat of extinguishment.

But even before the present crisis I don't think the Northeast was very much part of the Indian vision. Part of my work was to try and include the people and communities living in the Northeast in our vision of India.

**And to some extent we have succeeded, haven't we? After all, so many people from the Northeast now work all over India.**

I do not think it is a mark of success if young people, with little or no education, are forced to leave their homes in search of a job. Villages in the Northeast do not have young people and old people have no one to take care of them, to fetch water, chop wood or give comfort.

I documented the lives of some of these migrant workers in my book called *The Exodus is Not Over: Migrations from the Ruptured Homelands of Northeast India* (2016). One of the people I wrote about was a young woman, Atim, who worked as a waitress and after she read her own story she said: "I did not realize our lives are so sad."

But if there is any success it is that a generation of young people from all over the Northeast has got a good education and they have become teachers in our universities. They have voiced the concern of the Northeast people and they have become visible in the intellectual landscape of our country.

But these are also people who are the force behind the growth of regionalism which can be destructive of a pan-Indian nationalism.

**But if every state in the Northeast is going to ask for an NRC, aren't we going to witness turmoil? The NRC in Assam was a failure. It was a botched exercise.**

Not all people in the Northeast are asking for an NRC; the Muslims are demanding that it be scrapped. This has led to a potentially explosive situation.

We see today in the Northeast that the tribal communities and Hindus of the Northeast want the NRC while Muslims see it as a tool to disenfranchise them and are protesting against it.

The all-India protests against the plan to have an NRC have focused on one dimension: the discriminatory nature of implementation, the special protection for non-Muslim refugees and some people have said it is part of a plan to make India a homeland for Hindus much as Israel was conceptualized by Zionists as a

homeland for the Jewish people.

For those of us who visualize India as a homeland for all religions and communities, as a living example of unity in diversity, the idea of India as a homeland for one community is abhorrent.

But even for those committed to the idea of India as unity in diversity we have to find a way of making all communities feel at home; the people of the Northeast do not feel they belong fully. The diversity they represent is seen as an obstacle for development. We do not seem to recognize that the cultural diversity that 220 communities living in the Northeast have, could be a resource for development, not to be preserved but to be allowed to flourish.

We need to understand that this is cultural wealth and intellectual property, which needs to be developed. Then we will not look at the Northeast as a backward economic area but as a culturally rich resource, which is part of (India's) economic development.

This is something even the people of the Northeast don't realize. None of the movements, the Assam movement or the movements in Mizoram or Nagaland, has looked at culture as a resource.

**So you are saying that we may be missing an opportunity in not recognizing the value of culture in the Northeast and integrating it into development?**

Precisely. If the tribal communities of the Northeast had not felt alienated from the rest of the country, they might not today be asking for Inner Line protection, which was, in fact, a method the British colonial rulers used to isolate them.

But, currently, the slogan against "outsiders" is a rallying cry which helps mobilize people without any further thinking of solutions to the problem of development and a vision for the future.

The alienation leads to anger and the anger

is directed against migrants, the most vulnerable section of society.

The problem is made more complex by the fact that the Northeast region is the most politically sensitive part of the country with international borders with Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and just 22 km of land — the Siliguri Corridor or the Chicken's Neck — linking it to the rest of the country.

Added to this is that this is an ecologically fragile area where the impact of climate change is having very serious consequences for the people.

**How do you assure people their identity and their control over land will be retained without affecting migrants?**

I do not think the people in the Northeast have much control over their natural resources, their lands, forests, mineral wealth, rivers. The number of people displaced by development projects has increased. Walter Fernandes has documented the extension of displacement in the Northeast.

One of the first cases I took up was about

the negative impact of the cement factory set up by the Northeast Council in Utkhrul district of Manipur. Here the best paddy fields of the Tangkhul Nagas were affected and cultivators became landless and they joined the factory as workers just to have cash so they could afford to buy a pair of shoes.

The gap between the rich and poor is widening. The number of landless tribal people are being transformed into the migrant workers whom we see all over India. These people are the disenfranchised citizens of our country — they have voters' cards but cannot afford to go to their constituency on election day.

So, the youth find their culture and society being swamped by the outsider and they themselves are forced to live like outsiders in other parts of the country and abroad where they are often targets of prejudice.

I think the present Government of India has not only divided the country and polarized it along communal lines, it has made us less human.

Courtesy **Civil Society News, Panaji**,  
Jan. 27, 2020 

## **Reader's Comments :**

### **Travesty of truth**

In his reply to the President's address in the budget session, the Prime Minister stated that Nehru was responsible for the partition of the country to become the PM. By the time of partition Nehru had already been PM of the whole country during the interim govt. Actually he was the choice of Gandhiji to be the PM over Patel. Even though Patel was as great as Nehru, Gandhiji knew that Nehru was the darling of the people and he could carry all sections of the people with him, very necessary in the early days of attaining Independence. More than Nehru, it was Patel who was eager for the partition as he was particularly fed up with the Muslim League's stance. Liaquat Ali Khan, as the Finance Minister, Muslim League's member in the interim govt. had given much trouble to Patel, the then Home Minister. Moulana Azad's 'India Wins Freedom' gives an authentic version of events leading to the partition.

Actually it was Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, one of the founding ideological fathers of the present BJP who strongly mooted for a separate religion based Bengal, long before the Pakistan slogan was born.

**P.A.S. Prasad**, Visakhapatnam

**Press Release :**

## **Denying Interim Bail To Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha Is Alarming**



### ***Statement by MRSD on Supreme Court's rejection of pre-arrest bail plea of Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha in the Bhima Koregaon violence case***

Mumbai Rises to Save Democracy (MRSD) is deeply disappointed with the Supreme Court's rejection of the plea by Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha seeking anticipatory bail in the cases registered against them in relation to the violence at Bhima Koregaon on 1st January 2018. Their arrest is imminent in next three weeks. Nine other activists and intellectuals who have been accused in this case and charged with sections of the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) have been imprisoned since 2018.

The top court's order to deny interim bail is alarming given that the case against the activists is based on very thin evidence. Moreover, the cyber forensic analysis by credible investigative journalists and technical experts discredit the evidence used by Pune police to incriminate the

activists. The analysis reveals that the letters which were allegedly recovered from the hard disk of Rona Wilson, one of the nine activists accused in the case, and used by the police to link the accused to a banned political party are most likely to have been planted in the disk through use of malware which allowed remote access to Wilson's computer (<https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/bhima-koregaon-case-rona-wilson-hard-disk-malware-remote-access>). This clearly indicates manipulation of evidence and the fabricated nature of the case.

The government is sparing few chances for truth to emerge in this case. In January 2020, more than a year after the chargesheets were filed by the Pune police, the Union Home ministry got the case suddenly transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and

thus brought the case under its control at a time when the Home department in the newly formed Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra had announced a review of the case, setting up of a Special Investigating Team (SIT) and dropping of the false cases against the activists.

While full-blown attempts are being made by the government to incriminate the eleven intellectuals in a fabricated case, the investigation into the role of Hindutva brigade led by Milind Ekbote and Manohar Bhide in carrying out planned organised attacks on Dalits at Bhima Koregaon has come to a standstill. The state government's failure to set up a SIT shows that the real perpetrators of violence are being shielded from prosecution.

These developments in the case and now the rejection of pre-arrest bail to two of the stalwarts of the democratic rights movement in the country on the grounds of what is not just flimsy but manipulated evidence shows the desperation of the government to repress democratic voices and spread a sense of fear amongst those who oppose the anti-people policies and actions of the Hindutva Fascist regime. MRSD extends its solidarity to the eleven activists who have been relentless defenders of human rights and people's movements in this country and who now stand wrongly accused in this conspiracy case. We also reiterate our resolve to continue to struggle

for their release and for the pursuit of truth about the violence unleashed on the peaceful Dalit-Bahujan masses at Bhima Koregaon.

■ MRSD

Participating Organisations: People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR), National Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), Trade Union Centre of India (TUCI), Student Islamic Organisation (SIO), Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC) – IIT Mumbai, Co-ordination Of Science And Technology Institute's Student Association (COSTISA), LEAFLET, Police Reforms Watch, NCHRO, Bebaak Collective, Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW), LABIA- A Queer Feminist LBT Collective, Jagrut Kamgar Manch (JKM), Majlis, Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy (IMSD), Women against Sexual Violence and State repression (WSS), Bharat Bachao Andolan (BBA), Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), People's Commission for Shrinking Democratic Spaces (PCSDS), Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), Cause Lawyers Alliance, National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti, Kashtakari Sanghatna – Palghar, Sarvahara Jan Andolan – Raighad, Jagrut Kashtakari Sanghatana, students from various colleges in Mumbai including Homi Bhabha Research Centre, St.Xaviers and Tata Institute of Social Sciences. 

## Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to: [mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com](mailto:mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com), or [theradicalhumanist@gmail.com](mailto: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

## **Radical Reports :**

### **1. RATIONALIST HUMANIST CONFERENCES**



**Ravipudi Venkatadri felicitated at the Conference**

89th Annual Conference of Rationalist Association of India 21st Andhra Pradesh Rationalist Association and 29th Anniversary of Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu were held at Radical Humanist Bhavan, Inkollu during 8th to 10th February 2020.

During these Three days Rationalist Humanist study classes were conducted with the guidance of **Ravipudi Venkatadri**, Chariman, RAI. More than 100 delegates participated in the conferences.

**A.N. Karia**, Retired principal, Law College, Palanpur, Gujarat inaugurated the conference. **Kurra Hanumantha Rao** chaired the 1st day session

**Prasad Amore**, Director Soft Mind Institute, President, Trichur Dt. Rationalist spoke on “Neuro Science of Religions and Spiritual experiences”.

**Shaik Babu**, Treasurer, RAI Spoke on “Religions and their Fundamentalism.

**Sreenipathathanam**, Vice Chairman, RAI spoke on “The sacrifices of Humanism – Religion”.

**Dr. P. Raghavan** Retired Scientist, CSIR and President of Bharateeya Yuktivada Sangam, Kerala, Spoke on “Intentional Spreading of Pseudo Sciences in India”.

In the evening **Meduri Satyanarayana**, General Secretary, RAI, Chaired and spoke on “M.N. Roy – Rationalism & Humanism”.

**Kari Haribabu** General Secretary, Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, spoke on “Geomancy and Astrology”.

89th Annual conference of RAI elected a new Executive body.

On 9th February 2020 Kurra Hanumantha Rao Chaired the morning session.

**Meduri Satyanarayana** Spoke on “Nature of Universe – Humanism”.

**Dr. Gumma Veeranna**, President, AP Rationalist Association spoke on “Physical Realism – Humanism”.

Retired R.J.D Prof. **N.A. Hameed** spoke on “Roots of Terrorism in Islam”.

**K. Srinivasa Chary**, Vice President, Telangana Rationalist Association spoke on “Rationalist thought – Function of Brain”.

99th Birthaday of **Ravipudi Venkatadri**, Editor, Hetuvadi, monthly magazine celebrated in the conference Hall. Several prominent persons and Activists, of Rationalist Humanist movement felicitated Ravipudi and conveyed best wishes to him.

In the evening session **Meduri Satyanarayana** chaired the meeting.

**Kannan Sivaram**, Joint Secretary, RAI, spoke on “Rationalism in Internet Era”.

**Adiala Sankar**, President, Telangana Rationalist Association, Spoke on Annihilation of superstitions – Rationalism”.

21st Biennial Conference of A.P. Rationalist Association was held and a new Executive body elected in the evening.

On 10-2-2020 **Dr. Gumma Veeranna** Chaired the study session.

**K. Rajendran Uliyakkovil**, Treasurer, BYS, Kerala, spoke on “Parliamentary Democracy and protection of Secularism”.

**Kurra Hanumantha Rao**, spoke on “Secularism – Rationalism – Humanism”.

**Aluri Prafulla Chandra**, APRA, Spoke on “Conflict between Religion and Science”.

**Meduri Satyanarayana** spoke on “Present Politics – Humanist Alternative”.

In the evening **Shaik Babu** chaired the session.

**Simhadri Yellamanda Reddy**, Joint Secretary RAI spoke on “The Necessity of Rationalist Humanist Movement”.

**Shaik Daryavali**, General Secretary, APRA, spoke on “Rationalism in daily life”.

29th Annual conference of radical Humanist centre, Inkollu, was held under the chairmanship of **Meduri Satyanarayana**, President RHC, Inkollu.

Prizes were distributed to the students who won the prizes in Rationalist Humanist competitions by the responsible persons of the movement.

During these conference, 7 Books on Rationalism and Humanism have been released.

1. "What shall be done" written by **Ravipudi Venkatadri**, released by **Srinipattathanam**
2. "Rationalist thoughts – Irrational misconceptions" written by **Ravipudi**, released by **Kurra Hanumantha Rao**
3. "Strange thoughts – strange things" written by **Ravipudi**

4. "100 poems on Ravipudi" by **Chegireddy Chandrasekara Reddy**, released by **Shaik Babu**
5. "Politics – Democracy" by **Kurra Hanumantha Rao**, released by **Dr. Gumma Veeranna**.
6. "Science-Philosophy" written by **M.N. ROY**, Translated by **Dr. Gumma Veeranna**, released by **Meduri Satyanarayana**.
7. "Vivaksha in smruthis" by **Meduri Satyanarayana**, released by **Ravela Sambasivarao**, retired Registrar, Nagarjuna University.

#### New – Executive body of RAI

Chairman	:	Ravipudi Venkatadri
Vice Chairman	:	Sreenipathathanam
President	:	Kurra Hanumantha Rao
Vice President	:	Dr. Gumma Verranna
		Dr. P. Raghavan
		K. Sreenivasa Chari
		Dr. Sujatha Vavai
General Secretary	:	Meduri Satyanarayana
Joint Secretaries	:	S. Yellamanda Reddy
		Kannam Sivaram
		M. Rajeswara Rao
		Siddarth Degami
Treasurer	:	Shaik Babu

33 members were elected in Executive committee.

#### New Executive Body of APRA

President	:	Dr. Gumma Verranna
Vice Presidents	:	Kari Haribabu
		Liakat Ali
General Secretary	:	Shaik Daryavali
Joint Secretaries	:	D. Rajasekar
		Nandam Venkata Syam
Treasurer	:	Karanam Ravindra Babu

33 members elected to executive committee

-Report by **Dr. Gumma Veeranna, Mr. K. Srinivasa Chary** 

## 2. A Series of Unfortunate Events: Shaming Women in Gujarat

**Kiran Nanavati**

This is a collection of unfortunate events on gender-insensitivity in Gujarat during February 2020. Information under each heading is derived from newspapers without adding any comments.

### **In periods, college girls forced to live in basement**

This is the headline on page four of The Times of India (ToI), February 15, 2020 and the news hit headlines in days to come. The incident occurred in Bhuj city of Kutch district in Gujarat. Report mentions the demeaning ordeal that 68 girl students of Shree Shajanand Girls Institute in Bhuj is repeat of the infamous 2017 Muzaffarnagar episode, where a warden in residential school forced these girl students to strip to check for menstrual blood. The girls in the menstrual cycle have to sign a register in the hostel while going to the basement to stay ‘quarantine’ for four days. The basement area is heaps of rubbish strewn everywhere. All girls hesitate to go there as it is not only difficult to live there alone in dark but is also frightening at times. A girl student recounts, “When we joined the college we were not informed about the rules regarding periods at that time. Only after joining we came to know about these strict rules. We are also not allowed to wear western outfits in college and have to wear traditional clothes only. If a legging is slightly above the ankle, the student is punished.”

Principal Rita Raniga has been dominating in nature and the main culprit who orchestrated the shameful exercise. Not all teachers were favouring this. There were many teachers who objected and one of them was even thrashed by Raniga, asking her not to interfere in the

matter. She also gave deaf ears to many other teachers who pleaded her not to discontinue such practice. She asked them to keep quiet if they desired to continue in the job. Girls had approached a trustee Pravin Pindoria after incident, but did not get any satisfactory response from him. Nar Narayan Dev Gadimanages the Bhuj temple of Swaminarayan sect, which runs this college and hostel.

Special investigating team (SIT) formed by Kutch Police arrested four culprits including the Principal. However, trustees who framed the archaic admission rules for hostellers seem to have been let off as of now, though more names might be added as investigation progresses. National Commission of Women (NCW) met several victims as part of inquiry. Members of state commission of women have also been inquiring into incident.

### **Menstruating women who cook reborn as dogs**

This headline appeared in Hindustan Times on February 19, 2020. Swaminarayan Temple runs Shree Shajanand Girls Institute in Bhuj, where the abovementioned incident occurred. Swami Krishnaswarup Das is religious leader associated with Swaminarayan Temple. He said, “It is certain that men will be born as bullocks in their next life if they consume food cooked by menstruating women. I don’t care if you do not like my views, but this is all written in our *shastras* (scriptures). If a menstruating woman cooks food for her husband, she will definitely be born female dog in her next life”

He further adds, “Women do not realize that period of menstruation is like doing ‘*tapasya*’

(penance). This is written in our shastras. Even I do not like to tell you all these things, but I have to warn you. Men should learn cooking, it will help you." Such videos of sermons are available on the temple's dedicated YouTube Channel.

### **Now, Surat women trainee clerks stripped for gynogenic test**

This is the headline of ToI on February 21, 2020 and its report continued for next few days. The reports state that, according to a complaint lodged by Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) Employees Union with the municipal commissioners, around 100 employees got a rude shock when they reached Surat Municipal Institute of Medical Education and Research (SMIMER) for their mandatory fitness test. Victims confided in a senior corporation employee, "Female employees were forced to stand naked together in groups of around 10 in a room where they did not have any privacy. The door was not properly closed and the only blocking the view from outside was a curtain." Besides being subjected to the controversial finger test, even unmarried women were allegedly asked if they had ever been pregnant. The seniors informed their respective bosses, but no one took immediate action to halt the practice, claiming it to be mandatory as prescribed in government rules for recruitment. Apparently, such instances were common knowledge among corporation staffers. One of them confided, "I know some women who were afraid to go to the hospital after colleagues who underwent the test shared the horrifying details." The top brass of the civic body is now working to find how the humiliating practice went unnoticed especially at the SMC-managed hospital.

Ashwin Vachhani, head of gynaecology department, SMIMER, had said physical examination of women was mandatory as per the guidelines to ascertain if they had any

specific illness. Dr. Vandana Desai, superintendent, SMIMER, said, "There are no specific government guidelines about fitness test, but majority of doctors follow the protocol that is commonly practiced in all the government medical colleges. In this case, the women must have been tested as per the requirements to check their complete fitness."

Surat municipal commissioner Banchhanidhi Pani constituted a three-member committee of women to probe the incident. NCW condemned the incident as shameful. Gujarat State Commission for Women (GSCW) ordered a suo-motu enquiry, while chairperson Leela Ankoliya said, "It is indeed shocking, courts have also prohibited such tests. We will take further action after examining the SMC report."

### **Primary girl students discriminated**

A shocking video went viral showing primary girl-students of Upleta-based Rajmoti Primary School accusing three teachers of subjecting them to casteist slur and discrimination (ToI February 23, 2020). From not allowing to attend any religious feast along with the other classmates to being thrashed if anyone dared to disobey their ban. One of the afflicted girl students was seen particularly aggrieved by the female teacher who would love to inflict corporal punishment on these girls without rhyme and reason. She would slap them first before asking question and resort to using cane for petty mistakes during games.

Chairman of Upleta education committee Nikul Chandravadia has ordered the shunting of the three culprits teachers; Jignesh Sojitra, Rasila Sojitra and Laxmi. The local committee does not have authority to transfer teachers to other district. They have forwarded application to district education officer recommending transfer of these teachers to other district as punishment posting. 

### 3. Indian Rationalist Association – History Tips

#### The Body Blow

**Dr. P K Narayanan**

The years covering 1978 through 1979 and 1980 marked painful incidents in the history of Indian Rationalist Association. The DMEC (Divine Miracle Exposure Campaign) conducted across the Country during the period 1975-76 had given unprecedented popularity for the rationalist movement. Organised Rationalist Associations came up in each and every State and each of the State units got affiliated to IRA as parent body of rationalists and atheists in the Country. But suddenly an unexpected body blow struck the IRA. Jyothi Shankar who dedicated his work for more than three decades to build IRA as a powerful movement to spread scientific attitude and to live life freed from superstitious beliefs, left for Canada on domestic and personal grounds. A Suryanarayana, the then General Secretary and core activist of the movement had to leave Madras due to his transfer as an Executive Officer of Indian Oil Corporation. That was the time when Joseph Edamaruku, a staunch rationalist activist and writer of atheist literature was made one of the Vice-Presidents of IRA. He along with his family had already shifted from his home town at Kottayam in Kerala to New Delhi and settled there. Mr. Joseph vented his strong desire to shift the head quarters of IRA to New Delhi, the capital city of India. Since there were no responsible activists available in Madras at that point of time to look after the affairs of IRA, his request was conceded and the head quarters of IRA thus became the residence of Edamaruku clan at Delhi. But things did not end there: Soon after the event, Joseph Edamaruku

came down to Madras and shifted Ramanathan Library with its precious collection of books and periodicals to his residential house in Delhi. Thus there ended the life of the famous Ramanathan library: It became a part of Edamaruku Library along with the Indian Rationalist Association. Indian Rationalist Association is still very much in existence but as a proprietary concern of the Edamaruku clan. Joseph Edamaruku became the President of the Association and with his demise later, his son Sanal Edamaruku took over the robe of the President of the IRA. At present Sanal Edamaruku is an acclaimed activist and leader of Rationalist-Atheist movement. He is regarded as an icon of rationalist movement by the people who are against superstitious beliefs and practices. With reference to IRA he too carries the ego as his father did that the Indian Rationalist Association is the property of Edamaruku Family. In his blog narrating the history of IRA he mentions that IRA was established in the year 1949 and it has over one lakh and odd registered members on its fold: But he skillfully avoided mentioning the activities of the Association and the persons who worked for the cause of the movement with dedication during the period from 1949 to 1980s. All what appears in the blogs in various web sites including Wikipedia is about his TV appearances, debunking of miracles and miracle makers. There is no harm in it: Let Sanal Edamaruku continue his crusades against obscurantism which is the need of the hour.

**Dr. P K Narayanan** is Prof. HYPNO of DMEC. 

*On the 86th anniversary of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on 23rd March, we pay our tributes to the Shaheeds who laid down their lives so that we would live as free and independent citizens of an independent nation.*

**- Mahi Pal Singh** on behalf of all Radical Humanists

## **“Selections From The Radical Humanist” hits triple century Not out**

‘Selections from The Radical Humanist’ Volume I (1970 to 2005) and II (2006 to 2018) containing articles by all-time great Indian thinkers and intellectuals 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** on the periodicals page where ‘The Radical Humanist’ magazine is put every month. The two volumes are also available at

**www.academia.edu** and have been accessed from the following 309 cities, 129 in India and 180 aforeign cities across the world till 18 March 2020 by interested readers, researchers and scholars. Readers may download these volumes from there and read whenever they please.

**- Mahi Pal Singh**

1 Abu Dhabi (UAE)	25 Bansberia, India	48 Boston, MA, the US
2 Accra, Ghana	26 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia	49 Brasilia, Brazil
3 Ahirka, Indfia	27 Bareilly, India	50 Brighton, The United Kingdom
4 Ahmedabad, India	28 Barnala, India	51 Bronx, NY, the US
5 Ajman, the UAE	29 Barsat, India	52 Brooklyn, NY, the US
6 Alamsahi, India	30 Batala, India	53 Budva, Montenegro
7 Alcobendas, Spain	31 Berhampore, India	54 Buffalo, NY, the US
8 Alegre, Brazil	32 Belgaum, India	55 CA US
9 Aligarh, India	33 Belgrade, Serbia	56 Cairo, Egypt
10 Allahabad, India	34 Bellville, South Africa	57 Calgary, AB, Canada
11 Amherst, MA, the US	35 Bénin, Nigeria	58 Calicut, India
12 Amsterdam, The Netherlands	36 Benoni, South Africa	59 Cameroon
13 Angul,India	37 Beograd, Serbia	60 Cape Town, South Africa
14 Arima, Trinadad and Tobago	38 Berhampore, India	61 Chandigarh, India
15 Arizona State University	39 Bhagalpur, India	62 Chennai, India
16 Athens, Greece	40 Bhandara, India	63 Cheyenne, WY, USA
17 Auckland, New Zealand	41 Bhilai, India	64 Chlef, Algeria
18 Aurora, IL, the US	42 Bhimavadiaram, India	65 Chirala, India
20 Azamgarh, India	43 Bhopal, India	66 Chittagong, Bangladesh
21 Bagalkot, India	44 Bhubaneswar, India	67 Cochin, India
22 Balurghat, India	45 Bilaspur, India	68 Coimbatore, India
23 Bangalore, India	46 Birkirkara, Malta	69 Cote D’Ivoire
24 Bangladesh	47 Birmingham, the UK	

70	Cotonou, Benin	109	Guelph, ON, Canada	148	Katsina, Nigeria
71	Cyprus	110	Guntur, India	149	Kenya
72	Dehradun, India	111	Gurdaspur, India	150	Kigoma, the UR of Tanzania
73	Denmark	112	Gurgaon, India	151	Kingston, ON, Canada
74	Des Moines, IA, the US	113	Guwahati, India	152	Kissimmee, FL, the US
75	Devgad, India	114	Haldia, India	153	Koani, UR of Tanzania
76	Dewas, India	115	Haldwan, India	154	Kochin, India
77	Dhahran, Saudi Arabia	116	Hamirpur, India	155	Kochi, India
78	Dhaka, Bangladesh	117	Hamma Bouziane, Algeria	156	Kolhapur, India
79	Dindigul, India	118	Helsinki, Finland	157	Kolkata, India
80	Diss, the UK	119	Hisar, India	158	Köln, Germany
81	Doha, Qatar	120	Hassan, India	159	Kota, India
82	Dubai, the UAE	121	Höxter, Germany	160	Krugersdorp, South Africa
83	Durban, South Africa	122	Howrah, India	161	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
84	Durgapur, India	123	Hubli, India	162	Kuju, India
85	Edappal, India	124	Huddersfield, the UK	163	Kuwait
86	Edmonton, AB, Canada	125	Hyderabad, India	164	Lagos, Nigeria
87	Eindhoven, the Netherlands	126	Indianapolis, IN, the US	165	Lahore, Pakistan
88	Electronics City, India	127	Indore, India	166	La Mesa, CA, the US
89	Encinitas, CA, the US	128	Innsbruck, Austria	167	Lamongan, Indonesia
90	Enfield the U.K.	129	IR of Iran	168	Ledyard, CT, the US
91	Ernakulam, India	130	Irvington, NJ, the US	169	Lepe, Brazil
92	Etobicoke, ON, Canada	131	Islamabad Pakistan	170	Lima, Peru
93	Europe	132	Izmir, Turkey	171	Loganville, GA, the US
94	Faridabad, India	133	Jaipur, India	172	Lonavala, India
95	Footscray, Australia	134	Jakarta, Indonesia	173	London, UK
96	France	135	Jalpaiguri, India	174	London SOAS University, UK
97	Gandhidham, India	136	Jammu, India	175	Los Angeles, CA, the US
98	Ghaziabad, India	137	Jhelum, Pakistan	176	Lucknow, India
99	Goharganj, India	138	Jodhpur, India	177	Ludhiana, India
100	Gonder, Ethiopia	139	Johannesburg South Africa	178	Mahesana, India
101	Gorontalo, Indonesia	140	Jorhat, India	179	Malabar Hill, India
102	Göteborg, Sweden	141	Kakinada, India	180	Mandi, India
103	Göttingen, Germany	142	Kannur, India	181	Mathikere, India
104	Greeley, CO, the US	143	Kanodar, India	182	Mau, India
105	Groningen, the Netherlands	144	Kanpur, India	183	Medan, Indonesia
106	Guararema, Bazil	145	Kansanshi, Zambia	184	Medford, MA, the US
107	Guareña, Spain	146	Karachi, Pakistan	185	Melbourne, Australia
108	Guatemala, Guatemala City	147	Karaikudi, India	186	Menomonee Falls, WI, the US

187 Middlesbrough, the UK	226 Pickering, ON, Canada	265 Springfield, MO, the US
188 Middletown, OH US	227 Point Cook, Australia	266 Srinagar, India
189 Milan, Italy	228 Poona, India	267 Streatham, The UK
190 Minchinbury, Australia	229 Port Moresby Papua New Guinea	268 Stockholm, Sweden
191 Mirpur Khas, Pakistan	230 Pretoria, South Africa	269 Suri, India
192 Morigaon, Indeia	231 Princeton, NJ, the US	270 Surat, India
193 Morristown, NJ, the US	232 Pune, India	271 Suva, Fiji
194 Mossel Bay, South Africa	233 Ramanathapuram, India	272 Swartruggens, South Africa
195 Mountain View CA US	234 Ranchi, India	273 Switzerland
196 Muktsar, India	235 Rawalpindi, Pakistan	274 Sydney, Australia
197 Mumbai, India	236 Richmond, the UK	275 Tadepalligudem, India
198 Muzaffarpur, India	237 Ridge Spring, SC, the US	276 Tampa, Flthe US
199 Nagar, India	238 Riverside, CA, the US	277 Taoyuan, Taiwan
200 Neuvic, France	239 Rodenbach, Germany	278 Tenkasi, India
201 Newark, NJ , the US	240 Rohtak, India	279 Tenkasi, India
202 New Delhi, India	241 Rome, Italy	280 Thane, India
203 New London, CT, the US	242 Ruwais, Qatar	281 Thrissur, India
204 New York, the US	243 Ryde, Australia	282 Tirunelveli, India
205 Nigeria	244 Saint-cloud, France	283 Tirupati, India
206 Noida, India	245 Salem, India	284 Toledo, OH US
207 North Adams, MA , the US	246 Samalkha, India	285 Toronto, ON, Canada
208 Northridge, CA, the US	247 Samalkot, India	286 Traverse City, MI, the US
209 Novi, MI the US	248 San Antonia, TX, The US	287 Trivendrum, India
210 Oakville, ON, Canada	249 San José, Costa Rica	288 Uganda
211 Ojo De Agua, Mexico	250 San Jose, CA, the US	289 Vadodara, India
212 Olney, MD, the US	251 San Salvador, El Salvador	290 Vapi, India
213 Ongole, India	252 Santa Fe, NM , the US	291 Varanasi, India
214 Pacoima, CA, the US	253 Santa Monica, CA, the US	292 Vishakhapatnam, India
215 Padaebom, Germany	254 Sao Jose Do Rio Preto, Brazil	293 Vijayawada, India
216 Panjim, India	255 Seattle, WA US	294 WA, The United States
217 Parksville, BC, Canada	256 Secunderabad, India	295 Warsaw, Poland
218 Patna, India	257 Shimoga, India	296 Walworth, NY, the US
219 Pattambi, India	258 Sikar, India	297 Wellington, New Zealand
220 Pérama, Greece	259 Siliguri, India	298 West Bengal, India
221 Perambalur, India	260 Sirajganj, Bangladesh	299 Wilmington, DE, the US
222 Peshawar, Pafkistan	261 Serampore, India	300 Witney, the UK
223 Phagwara, India	262 Seymour, IN , the US	301 Wroclaw, Poland
224 Philadelphia, PA, the US	263 Sibsagar, India	302 Wynberg, South Africa
225 Phoenix, Mauritius	264 Sonepat, India	303 Zambia



**M. N. Roy's statue installed at Ramakrishna School, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh arranged by Mr. Mallela Srinath.**



**Near the grave of M.N. Roy in  
the backyard of 13- Mohini Road,  
Dehra Dun, India. Abburi  
Varadarajeswararao, his face  
towards us, talking to Dr. R M Pal,  
a very close associate of M.N. Roy  
and a well-known Radical Humanist,  
Principal, Rajdhahi College, Delhi.**