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Congratulations! Mr. Javed Akhtar
On being conferred the prestigious Richard Dawkins Award



The Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI) and 'The Radical Humanist' congratulate Mr. Javed Akhtar on being conferred the prestigious Richard Dawkins Award for 2020 for 'critical thinking, holding religious dogma up to scrutiny, advancing human progress and humanist values'. Poet, lyricist and writer Javed Akhtar, known for his strong and independent views on polity, society, art and culture and religion alike, has become the first Indian to receive Richard Dawkins Award. The award is held in high esteem by all humanists, rationalists and secular intellectuals all over the world.

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Prof. Debiprasad Ray is no more

(11 December 1942 - 23 December 2019)

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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entertained here if the need is felt to debate and
discuss them.

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Debiprasad Ray is no more : Loss for the sane society

Anjali Chakraborty

Your calls to a friend go unanswered, over and over again. No call backs either, unlike usually.

And suddenly, the sad news of his demise reaches you, already a few days late by then. To make it further complex, the lockdown situation tops up this already weary condition!

However, I've been able to get in touch with his grieving family and tried to bring out a short sketch of his mortal life and his works to keep him alive in our thoughts.

[1]

Debiprasad Ray served the Bankura Christian College, Bankura district, West Bengal as a professor in Physics from 1965- 2003. He took retirement serving the department as HOD for years. He was born on 11th December, 1942 and left us forever on 23rd December, 2019 at the age of 77 years. His birth place IRPALA is a village under Ghatal sub-division of Midnapur, the well-known district in West Bengal for Independence movement where Swadesh Ranjan Das, a Royist, was born.

In the young age Debiprasad was inspired by Swadesh Ranjan Das, his neighbour in the village. At that time he did not, obviously understand about MN Roy. Only when he grew up, he gradually understood his new socio-political thought. He felt great wonder about M N Roy's colourful life and works in the foreign countries more than a decade.

He was inquisitive about Roy as he had an emotional inspiration from his adolescence while he companied with a senior person, as named above, a pioneer of progressive works in the district, especially at IRPALA village. Debiprasad had great respect for 'Swadesh- da'. He remembered the memory of Swadesh

Ranjan as founder of many progressive social works and doing awareness program among the villagers. Debiprasad might be influenced by the Exhibition of huge posterings captioned — "Why Cooperative Commonwealth" which Swadesh Ranjan Das often exhibited in the village along with other places.

This may be a reason, to some extent, for his affiliation to the Radical Humanist Movement and thus he had maintained connections with the Radical Humanist Association, Kolkata till his death. His emotional bonding with this movement in west Bengal has been documented here by his letter (Dt 22/02/1990) addressing to the present writer attached below. *.

Debiprasad's uncle, sri Jugal Kanti Roy, a desciple of great physicist S. N Bose, was intimate with "Swadesh-da" - Swadesh Ranjan Das. Debiprasad wrote a book named "Prasangata: Manobendranath" (M N Roy), March 2017 in Bengali published by the Pritoria, Kolkata.

This book is an attempt for evaluation of Roy's new ideas at our present time. Debiprasad was critical in his discussions in meetings about Roy's views on Indian religion, philosophy which caused a sentiment of indifference to M N Roy by the majority people of India.

[2]

Debiprasad as professor of physics had intensive study on the famous Indian scientist, Satyandranath Bose (S. N. Bose). He had written a great book on SN Bose publishing some inner painful events beared by this scientist beyond his wonderful achievements like Quantum Mechanics, providing the foundation for Bose-Eienstien Statistics and the

theory of Bose-Einstein Condensate, Bose - Einstein Distribution, Bose - Einstein Correlations, 'Boson', Photon Gas and others. A sub-atomic particle **BOSON** has been named after S N Bose. Debiprasad endeavored to release the inner pain of the scientist who did not get his due recognition in time and till the date his works have not been widely recognised among the Indian scientists. The book he authored is *Satyendranath Bose: Chena Bigyani, Ajana Katha* (in Bengali). He had written articles on Albert Einstein sometimes in connection of his query on the untold or semi-told stories between Einstein and S N Bose.

Here we can also mention our special tribute for his (S N Bose) reading the book *SCIENCE & PHILOSOPHY* (by M. N. Roy) as a request for review on the Bengali translation of the book translated by Swadesh Ranjan Das. He had noted great appraisal about the translated manuscript. But we were unfortunate that he could not write his comment because of his sudden illness followed by death.

It may be true that Debiprasad was inspired by the incident of correspondence by Einstein with the British colonial government requesting to free M.N. Roy from the jail. Because Einstein thought that a great "physicist" like Roy should not be put into jail. The reason of this impression about Roy was formed in the mind of Einstein after reading Roy's interpretation of latest theories of physics for the new direction of human society.

So far we know that Debiprasad was a man of hard labour for academic purpose. Some text books were written by him for the Honours students at national level. He wrote a good number of Bengali articles for the *Jyan Bichitra* (top Bigyan journal in Tripura), *Gyan-Bigyan*, *Utsa-Manush* (West Bengal), *JIGNASA* (Renaissance publisher), *PUROGAMI* (by the R H Association, Kolkata) and *BHABNA-CHINTA* (by the Centre for Political Studies, Burdwan), *DESHBHAKATER CHITI* (edit.

by Sandeep Sengupta), *SWASTIKA*. (edit. Sukash Chandra Mandal) and *Sahitya Bitan*, Bankura. He contributed articles to the *YOJONA* by the Government of India and the *Statesman of India*.

The area of his study and writing was from pure science to politics - both national and international e.g. National Education policy, Philosophy of Raja Rammohan and Vidyasavar, Secularism in national perspective, Communalism, Sangha Parivar, Political parties and the common people, and so on. His political attitude was reflected in one of his translated works e.g. the famous letter of the Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn addressing to the Soviet Union Authority exposing the horror of Soviet prison Labour Camps, the Gulag Archipelago. This was published as booklet in 2007.

[3]

One of the characteristics of his writing is that he was very much sensitive about the sanctity of the purpose of writing and about the innate nature of human beings for truth, ideology and freedom of man. He exposed his frustration narrating the prevalent practice of the politicians and also the intellectuals who are abusing the human resources for their selfish motive.

Out of academic works, he was known in the locality for other good deeds. Being associated with the Adibasi Kalyan Samiti, he worked for spread of education among them. He was founder and first president of *SAWRASWATI SISHU MANDIR* in 1993, at Bankura district, west Bengal. This school has been increased in number all over the district. In 2015, he planned to found *SAWRASWATI VIDYAMANDIR* of Madhyamik standard at Barda village adjacent to Bankura town. He became the first president of this school. He always forwarded his best for the welfare of the people in contact with him.

He belonged to the category of human beings

who love their country, its people and ready to do for noble cause of humanity.

His demise is not only personal pain for family and friends but a irreparable pain for the sane society where he belonged to. Although he was a healthy person, it is unfortunate that he might be a victim of wrong treatment or proper diagnosis at initial stage for his demise. He is survived by his wife Smt. Bharati Ray, and two daughters Samadrita Ray and Taponita Ray. They are in teaching profession.

His books are:

1. Introductory Statistical Mechanic Asian Books Pvt Ltd (Publisher), 2008
2. 1 “Bhabna Apariharya” (A collection of Bengali essays composed by Debiprasad Roy), 11th December 2003, Sahitya Tirtha, Bankura
3. Itihash, Bikritir Itihash, December 8, 2004

Sahitya Tirtha, Bankura


4. Satyendranath Basu: Chena Bigyani, Ajana Katha, January 2012 Ananda publisher, Kolkata

5. Vivekananda O Khetriraj Ajit Singh, November 2015, Patralekha, Kolkata.

6. Prasangata: Manobendranath (M.N. Roy), March 2017, Pretoria publisher, Kolkata

7. “Buro Aanglar Manasa Yatra” —A poetic version of one of the stories for children by Abonindranath Thakur,

Acknowledgement: Ms Samadrita Ray helped to write this article by providing important information.

***Note:** Following is the letter of first introduction with the present author during nineties (English version by Koushik Das (kousdas@gmail.com) 

To

Anjali Chakrabarty
M B B College, Agartala

Respected Madam,

I have come across the August 1989 edition of the magazine “Jñanbichitra” per chance, and have gone through the report pertaining to the survey in “Jñanbichitra- 88”, in it. In fact, I am penning down these words to you, after getting somewhat astonished by the mentioning of the name of Manabendra Nath Roy, there.

I daresay that apart from just a handful of persons (India-wide, and even outside India, Internationally), not many are not aware of Manabendra Nath’s contribution building up of a healthy society. Unfortunately, many of us are not aware of this fact, especially the boys & girls of the present generation, although it is much required that they get aware of the same.

The ‘specialised effort’, which has been followed by the so-called Socialist Nations till now was not correct, according to M.N. Roy. Due to this point of view, he had spent his days somewhat ostracized or in isolation. But the events seen in the World of date proves the veracity of his point of view and the process in Social Philosophy, as envisioned by him, in his “New Humanism”, which now stands at the historical juncture of giving it a shape.

I am partially involved with the Radical Humanist Movement. There are mainly two places (in Kolkata) where there are writings, and discussions on the thoughts of M.N. Roy (in Bengali):

- 1) Purogami, 15, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Kolkata 73
- 2) Bhabna-Chinta, B C Roy Road, Burdwan 7131041.

As for the Pan Indian context, you should have contacts with any one of centres of the Radical Humanist. I would be much obliged to know about your thoughts in this regard.

Namaskar
Debiprasad Ray

Migrant Worker Crisis : The Supreme Court Has Abdicated All Responsibility

New Delhi: “How can we stop migrants from walking”, the Supreme Court is reported to have asked on May 15, 2020. The questions seemed quite incongruous on the face of it but bordered on being bizarre when seen in the light of a statement made by the solicitor general (SG) of India in the Supreme Court on March 31, 2020, that “there is no person walking on the roads in an attempt to reach his/her home towns/villages”. This was reportedly said while filing an affidavit on behalf of, none other than, the Union of India!”

‘as of 11AM on March 31, nobody is in the road. They have all been taken to the nearest shelter available”.

This happened in the context of a petitioner seeking to mitigate the misery of thousands of migrants who were



Jagdeep S. Chhokar



Ram Aytar (60) with his family walks along with other groups of migrant workers as walk to their native places amid the nationwide complete lockdown, on the NH24 near Delhi-UP border in New Delhi, Friday, March 27, 2020.

Photo: PTI/Ravi Choudhary

Some other reportage of the same event also had SG Tushar Mehta saying, “I have instructions to state that no one is now on the road. Anyone who was outside has been taken to the available shelters”. The same report also quoted him as having said, “Home Secretary makes an official statement on record to say

walking long distances on highways to go to their villages because there were no jobs, no place to stay, and no money to buy food, and no reliable means of transport. The three-judge bench said, “it was not possible for the court to monitor who is walking and who is not walking”.

The response of the SG was, of course,

self-assuring. He said, “States are providing interstate transport. But if people get angry and start on foot instead of waiting for the transport to be provided nothing can be done. We can only request that people should not walk. Using force to stop them would be counterproductive”.

While the SG argued that using force “would be counterproductive”, the chief minister of the most populous state of the country directed district administrations to form special police teams to stop migrant workers from travelling on their own.

The bench also indulged in what, under normal circumstances, would be considered frivolous talk, usually not expected in such a setting when one of the judges “asked the petitioner whether he was willing to go and implement government directives if the Court grants him special pass”.

When the issue of 16 migrants being run over by a goods train while they were sleeping on the railway tracks, on May 8, was raised, the bench said, “How can anybody stop this when they sleep on railway tracks?”.

This last remark not only displayed the lack of sympathy for the victims of the tragedy, it also betrayed the fact that the judges had, at least temporarily, overlooked a law which first came into existence as far back as, and has been on the statutes since 1890. It is called the Railways Act. It was last revised in 1989. Section 147 of the Railways Act, 1989, reads as follows:

“147. (1) If any person enters upon or into any part of a railway without lawful authority, or having lawfully entered upon or into such part misuses such property or refuses to leave, he shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or both.

(2) Any person referred to in sub-section (1) may be removed from the railway by any railway servant or by any other person whom such

railway servant may call to his aid.”

The existence of such a provision in law is only incidental.

The proceedings of the petition, excerpts of which are mentioned above, and of several others on the issue of migrants walking home, are indicative of the attitude of the judges towards these unfortunate citizens of the country. Two observations of the bench, one asking the petitioner if “he was willing to go and implement government directives...”, and on the 16 persons being run over while asleep on the railway tracks, are examples of the callousness and indifference with which the issue of migrants seems to have been dealt with by the apex court.

This mindset seems to have been abetted by the solicitor general, who not only considers public interest litigations (PILs) anathema but is also thoroughly disapproving of citizens who file PILs. What is disturbing, indeed shocking, is that various benches of the apex court have accepted some statements made by the solicitor general which are patently contrary to the facts on the ground.

The most amazing instance of this is the statement about there being “no person walking on the roads in an attempt to reach his/her home towns/villages,” which seemed to have been believed by the bench without any doubt or demur, at a time when photographs and videos of hordes of migrants walking on the roads were being widely shown by both, the print and the audio-visual, media.

As a matter of fact, the director general of police of UP was quoted as saying that “the number of people who are moving is huge”, as late as May 17, 2020. A headline on May 18, 2020, is quite revealing: “Protest by migrants stokes traffic chaos after UP govt seals borders”. Yet another report illustrates the desperation of the migrants, “Covid-19 lockdown: Migrants stranded in Haryana cross Yamuna to reach Uttar Pradesh”.

Petitions related to migrants are not the only instance of the apex court appearing to abdicate its authority in deference to the executive. A recent order of the court on the issue of restoration of 4G internet services in Jammu and Kashmir, is a graphic example of that. Responding to a plea for the restoration of 4G internet services, the court decided “to constitute a Special Committee comprising of the following Secretaries at national, as well as State, level to look into the prevailing circumstances and immediately determine the necessity of the continuation of the restrictions in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir...The Special Committee is directed to examine the contentions of, and the material placed herein by, the Petitioners as well as the Respondents. The aforesaid Committee must also examine the appropriateness of the alternatives suggested by the Petitioners, regarding limiting the restrictions to those areas where it is necessary and the allowing of faster internet (3G or 4G) on a trial basis over certain geographical areas and advise the Respondent No. 1 regarding the same, in terms of our earlier directions”.

The order is peculiar for many reasons but two stand out. One, it violates one of the fundamental principles of natural justice, *nemo judex causa sua*, which means “no one can be a judge in his own case.” By setting up a committee of secretaries to “determine the necessity of the continuation” of the ban on 4G services, the court has authorised pretty much the same people to take a decision which they, themselves, had made!

Two, the order is peculiar also in the sense that while it does ask the committee of secretaries to “determine the necessity”, but it is not at all clear about what will they do after they “determine the necessity.”

A national daily has expressed strong views on this order: “But the SC order is also troubling because it appears to be part of a *broader pattern of delay and evasion, and passing*

the buck, in cases that touch upon fundamental rights and crucial policy issues...” (emphasis added).

What is the Supreme Court missing?

The first thought that comes to mind is the well-known “Gandhi’s Talisman”. This is what the Mahatma said:

“I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away.”

When the court speaks about the unfortunate migrants walking on the highways in a disparaging tone, it is difficult to believe that the court remembers the Mahatma’s Talisman.

Given that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi gave his talisman in a letter to a friend, who was tormented by doubts, many decades ago, the fact that the bench may have overlooked this can be understood. There is, however, an event which occurred not too long ago, on May 6, 2020, to be precise. It was the first “virtual” farewell in the history of the Supreme Court. Justice Deepak Gupta was the retiring judge and he made some significant observations in his farewell speech. Some parts of his speech are worth reproducing in full:

“In addition to being independent, honest and courageous, the judiciary must also be *humane and compassionate.... A compassionate superior judiciary which lives up to the principles enshrined in the Preamble to the constitution to provide justice – social, economic and political, and to ensure the dignity of the individual, is something which we all must strive for.*”

“In this battle between the rich and powerful

on the one side and the voiceless, poor and downtrodden on the other, the scales of justice can never be balanced equally. One cannot equate apples with oranges. If real justice has to be done then the *scales of justice have to be weighted in favour of the underprivileged.*”

“(I)n the present day and age *judges cannot live in ivory towers but must be aware of what is happening in the world around them.* The scales of justice to be really equal, must, in fact, be balanced in such a way that the poor and the underprivileged are not denied justice” (emphasis added).

If the apex court benches had shown some humaneness and compassion while dealing with our, and their, migrant compatriots, perhaps the pronouncements might have been different.

The saving grace



Migrant workers walk along a railway track in Ghaziabad, in the outskirts of New Delhi, May 13, 2020.

Photo: Reuters/Adnan Abidi

While the migrants walking home seemed doomed because of the strange attitude of the apex court, hope has come from the high courts. First off the block was the Orissa high court, which took up the issue of migrants on May 7, 2020. This decision was, however, stayed by the Supreme Court on May 8, 2020. This was followed by the Gujarat high court, which took *suo motu* notice of newspaper reports on May

11, 2020.

These were followed by the Andhra Pradesh high court and the Madras high court, both on May 15, 2020. Both, these courts have asked some very relevant and searching questions of the state as well as the Central governments.

The Madras high court, for example, has asked the Union of India, represented by its secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi; and the government of Tamil Nadu, represented by its chief secretary, Chennai, to respond to the following questions by May 22, 2020:

“1. Whether any data is being maintained by the Government of India regarding the details of migrant workers working in each State/Union Territories in India?

2. If so, what is the number of migrant

workers in each State/Union Territories in India and the details regarding their nativity?

3. What is the number of migrant workers stranded in each State/Union Territories in India as on today?

4. What is all the assistance provided to those migrant workers by the respective States as well as the Union Government?

(To be Contd....on Page - 19)

Where are our godmen when they are needed?

Mumbai experiences devastating floods, the authorities promptly trot out some more nonsensical statistics to justify their goof-up

Shobhaa De

I have been staring at my limited view of the sky for the past few days. My eyes searching through the fast-scudding monsoon clouds moving over Mumbai, letting us know well in advance that the rains will be arriving earlier than usual this year.

Ufff... one more thing to add to our misery. Maybe our satellites are on the blink or on some other plan, and maybe the meteorologists don't have the time to look up from their computer screens and observe the rain clouds moving at top speed.

They are busy relying on useless statistics! As always. We mediocre mortals are far more sensible we rely on observation and common sense. Both those attributes save us and will continue to save us, from unreliable data and misleading statistics put out by government departments.

Year after year, Mumbaikars are caught off guard because they have paid attention to official monsoon updates.

When the deluge does arrive and Mumbai experiences devastating floods, the authorities promptly trot out some more nonsensical statistics to justify their goof-up. So much for sarkari statistics and graphs!

I use the monsoon mayhem as a mere peg. Considering what the country is going through right now, it is worrying to know that citizens are being fed carefully calibrated and cleverly curated data about the coronavirus. The numbers simply don't add up!

I have stopped watching prime-time news some time ago. I barely read the e-papers. I can just about handle gratuitous videos and smarmy memes. The people I talk to have confessed to feeling the same way. There is

just so much of Covid-19 stuff I am willing to glance at 24x7 from across the world.

Is there absolutely nothing else to discuss? Distract? Inspire? Nothing at all? When information overload on this scale becomes the "new normal" (whatever that means), the human brain stops responding and presses "pause". I have reached that point. And so have countless others. I have switched off in order to retain my own sanity which is under serious threat at present. I may qualify as Insane-Positive, if tested.

And how much worse can that be from testing Covid-Positive? I cannot get beyond the first paragraph of any report written by "experts". I can also efficiently and convincingly take apart all those tomes, put together by global specialists so much gobbledegook, fellas! Designed to frustrate, confound and anger the reader. What are we doing to ourselves?

Is any of this data actually working or relevant? Where? Not even in the most advanced and economically strong countries. So... can all those gurus and pundits take a break; give us all a break too? Relax... deep breaths. As of now, nobody knows nuthin' that's the brutal truth.

Meanwhile, here in India, there are sycophants in overdrive proposing our Prime Minister's name for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020. First of all why do we crave foreign recognition this desperately?

How will the prize (if at all it happens which is doubtful) solve India's myriad and almost insurmountable problems? Even as a highly coveted and largely symbolic gesture, why lobby for the honour? When such blatant hardsell is employed by touts, it devalues the office of

India's Prime Minister.

This isn't the first time that touts have been at it. But given the gravity of the coronavirus crisis, the focus should be on leading the country through the pandemic with the least amount of collateral damage. Not bagging an international prize.

Here we are... with our Invisible People the Miserable 'Migrants' still struggling to get home, despite an international scandal about their sorry lot. Every single day no, make that every single hour we see stories underlining their inhuman existence, made worse by an unfeeling bureaucracy.

What has changed? They are still paying for their train tickets that is, if they manage to get into a train in the first place. They are still been thrown packets of stale, inedible food, which they sensibly discard.

There is no water, no sanitation, no medical care. So... what has the Narendra Modi government offered them in real terms? A Nobel Peace Prize for this? Please — can someone define "peace"?

India is at a crucial crossroads. My inner voice tells me that NaMo will pay a gigantic price during the next election and it will be the disenfranchised migrants who will be the cause of his downfall. It's really silly to raise arguments about the Opposition's failures at this point.

The issue is not about those lapses. What did the government in power do? That is all

that counts. Why was no action plan put into place as soon as the guest workers' exodus began? And... hello! We still don't know what was done with the grandiosely named PM-Cares fund.


The one which cannot be audited! And must not be questioned! Our granaries are full, say government officials. Despite that, our migrants are left to starve! They themselves have resignedly said: "Hunger will kill us if corona doesn't." We should be so ashamed of ourselves!

Oh, another thing that is bothering me where have all our astrologers gone? And those crafty gurus? How come not one of them was able to "predict" the pandemic. How come they have failed to come up with a magic cure? Our media-created godmen and godwomen have been missing in action, when we need their soothing words the most.

This should open our eyes to the deceptive dealings of these awful people, who have created multi-million-dollar empires for themselves. Not one of them cared to turn up to show compassion and walk a few kilometres with the migrants.

Also, how many temple/religious trusts have opened their overflowing coffers to feed the poor and homeless? The Nobel Peace Prize 2020 should go to India's Migrants.

Courtesy **Deccan Chronicle**,

30 May 2020 

What is Humanism

Humanism is a philosophy and a mental attitude which gives primacy to the human individual and recognises his or her right to live in freedom and with dignity. It believes that "the human individual is the measure of all things". Humanism opposes the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of any imaginary collective ego like a nation or class. Historically as well as logically, humanism is the philosophy of democracy.

(From the Preamble to the **Constitution of Indian Radical Humanist Association**)

7 Big Little Lies Of The Modi Government's Coronavirus Economic Relief

HuffPost India spoke to experts and read the fine print to find the Modi government has failed to put its money where its mouth is.

Betwa Sharma

NEW DELHI — The Narendra Modi government's much-touted Aatma Nirbhar, or self-reliance, economic stimulus appears to be a rehashing of previously announced schemes, with very little additional spending, that is unlikely to prop up the faltering national economy, a close read of the package and interviews with economists reveal.

The Modi government announced a Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package over five days in May this year to ameliorate the economic devastation caused by India's punitive and unplanned coronavirus lockdown. At 10% of India's GDP, the Aatma Nirbhar economic package was billed as one of the largest in the world. Yet, the opposition Congress Party says the stimulus in terms of actual additional government spending could be as little as between 1.6% to 0.91% of the GDP.

Global Securities research firm Sanford Bernstein, which put the fiscal spending at 0.9% of the GDP, described the economic stimulus as "aimless," "with several generic announcements which should ideally have been a part of a normal economic agenda."

R. Ramakumar, an economics professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, told HuffPost India that his calculations suggested actual additional government spending would be 1.5 to 2 lakh crores, or 0.87% of the GDP.

"Given that the whole world is announcing government packages, the government of India wants to make it look like it has announced a huge package," Ramakumar said. "The reality is that this package is extraordinarily

insignificant in magnitude, and does not take into account the acuteness of the crisis that we are in the moment. Its impact on the economy is going to be insignificant."

Ramakumar said this was a time when the government should be transferring money to vulnerable workers, farmers, and the urban and landless poor; but "the government is holding on to its purse and it is not opening it up."

Ramakumar said this could be because the government was reluctant to run a higher fiscal deficit.

"There is an ideological opposition in the economic thinking within the government that higher fiscal deficit is bad for the economy primarily because it will scare away foreign investors who come to India," he said. Other countries however, "have temporarily kept aside such concerns and gone into increasingly fiscal deficits."

Here are seven key reasons why the Modi government's economic relief measures since March have left many unimpressed.

The reality is that this package is extraordinarily insignificant in magnitude...

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna

One part of Rs 20 lakh crore Aatma Nirbhar package, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Rs 20,000 crores for the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna to "integrate, sustainable, inclusive development of marine and inland fisheries to plug critical gaps in fisheries value chain," and to provide employment to over 55 lakh persons and double exports to Rs. 1 lakh crore.

However, this scheme was first announced in July 2019 and approved in January 2020, well before the coronavirus pandemic struck India.

Sitharaman announced the scheme in 2019 Budget in July, and the Expenditure Finance Committee in January 2020 approved the PMMSY at a total cost of Rs 20,050.00 crores comprising a central government share of Rs 9,407 crores, a state share of Rs 4,880.00 crores and beneficiary share of Rs 5,763 crores for its implementation for a period of five years with effect from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This was exactly the same scheme approved by Cabinet on 20 May following Sitharaman's announcement.

Anil Tharayath Varghese from the secretariat of the National Fishermen Forum said the beneficiary share suggested this was an "investment-based scheme," and in no way constituted coronavirus relief.

"All they are saying is that this is a scheme for five years, and once you start fishing, you can take a loan. But people have not done fishing for the last two months. What about their relief?" he said. "There is no component for Covid-19. There is nothing here that says that we will give you financial assistance."

National Animal Disease Control Program

As part of the Aatma Nirbhar package, Sitharaman announced Rs 13,343 crores for the National Animal Disease Control Program aimed at vaccinating India's cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats and pigs. The same scheme was approved by the Cabinet in May, 2019 and launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September that year.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

As part of the Aatma Nirbhar package, Sitharaman announced funding of Rs 3 lakh crores to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMES) to guarantee loans from the National

Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited, a Delhi-based private limited company, and the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana that provides loans up to Rs 10 lakh, through a guaranteed emergency credit line facility. The government also announced 20% extra working capital for businesses with an outstanding debt of up to Rs 25 crore and sales of up to Rs 100 crores.

There was, however, no fiscal spending to tide over the MSMES that were shuttered in the lockdown.

A week before the Modi government announced the economic stimulus package, former Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg wrote that 10 of the 15 crore workers employed in eight crore MSMES are without a job, and paying 50% of their normal wage for the period of the shutdown (capping it at Rs 10,000) would only cost the government Rs 1 lakh crores. A second package of 1 lakh crore, Garg wrote, should be extended to eight crore MSMES to cover for part of their fixed costs.

Extending additional credit support through banks, Garg tells HuffPost India does not help MSMES because only about 45 to 50 lakh have some credit with the bank, which leaves out the bulk of the eight crore enterprises.

"They suffered income loss, turn over loss and massive unemployment loss. Their backs are literally broken," said Garg. "I refuse to call it a stimulus package because they don't need stimuli to grow further, they need support to survive and revive. The package that has come is unfortunately not a support package."

On the 20% additional loans guaranteed by the government, Garg said the MSMES loan growth has only been 4% to 5% in the past few years, which makes increasing to 20% a challenge. Garg also said that 10% to 15% of MSMES have large non performing loans that considerably reduces their chances of getting additional credits from banks.

The Reserve Bank of India has since March cut the repo rate at which banks borrow twice

(now at an all time low of 4%), to make it easier to give out more loans, but this has not led to higher lending — a trend that was persisting even before the coronavirus pandemic due to slower economic growth and mounting bad loans.

“The package does not seem to be addressing the core need of the MSMEs to get some support for the losses they have suffered so that they restart their business now that the lockdown has been largely lifted,” said Garg.

I refuse to call it a stimulus package...

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

As part of the Aatma Nirbhar package, Sitharaman had announced that a 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund would be created for small and marginal farmers, and financed by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). Ramakumar, who teaches economics at TISS, said there was no additional spending on part of the government, and NABARD would have to borrow the money from the market.

“It is not actually money spent by the government,” he said. “If you wanted to address the concerns in agriculture, you should have thought of increasing the cash transfers to farmers through a scheme like PM Kisan. If you wanted to address the concern of workers, you should have thought of a new cash transfer scheme for them at least or universalizing the Public Distribution System.”

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna

As part of the Rs 1.7 lakh crore Garib Kalyan package unveiled in March, the Modi government had announced a payout of Rs 2,000 each to more than eight crore farmers under the PM Kisan Yojna. Reported by sections of the media as a “big relief” for farmers, the government had only fast tracked the first instalment of Rs 2,000 of a total of Rs 6,000 due to landholding farmers covered under the

scheme every year. The money under this scheme, launched in February 2019, is meant to provide income support for landholding farmer families to meet their agricultural as well as domestic needs.

Jean Dreze, an economist and activist, and visiting professor at Ranchi University, toldHuffPost India, “For years there has been a pattern of creative accounting to reduce social expenditure, and this is visible again in the critical relief package.”

MGNREGA wages

The Modi government in March had announced a hike of Rs 20 in wages given under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), increasing the national average wage under the scheme from Rs 182 per person per day to Rs 202. This increase was a routine revision that is done twice a year by the Chief Labour Commissioner and calculated as per the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers.

2020-2021 marked an 11% rise in the average wage rate, significantly higher than the 1.6% in 2019-2020, the highest since the 7% increase in 2015-16, but still 40% to 50% less than the state-notified minimum wages paid to unskilled agricultural workers. Labour rights activists also questioned how a rise in MGNREGA wages in the middle of a coronavirus lockdown would help rural families given that there was no work to be found and they too were under the lockdown.

Reetika Khera, an economics professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, said the month of April had seen the least work generated in the past five years under MGNREGA, a program that guarantees 100 days of work in a year for rural families.

Sitharaman announced funding of Rs 40,000 crores for MGNREGA in May, in addition to the Rs 61,500 announced in the Union Budget 2020-2021.

Khera has pointed out that Rs 11,000 of the Rs 61,500 announced in the budget was payment of pending arrears.

State Disaster Response Mitigation Fund (SDRMF)

The Modi government while releasing Rs 11,092 crores to the State Disaster Response Mitigation Fund of 28 states on 3 April called on them to use it for combating the coronavirus. A letter from the Disaster Management Division from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Chief Secretaries all states said the money should be used for quarantine measures, sample collection, screening, and procurement of essential items and laboratories for response to Covid-19.

Funds under the SDRMF are released every year in two instalments for state governments for responding to natural disasters. The Union Government contributes 75% of funds for general category states and 90% for special category states (Northeast states, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh), and the rest of the money comes from the state government.

The funds for each state released in the first allotment were calculated by the 15th Finance Commission in November, 2019, months before the coronavirus cases were reported in India, and its report tabled in Parliament in February. But no additional money specifically for tackling

the coronavirus was released in the first allotment.

The Commission says that it arrived at the final allotment for each state by weighing area, population and risk profile, with Maharashtra getting the most at Rs 4,296 crores and Rs 1,161 crores in the first allotment followed at a distant second by Uttar Pradesh with Rs 2,578 and Rs 966.50.

Data scientist Nilakantan R.S. has pointed out that this allotment does not correspond to how the coronavirus disaster is playing out in different states in the country.

While Maharashtra has the highest number of coronavirus cases, the next worst-hit states - Tamil Nadu and Gujarat - only got half as much relief funds (Rs 510 crores and Rs 662 crores) in the first allotment.

The Fifteenth Finance Commission formula was not designed for the coronavirus pandemic situation, and the vulnerability of states in the face of a public health emergency does not correspond with the disaster risk index, said Himanshu Upadhyay, who teaches development at the Bengaluru-based Azim Premji University. "So, when you use a formula which was not designed for the crisis situation, you will naturally be generating a fiscal prudence disaster," he said.

Betwa Sharma is political editor, HuffPost India.

Courtesy **HuffPost**, 27 May 2020. 🌈

Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

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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

J&K's New Domicile Order : Disenfranchising Kashmiris, One Step at a Time

The changes are an erasure of Kashmir's history and a project in creating homogeneity – so that there is no legal difference between a Kashmiri and someone from any part of India who has lived in Kashmir for a specified period.

Mirza Saaib Beg

In the absence of any representative government in Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre has exercised undiluted and direct control in the region through a bureaucratic administration since June 2018.

Nine months ago, India's parliament, acting on legislation moved by the Narendra Modi government, unilaterally terminated Jammu and Kashmir's unique constitutional position, ending its autonomous status within the Indian Union.

Last week, the Jammu and Kashmir administration notified the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate (procedure) rules, 2020. These rules provide a fast-track procedure for issuance of Kashmiri domicile certificates, within 15 days, to people from any part of India. The sense of urgency to legalise the region's new status is further underscored in the new rules since non-compliance with the time frame provided therein attracts a penalty of Rs. 50,000 from the salary of an errant officer.

The domicile certificate has been made mandatory for employment in Kashmir following amendments to the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services rules. Eligible individuals from any part of India will also be granted the right to purchase immovable property in J&K, something that has not been possible till now in J&K and is still not possible in those parts of India governed by special laws and provisions.

Over the past one year, we have observed a grotesque, euphoric celebration by a broad cross-section of people across India on the disenfranchisement and dispossession of

Kashmiris through these legislative changes. In response, Kashmiris have realised that we cannot indulge in the luxury of despair and despondency. We need to, and will continue to, engage in the persistent labour of resistance and hope, despite the reckless violation of our rights, and of democracy, by the Indian state.

The new 'domicile' rules are a major departure from an established body of historical precedent, law and jurisprudence. This position was guaranteed to Kashmiris under the Delhi Agreement of 1952, the Presidential Order of 1954, Article 35A of the constitution of India and Part III Section 6 of the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.

These instruments and articles recognised the right of Jammu and Kashmir to define its citizens, known as "permanent residents" or popularly called "state-subjects" based on a 1927 notification by the erstwhile king of Jammu and Kashmir. Through the new rules, with retrospective effect, a "permanent resident" has now been replaced with "domicile" even though no instrument has ever granted such power to the Indian government.

The rules grant eligibility of domicile to new classes of people, including migrants, Central government employees, Indian armed forces personnel and their children who meet the eligibility criteria.

It is pertinent to add that in this new arrangement, there is no space for a diaspora Kashmiri whose parents do not have an existing certificate of permanent residence, to obtain domicile without living in the region for 15 years

or serving the Indian government for 10 years. Effectively, the child of an Indian citizen from any part of the country is eligible, even if the child has never lived in Kashmir, but the child of a diasporic Kashmiri may not be eligible if the parent does not possess an existing certificate of residence.

Despite the Indian state being overwhelmed with the economic collapse, migrant labour crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, the desire to subdue the Kashmiris has been funnelled with astringent and virulent zeal. It drives home the message to the people of Kashmir that nothing, not even a medical emergency, can prevent the Indian state from doing what it wants to do in J&K.

The rules do not merely grant people from all parts of India a right of residence in Kashmir. They also engineer a situation where Kashmiris must submit a certificate of permanent residence for verification of domicile if Kashmiris want the jobs where a domicile certificate is now required.

The certificate of permanent residence was a constitutionally valid document and has been held by numerous judgments to be a “conclusive proof of residence”. Under the new rules, it merely carries evidentiary value for residence. Therefore, if a Kashmiri fails to meet the new criteria, whether by malice, manipulation or by design of the new rules, the revocation of residency rights will inevitably lead to their involuntary transfer from Kashmir in search of shelter and employment. All these initiatives have sparked fears of demographic change, militarised settlements, dispossession and alienation of land in Kashmir.

It is relevant to mention that since 1995, Israel has been escalating the use of residency revocation as a punitive measure when the Israeli interior ministry started reinterpreting the 1952 Law of Entry. In 1952 Israel enacted its own Nationality law and repealed the Palestine Citizenship Order of 1925.

Israel uses three discriminatory (and illegal)

criteria to forcibly transfer Palestinians:

If they have been living abroad for an extended period.

Based on a 1995 high court judgment, Palestinians need to establish that their “centre of life” is in Jerusalem in order to maintain residency rights.

Accused of breaching “allegiance” or “minimum loyalty” to Israel. In 2006, this provision was first used against four Hamas members elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council. International humanitarian law explicitly forbids the occupier, in this case, Israel, from demanding the allegiance of an occupied population.

The revocation of residency forms part of a widespread and systematic policy to transfer the protected Palestinian population, and may amount to a crime against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute, to which Palestine is a party.

For Kashmir, the new domicile rules are just another reminder that the Indian government can alter its position at any point to suit the circumstances. Earlier, Prime Minister Modi had given an assurance to a delegation of members of a pro-India political group that the interests of J&K residents would be protected in government jobs and land laws. However, by these changes, all eligible Indians can compete against J&K residents for jobs and benefits, indicating how much respect the prime minister has even for pro-India politicians, as well as how much he values his own words. While earlier, a total of 480,000 government jobs were only for permanent residents, the new law opens the field for any Indian citizen who has been living in the state for a certain period.

This is especially disconcerting at a time when the 2016 Economic Survey Report had pegged a quarter of J&K’s population between 18 and 29 as unemployed. The diminution of our rights is set to increase the levels of unemployment as well as hasten the

disenfranchisement of Kashmiris while setting the stage for demographic changes. With the dilution of their 'domicile' status, Kashmiris will find it difficult to obtain work in most sectors of employment. While the rules are silent on this aspect, there are fears that through incremental displacement of rights, Kashmiris could also lose benefits from welfare schemes for food, health care, children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

These changes are an erasure of Kashmir's history as a princely state that was not under direct British rule, and a project in creating homogeneity – so that there is no legal difference between a Kashmiri and someone from any part of India who has lived in Kashmir for a specified period.

Kashmiris were once state-subjects of a princely state. We were then made permanent residents of an autonomous state within the Indian Union. Today we are being made

'domiciles' of a Union territory, that too, without our consent. Extrapolating from the developments taking place, it is not hard to imagine the Kashmiri landscape seeded with predatory militarised settlements similar to Palestine. The implications can only be calamitous.

The threat of demographic change, loss of livelihood and increased competition for scarce resources is bound to electrify an already incensed population. In any sensible democracy, this situation would be alarming but authoritarian and xenophobic actions seen over the last year suggest that Modi's government is neither sensible nor democratic.

Mirza Saaib Bég is a Kashmiri lawyer and an alumnus of NALSAR University of Law. He is currently pursuing a Master's in Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford as a Weidenfeld-Hoffman scholar.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 30 May 2020. 

Migrant Worker Crisis : The Supreme...

Contd. from page 10 ...

5. Whether those migrant workers are allowed to cross the State borders or prevented from crossing the borders and if they are prevented, whether they are provided with basic amenities such as food, shelter and medical assistance?

6. How many migrant workers died on their way to the native States?

7. To which States/Union Territories, the deceased workers belong to?

8. What are the relief measures/compensation provided to the families of those migrant workers who lost their lives on their way back to their native States?

9. How many migrant workers in each State/Union Territories have been evacuated from their working States to their native States through buses/trains throughout India?

10. What are all the steps taken to transport the remaining people to their native

States?


11. Whether migration of people is one of the reasons for spread of Covid-19?

12. Whether the Central Government has instructed the respective States/Union Territories to provide financial assistance, job opportunities in their native State/Union Territories for the labourers who migrated from other States?"

It is this kind of questioning that can make the executive accountable for its responsibilities towards "the poorest and the weakest man" of Mahatma Gandhi.

One hopes these high courts will be allowed to continue their proceedings without any interference from any quarters!

Jagdeep S. Chhokar is a former professor, dean, and director in-charge of IIM, Ahmedabad. Views are personal.

Courtesy **The Quint**, 19/May/2020 

In Delhi violence investigation, a disturbing pattern : Victims end up being prosecuted by police

Hundreds have been arrested by the Delhi Police, even as the lockdown made scrutiny and access to justice difficult.

Vijayta Lalwani



A woman mourns over the body of her son, Hashim Ali, who was killed in the communal violence in Delhi in February. | Reuters/ Adnan Abidi

On February 24, communal violence engulfed North East Delhi, leaving at least 53 people dead over the next three days, most of whom were Muslim. Exactly a month later, India went under a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. Normal life came to a halt – but not Delhi Police’s investigation into the violence.

By April 13, the police had made more than 800 arrests, the *Indian Express* reported. An unidentified official was quoted in the report saying that the Union Home Ministry “insisted that police must continue making arrests under any circumstances”.

But many lawyers and activists say the lockdown reduced scrutiny of the police investigation and impaired access to justice for those arrested. On May 16, activists of the

Peoples’ Union for Democratic Rights, a civil liberties group, wrote in *The Hindu* that very little was known about the status of most Delhi violence cases.

Based on an analysis of around 40 FIRs, it accused the police of displaying communal bias against Muslims, by diluting charges against Hindu accused. “It is imperative, for the sake of justice that all FIRs pertaining to the riots be opened to public scrutiny,” the activists said.

The same day, the Delhi Police issued a rejoinder to the article on Twitter, calling it “factually incorrect”. It said over 1,300 accused had been arrested in over 750 cases related to the violence, with the number of those arrested from the two communities “almost identical to each other”. Still, the Delhi Police have not made the FIRs public.

Activists say this raises further questions, given that Muslims bore the brunt of the violence: 38 of the 53 killed are from the community.

Nature of violence

Activist Harsh Mander said the nature of violence in North East Delhi on the first day was that of a riot as both communities engaged in violence. On the subsequent days however, he said, it evolved into a pogrom “where organisations and people of the majority community, with active state protection and support, attacked the properties and bodies of Muslim residents”.

“The maximum loss of life and the loss of property was of this minority community, as has happened in virtually every major episode of communal violence after Partition, barring very few exceptions,” he said.

Three months after the worst violence in India’s capital in three decades, information about the police investigation remains limited, making it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions. But *Scroll.in* examined a few cases closely to find a troubling pattern: often victims of the violence were being prosecuted by the police.

Scroll.in sent queries to Delhi Police regarding the prosecution of victims of the violence. The story will be updated if the police responds.

Here is the story of two such families.

Filed a complaint – and got arrested

On March 1, Hasim Ali submitted a complaint to the Karawal Nagar police station. In the complaint, the 60-year-old resident of Shiv Vihar wrote about how his home was looted, ransacked and burnt to the ground at around 3 pm on February 25.

A mixed neighbourhood of both Hindus and Muslims, Shiv Vihar had seen intense rioting over three days. Several Muslim families had fled the area as mobs ran through it and desecrated the Medina Masjid, located in the same lane as

Ali’s home. Ali oversaw the administrative work of the mosque, said his son Aabid Ali, 22.

In his complaint, which *Scroll.in* has seen, Ali said he witnessed the mob set his house on fire and identified three people in the crowd: Diwan, Dashrath and Bhudev. “Diwan and Dashrath live behind my house and Bhudev lives in front of it,” he wrote. “In teeno ko maine saaf taur par dekha” – I saw them clearly.

Around 5.55 pm, another neighbour, Dharmendra, along with others, set fire to his second house, Ali wrote in the complaint. He claimed to have heard members of the mobs say they would be given Rs 10,000 for burning one house and Rs 5,000 for burning a shop. “I heard them say we will kill all the mullahs [Muslims] and burn their homes,” he alleged. He claimed when he called the police that evening, they said they were coming, but did not arrive.

Hasim Ali ran a tailoring shop in his house, and his family, including his 53-year-old wife Anisha Begum, four sons and daughter-in-laws, lost everything as their two houses were burnt to the ground that day. In the letter, he requested compensation for his losses pegged at Rs 90 lakh and asked the police to investigate the actions of the rioters.

The police attached Hasim Ali’s complaint to an FIR dated February 28, filed at Karawal Nagar police station by another resident of Shiv Vihar, Naresh Chand, who lived two lanes away, said Hasim Ali’s lawyer Brij Shyam.

Clubbed FIR

Scroll.in has seen the FIR that sums up Chand’s account of narrowly escaping violent mobs with his family around 5 pm on February 25. Their home was looted and burnt by mobs, he said. They family lost their fridge, 40-inch LED television screen, motorcycle and jewellery.

On the FIR, the police have scribbled a note stating that Ali’s complaint had been attached

with this FIR “for all legal purposes”. The FIR listed offences of rioting with deadly weapons, unlawful assembly and use of explosives.

It is not clear why the police did not file a separate FIR on the basis of Ali’s complaint.

After they fled the violence, Ali’s family has been living with their relatives in Delhi’s Mustafabad area since February 25.

On April 4, the police arrived at the house around 4 pm. Anisha Begum, the wife of Hasim Ali, said they asked for her elder son Rashid. He was not at home. Instead, they took away Hasim Ali.

Aabid Ali, who works as an electrician, said the police had previously taken away his father for questioning “four to five” times, and each time he had returned after a few hours.

“They would ask him about what happened during the riots, how did it happen,” Aabid Ali said. “Papa used to tell them what happened, that our house was burned and looted...two bikes and one scooter were burned,” Aabid Ali recalled.

But on April 4, Hasim Ali did not come back.

Aabid Ali called him at 6.14 pm. “He said they had just called him for interrogation and that there was nothing to worry about,” the son said. He called his father again at 6.39 pm. “Papa said he was just waiting and that police had not yet asked him anything,” Aabid Ali said.

Around 9 pm, he was still waiting to be questioned. Finally, at 10 pm, he called up Aabid Ali and told him that the police were taking him for a medical check-up. “From behind, I heard someone say, ‘take away his phone, he is talking too much,’” Aabid Ali said.

That was the last he heard from his father.

Allegations and arrests

When Aabid Ali called his father’s phone at 11 pm, a stranger answered. “He said that they had arrested my father... I asked him who he was and he said he too had been interrogated.” The police had released him after interrogation. Hasim Ali’s wife, Anisha Begum, went to Shiv

Vihar that night to collect the phone and money from this man.

The next morning, Aabid Ali received a call from an unknown number. It was his father. He asked them to bring him some clothes and food.

Aabid Ali and his uncle Shaukat Ali reached the police station within half an hour. Only Shaukat Ali was allowed to enter. Aabid Ali caught a glimpse of his father: “I saw him from a distance,” he said. “They did not let me meet him.”

The police did not give them any information about the FIR under which Hasim Ali had been arrested.

“Our house was burned and looted and we complained but none of those people were picked up. They are still roaming around,” said Aabid Ali. “Instead, the police took away our father and are chasing our brother.”

Investigating officer Suman Kumar from Karawal Nagar police station told *Scroll.in* that Hasim Ali had been arrested under the same FIR that his complaint was attached with.

“We received around 1,500 to 1,600 complaints from our area,” Suman Kumar said. “Individually not everyone has an FIR. Almost 15 to 20 complaints have been clubbed in one FIR. So the investigation will be done under that FIR only.”

While the FIR did not name any accused people, said Kumar, two people, including Hasim Ali, had been arrested in the case, and four others, including Ali’s elder son Rashid Ali, were “absconding”.

Asked what was the basis for Hasim Ali’s arrest, the investigating officer claimed he featured in several photos and videos that emerged from February 25 in Shiv Vihar.

In the footage, Kumar claimed Hasim Ali appeared to be provoking mobs who were armed with sticks, rods and swords. “He was gesturing with his hands, asking them to move forward quickly,” the officer said.

However, Kumar admitted he had not been

able to hear the audio of the footage. The CCTV was later destroyed by a member of the mob, he said.

‘Falsely implicated’

What about the four men that Hasim Ali named in his complaint? Would they be investigated?

Kumar said Ali’s witness statement would be taken under Section 161 of the criminal procedure code. “When you name people, you should give some proof against them,” he added. He said the main complainant of the FIR, Naresh Chand, had given evidence in the form of CCTV footage recorded on that day.

Lawyer Abhik Chimni said that asking for proof from a complainant was “prima facie incorrect”. “The idea of an investigation is to reach a conclusion about the claim,” he said. “Police asking for proof from the complainant is bizarre.”

A bail application for Hasim Ali was submitted by his lawyer Brij Shyam on May 3 at Karkardooma District Court. It states that the accused was a victim of violence who had filed a complaint but instead had been “falsely implicated” by the police.

At the first hearing on May 6, the court asked investigating officer Suman Kumar to submit a response, Shyam said. The next hearing took place on May 12 where the investigating officer did not turn up and the hearing was again scheduled on May 13, the lawyer said.

After arguments were made on May 13, Hasim Ali was granted bail on May 15 by Additional Sessions Judge Yogita Singh.

In the bail order, the judge noted the counsel’s arguments for the accused which stated that Hasim Ali was “falsely implicated” in the case and was the sole breadwinner of the family. The judge also noted in the order that the investigating officer opposed the bail application and had accused Hasim Ali of being involved in serious offences.

The judge asked the accused to furnish a surety bond of Rs 20,000 and noted the “personal difficulty of the accused” – the fact that he was the sole earning member – to allow his release from judicial custody.

Complained of vandalism – got arrested

Subhash Tyagi, 51, works in a government-run hospital in Delhi. He lives in Yamuna Vihar with his wife and children, while his parents, three brothers and their families live in North Ghonda.

On February 23, the family left Delhi to attend a wedding in Firozpur village in Uttar Pradesh’s Baghpat district. Tyagi stayed back. So did his 26-year-old niece and 16-year-old nephew.

The next day as communal violence spread through North East Delhi, they called him to say tensions were rising in their area, he recalled.

Tyagi left work and reached North Ghonda around 7 pm. While he was parking his bike in front of the gate of the house, some people came to attack him, he alleged. The mob, he claimed, was armed with sticks, stones and firearms and chanted slogans like “Allah Hu Akbar!”

Leaving his motorcycle there, Tyagi ran into a neighbour’s house. When he emerged around 9 pm after the mob retreated, he found his motorcycle had been burnt, the gate of the house had been broken and glass windows shattered, he said. His niece and nephew had recorded videos of the vandalism. They also called the police helpline but no one responded, he said.

On the night of the violence, Tyagi did not return to his home in Yamuna Vihar and stayed back at the family home in North Ghonda for the next four days. His brothers came back from Baghpat around 11 pm on February 24, he said.

On February 27, when *Scroll.in* had visited the area to report on the aftermath of the violence, Tyagi and his brother had given a similar account of the mob violence. A burnt

bike was parked outside their home.

It took the family three weeks to file a police complaint. On March 16, Subhash Tyagi's brother Virender Tyagi wrote to the station house officer at Bhajanpura police station, saying he recognised faces in the violent mob seen in video footage recorded by his daughter. He asked the police to launch an investigation into the matter.

Crime Branch summons

But the police did not file an FIR on the basis of the complaint, said Subhash Tyagi.

However, police officials at Bhajanpura police station told *Scroll.in* that an FIR had been filed on the basis of Virender Tyagi's complaint. They refused to disclose the FIR number to this reporter over the phone.

On April 8, Subhash Tyagi along with his brothers Naresh Tyagi, 53, and Uttam Tyagi, 40, received summons to appear before Inspector Richhpal Singh at the Crime Branch office in Dwarka on April 9. They were asked to bring their mobile phones.

The notices said that the investigation pertained to a case registered at the Jaffrabad police station for offences related to rioting, criminal conspiracy and the Arms Act.

However, at the crime branch office on April 9, where they found themselves as part of a group of 22 men, they were told the case pertained to the murder of a person named Parvez who had been killed near Baburam Chowk in Maujpur. Their mobile phone locations showed they were present near the spot at that time on February 25, the police said.

"If our house is there, then we will be located there itself, no?" said Subhash Tyagi. He claimed his family home located at the corner of gali number 3 of North Ghonda and was over 800 m from Baburam Chowk.

Murder case

Scroll.in accessed an FIR filed on February

26 by Assistant Sub Inspector Rakesh under Section 302 for punishment of murder. The FIR, which is not available on the police website, does not name any of the accused.

The FIR states that on February 25, a 48-year-old man identified as Pravesh was brought dead to GTB Hospital at Dilshad Garden. The medico-legal certificate said he had suffered a firearm injury near Baburam Chowk, Maujpur at around 7 pm. In the FIR, the police official said he tried to search for eyewitnesses but could not find anyone.

Inspector Richhpal Singh told *Scroll.in* that the person identified in the FIR as Pravesh was later identified as Parvez Alam.

Parvez Alam, 50, ran an NGO in the area providing books to students and free eye surgeries for the elderly. On February 27, *Scroll.in* visited the area and spoke to a neighbour who claimed he had seen Alam fall to a bullet while making an appeal for peace at the corner of his lane in Ghonda. Alam's son also recounted his father's last moments to reporters outside the GTB hospital.

Baburam Chowk in Maujpur is at least 500 metres away from the lane in which Alam lived. *Scroll.in* sent queries to the police about this discrepancy – the FIR alleges that Alam suffered his injury "near Baburam Chowk", though his neighbour and son say he was shot at the corner of his lane. The piece will be updated if the police respond.

On April 9 morning, Subhash Tyagi had carried a pen drive with him to the crime branch office, which had screenshots of the mob vandalism footage recorded from a neighbour's CCTV camera on February 24 evening in North Ghonda. But the police refused to see it. "They [police] said we should show all this in court," he said.

Subhash Tyagi claimed that police made all the men sit on the floor of the crime branch office without maintaining any physical distancing norms required to avoid the spread

of the coronavirus.

He was finally allowed to leave at 11 pm after being made to fill up some forms. "Like a dossier for criminals," he said. "They told me they were letting me go because I have a government job."

But his brothers were arrested and so were several other men, he recalled. Many were familiar faces from the area. "Everyone there was from our community, the Hindu community," he said. "Humare aas paas ke log the sab." He said that many of those arrested that day were neighbours and victims of the February violence in which their homes and vehicles had been destroyed.

Inspector Richhpal Singh told *Scroll.in* that 16 people were arrested from that group in connection with the case. He said that the police had photos and videos as evidence against them.

The lawyer representing the two brothers said that their bail application had been filed but the case had not yet been listed at the Karkardooma District Court. The lawyer, who did not wish to be identified, said that the police had no "potent evidence" against the brothers.

Subhash Tyagi received another notice signed by Inspector Ricchpal Singh dated May

20 to appear before him on May 21 at 11 am at the crime branch office in Dwarka to give information regarding the investigation of the same FIR under which his brothers were arrested. Tyagi said he was unable to go because his leave was rejected by his workplace in light of Covid-19.

He wrote a letter to the police on May 21 stating that he would not be able to "physically participate" but would assist them and provide them with information over the phone, or through WhatsApp, video conferencing and email, and attached the letter from his workplace cancelling his leave, he said.

Subhash Tyagi said his family has been unable to meet or speak to his brothers since they were arrested on April 9 and taken to Mandoli jail. The family was concerned for their health as both brothers are diabetic, he said.

Listing the educational qualifications of his brothers, who run a packaging business, he asked: "If we were criminals then why would we go there [the crime branch office]?"

This is the first part in a series on the police investigation in the Delhi violence cases.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 24 May 2020. 🌈

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Delhi Police Riot ‘Plot’ Has Trump Present When He Can’t Have Been, Kapil Mishra Absent

The Wire Analysis

There is no loophole too large for the Delhi Police to ignore in what appears to be its singular mission to charge anti-CAA protesters for the riots.

New Delhi: Ever since communal riots broke out in various parts of north-east Delhi in the month of February, supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party have tried to paint the violence as one that was entirely organised by so-called “Muslim mobs”. They deliberately overlooked the BJP-led, high-pitched communal campaign that preceded the Delhi assembly elections.

In the violence which lasted three days, a majority of the 59 people who died were Muslims, and the minority community saw not just the maximum economic damage in the violence but the deliberate desecration of its places of worship. Yet, BJP spokespersons and sections of the big media linked the nationwide protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) which began in December 2019 with the violence that unfolded in the national capital two months later.

Without a shred of evidence, the democratic protests at Shaheen Bagh, Jafraabad, Khajuri Khas, Hauz Rani, etc – which had been conducted peacefully in the preceding two months – were projected as anti-national, and as breeding grounds of terrorism.

Even as the nation grappled with the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the Delhi police took time out to whitewash the graffiti-filled walls of protest art and demolish the makeshift tents at protest sites. A wider narrative to demonise one of the biggest protest movements in Indian history gained further currency when the Delhi police arrested several anti-CAA activists, including

students from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia, in cases related to the Delhi riots. At the same time, BJP leaders like Kapil Mishra and Union minister Anurag Thakur – who openly called for violent action against the anti-CAA dissenters – roamed around free.

The Delhi police has, throughout, steered its probe in a direction that has only facilitated the BJP’s Islamophobic campaign against CAA dissenters. Despite widespread criticisms against its allegedly partisan role, it has not budged an inch. Rather, it has gone ahead and slapped stringent charges like sedition and terror under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against anti-CAA activists.

Last week, the police filed seven charge sheets in connection with the cases related to the communal violence in the national capital. A breakdown of the charge sheets by the web portal, *Quint*, show that allegations the Delhi police have made against arrested activists are based more on conspiracy theories than concrete evidence.

“Well-hatched conspiracy,” really?

Among the seven charge sheets, the first four are against anti-CAA protesters and alleged rioters belonging to the Muslim community. Two have been filed against alleged rioters from the Hindu community.

In two of these charge sheets – one related to the Chand Bagh violence (65/2020) and the other to the murder of Intelligence Bureau official Ankit Sharma (101/2020) – the Delhi Police claims that AAP councillor Tahir Hussain, former JNU student Umar Khalid, and United Against Hate activist Khalid Saifi planned a conspiracy together to carry out a “big blast” during US president Donald Trump’s visit in February 2020.

This theory is the basis of the police’s larger

claim that the Delhi riots were part of a “well-hatched” conspiracy.

However, the number of gaps in this conspiracy theory is astounding.

The police claim that the three activists met on January 8 at Shaheen Bagh, and that Khalid Saifi organised a meeting between the alleged key conspirators Umar Khalid and Tahir Hussain. The details provided in the charge sheets say that in the meeting, Umar Khalid claimed that financing the operation would not be a problem as the Islamic political group the Popular Front of India (PFI) could fund it and take care of the logistics.

It further said that the idea of the “big blast” was decided “so that the Central Govt. could be shaken on the issue of CAA/NRC and so as to defame the country in the international arena.” The police said that “all necessary logistics and manpower were arranged prior to these riots and a number of people from U.P. West had been called before these riots for the purpose of riots in Delhi at a large scale”, and added that this aspect is being probed in a separate case by the Special Cell. Para 65 of the chargesheet in FIR 65/2020 notes:

“These riots were planned to be happened [sic] during or prior to the visit of US President Donald Trump in the month of February, 2020. For this, all necessary logistics and manpower were arranged prior to these riots and a number of people from U.P. West had been called before these riots for the purpose of riots in Delhi at a large scale.”

However, as Aditya Menon and Aishwarya S. Iyer noted in *The Quint*, the “first reference to a possible Trump visit to India was only on January 13, five days after this alleged meeting took place”. The first media report that came on Trump’s possible visit was on January 13 in *The Hindu*. There too, the daily mentioned only tentative dates and attributed the information to unnamed sources.

No mention of Trump visiting India was given

by either the Ministry of External Affairs or the Press Information Bureau until then.

The Hindu in its January 13 report said thus:

“Security and logistics teams from Washington are expected in Delhi this week to prepare for a possible visit by U.S. President Donald Trump, multiple sources have confirmed to The Hindu. The visit, which has not yet been announced, would bring the U.S. President to India a year after he declined an invitation to be chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations, and will go ahead at the end of February as long as dates don’t need to be changed to accommodate the impeachment process in the U.S. Senate”.

“Sources said the decision to visit India, at Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s invitation, was discussed during a telephone call between the leaders on January 7. According to the sources, Mr. Trump is “keen” to visit early in the year, ahead of elections in November, and both sides are working towards a visit in the last week of February.”

“Mr. Trump’s visit will be a diplomatic boost for both leaders and will likely coincide with the U.S. Congress’s impeachment process, and the date of the visit, currently scheduled around February 24 may have to be shifted to accommodate the Senate vote on his impeachment motion.”

Other newspapers like the *Hindustan Times* followed with a similar story with the headline: India, US in talks to finalise dates for Donald Trump’s state visit.

The police, however, have not given any information on how Hussain, Khalid and Saifi got to know about Trump’s visit to India at a time when the Union government itself was not sure about it.

The other possibility can only be that the police made an error in the charge sheet. However, when *The Quint* spoke to inspector Amleshwar Rai, the investigation officer-in-charge of the Ankit Sharma murder case and the primary

signatory of the charge sheet, he had the following to say, “It was probably decided on 8 January or even before that. However, the Special Cell is better placed to explain this to you.”

Satish Tamta, a renowned criminal lawyer in Delhi, said that it was evident the police were claiming that the planning of a conspiracy happened during the January 8 meeting. “However what is rather problematic is that while the police is making this claim, they have to also mention in the charge sheet, who these details were disclosed by and what was the evidence. Here there appears to be no evidence at all. This is their own thinking,” he said, adding that the police’s claim does not stand its ground as there was no evidence to back it.

“A story is being narrated and attempts are being made to make the charge sheet interesting while finalising it – while there is no evidence to back this claim yet, even if an accused or a alleged conspirator has made this statement, it can only be relied upon if it leads to recovery of material/article. Otherwise, the statement is not admissible as evidence,” he told *The Quint*. On being asked whether the police could modify the charge sheet, Tamta said that he has not heard or seen any such instance when the police have gone back on its claim.

Umar Khalid, one of the accused, has told *The Wire* there is no truth in the police charge sheet. Allegations against him in the Delhi riots were first mooted on social media by the BJP and its supporters when they circulated an edited clip of his speech in Amravati, Maharashtra. Union home minister Amit Shah also backed the allegation against Khalid and the civil society group United Against Hate. Shah told the parliament, “United Against Hate – the name sounds so pious but look what they advocated. They said, ‘(Donald) Trump is about to come, we should block the streets’.”

However, when *The Wire* reviewed the whole speech, it was clear that the edited clip was circulated to malign him.

The edited clip was taken out from this portion of Khalid’s speech, “...on the 24th (of February), when Donald Trump comes to India, we will tell that the Prime Minister and Government of India are trying to divide the country; they are destroying the values of Mahatma Gandhi; and that the people of India are fighting against the rulers. If the rulers want to divide India, the people of India are ready to work towards uniting the country. We will come out on the streets. Will you people come out.”

Even this clip, however, contains nothing that could be interpreted as incitement of violence.

A contrasting picture

When it comes to accusations against the alleged Hindu rioters, it appears that the Delhi police is more interested in justifying their side of violence than producing any concrete evidence. Differences between the two sets of charge sheets indicate the line of the Delhi police’s investigation. The Hindu side of violence is seen by the police as “retaliation” to the “provocation” by the Muslim mobs.

In its review of the charge sheet filed regarding the murder of one car mechanic and painter Aqil Ahmed (FIR number 36) and an auto rickshaw driver Musharraf (FIR number 38) in Bhagirathi Vihar, *The Quint* showed how the Delhi police went easy on the Hindu mobs.

“Both the places of incident were not covered with any CCTV cameras. Based upon source information, it was revealed that some Hindu men had joined hands on 25th & 26th February, 2020, post the riots on 24.02.2020 in which Muslim mobs had done massive rioting in which large scale loss of lives and properties of Hindu community had taken place. The group was identified and some of the group members were picked up. During questioning, it was revealed that on 25th & 26th February, 2020, a ‘Whatsapp’ group was created. This group had 125 members. Several members of the group were silent in the “Whatsapp” group. Subsequently, eye-witnesses were identified and

examined. Bases upon oral evidences and the chat in the Whatsapp group, the identity of the perpetrators was fixed,” the charge sheet against 10 accused Hindu men who were arrested in the murder cases said.

While the conspiracy angle is the most prominent accusation against the arrested anti-CAA activists, the same is missing in the charge sheets filed against the Hindu side.

“For instance, the blocking of the Jafrabad road as well as the violence near Rajdhani School in New Mustafabad are accused of being part of a pre-planned conspiracy. However, the conspiracy angle is entirely missing in the charge sheets involving the other side,” the news portal reported.

In another charge sheet regarding the killing of brothers Amir Ali and Hashim Ali, the police have claimed that “revenge” and “retaliation” were the reasons the Hindu accused allegedly formed a Whatsapp group to respond to the violence perpetrated by the Muslim mobs.

However, in chargesheets where the anti-CAA activists are accused, the police have claimed that such WhatsApp groups were part of a larger conspiracy. For instance, in the Jafrabad case, a WhatsApp message has been used to allege a conspiracy.

The message that the police have used to accuse the two founding members of Pinjra Tod, Devnagana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, of conspiracy lists measures for women to defend their homes.

Selective mention of chronology?

Similarly, in the 1500-word long chronology of events leading up to the riots which the Delhi police have mentioned, the charge sheet has conspicuously omitted the controversial speech by BJP leader Kapil Mishra on February 23 at Maujpur. Mishra had given an ultimatum to the police that if it cannot remove the anti-CAA protesters from their sit-in, he and his supporters can do that on their own.

The police’s chronology, however, jumps

directly from the road blockade by anti-CAA protesters on February 22 and 23 to the violent incidents during the Delhi riots. The violent turn of events is entirely pinned on the anti-CAA protesters.

The omission of Mishra’s speech is surprising as he had threatened the police in the presence of the deputy commissioner of police (DCP). It is interesting how the police have chronicled the events on February 23.

“On 23.02.2020, information was received that at 3.00 PM that *some people* demanding reopening of carriage way of 66-Foot Road at the Jafrabad Metro station would assemble in Mauj Pur Chowk, which is about 750 meters from Jafrabad Metro station,” the chargesheet in the Jafrabad case said. It added that the people from both sides then clashed with each other, pelting stones on each other.

It said that while the police then dispersed the crowd by using tear gas shells and lathi charge, the “situation continued to be volatile and tension started to spread to other areas like Welcome, Jafrabad, Dayalpur, Usmanpur, Bhajanpura, Gokalpuri and Khajuri Khas.”

“Incidents of stone pelting were also reported from Sherpur Chowk and Chand Bagh by Anti-CAA protesters,” the charge sheet said.

Curiously, in contrast, the police lists incidents of violence in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Friends Colony on December 13 and 15, formation of Jamia coordination committee to protest against on CAA on December 15, beginning of Shaheen Bagh sit-in on December 16, and other such protests, in its chronology of events leading up to the riots. All these events were separated by the riots by a period of two months and a distance of over 20 kilometres.

But it does not consider Mishra’s speech on the day when the riots broke out important enough to be included in the list of possible reasons for the riots.

12 June 2020. 

3 Traits Of Modi That Have Cost India Dearly

Ramachandra Guha

Last week, the respected US rating agency Moody's downgraded India's sovereign rating to Baa3, the lowest grade. It thereby joined Standard and Poor and Fitch, which had already relegated India to the bottom rung in this regard. Explaining their decision, Moody's said: "While today's action is taken in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, it was not driven by the impact of the pandemic. Rather, the pandemic amplifies vulnerabilities in India's credit profile that were present and building prior to the shock, and which motivated the assignment of a negative outlook last year."

Embarrassingly, this negative verdict appeared just as the ruling party was marking the sixth anniversary of Narendra Modi's becoming Prime Minister. Meanwhile, two senior Delhi columnists independently wrote sober assessments of his tenure. Both had once hoped that Modi would be an economic reformer; both felt disappointed that he had turned out otherwise. Writing in *The Indian Express*, Tavleen Singh thought that these failures were largely the consequence of the premature death of Arun Jaitley, after which (or so she claimed), "Suddenly, the priorities and the image of the government changed dramatically." Writing in *The Print*, Shekhar Gupta laid the blame at the feet of the IAS officers who advised Modi, whom he saw as cautious and risk-averse, unlike the "stellar team of civil servants" who had advised previous Prime Ministers such as Narasimha Rao and Atal Behari Vajpayee.

My own analysis is very different. Narendra Modi has been a disappointment as a Prime Minister not because he has bad advisers or because some good advisers died relatively young, but because of his own faults and failings. There are three character traits in particular that help explain why, despite the two resounding

electoral mandates he has won, Narendra Modi has not been able to deliver the sort of progress on the economic front that his supporters had once thought he would.

The first trait is the suspicion of experts and expertise. As a self-made man, who has risen to the top on the basis of his own intelligence, his own drive, and his own will-power, Modi is suspicious of those with formal qualifications from elite institutions. His statement that he preferred "hard work to Harvard" was a striking manifestation of this belief. In truth, the second does not preclude the former; had Abhijit Banerjee not worked so industriously after securing a PhD from Harvard, he would never have won a Nobel Prize for economics. Good governance needs both focused energy as well as expert knowledge. The disaster of demonetization - which set the Indian economy back many years - could have been avoided if the Prime Minister had listened to the professional advice of the (MIT-educated) Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. More recently, the fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been far less serious had the Prime Minister based his policies on the advice of the country's top epidemiologists rather than on his own penchant for the spectacular and the dramatic.

The second trait, which is related to the first, is the cult of personality that the Prime Minister has built around himself. As a technocrat who has worked with the PM once told me, the rule that all advisers have to observe is "total obsequiousness, no credit". The line with which the Prime Minister fought and won the 2019 elections, '*Modi Hai toh Mumkin Hai*', says it all. Only Modi will defeat terrorism, Modi and Modi alone will humiliate Pakistan (and now China), Modi by himself will eliminate corruption, Modi will surely make India the *Vishwa Guru* -

this is the sort of thinking that is ubiquitous within the ruling party and the central government. But a large and complex country like India cannot be governed effectively and well through the force of one person's will - however farsighted and hardworking that individual might be.

For all the confidence and strength he exudes, the behaviour of the Prime Minister suggests that he is, within himself, a somewhat insecure man. This is evident not just in his reluctance to publicly praise his ministers or advisers when they do a good job, but also in the sort of people he relies on for advice. The preponderance of Gujarat cadre officers around him and in positions of influence in the central government is one sign. A second is his tendency to shun some outstanding IAS officers, merely because they once held important positions in Congress governments. Even within the top ranks of the IAS, loyalty to the Leader, and not the quality of one's intellect, is what the Modi Government prizes most.


Back in 2013-14, when Narendra Modi launched his campaign to become Prime Minister, he was enthusiastically endorsed by many Indians not otherwise inclined to the Hindutva ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Disgusted by the corruption and cronyism of the Congress regime, they saw Modi as a dynamic economic reformer, an Indian Deng Xiaoping, who would unleash the forces of entrepreneurial dynamism. They were impressed by his energy, by his being self-made, and, of course, by his oratory. And they took at face value his claim that he had put his RSS past behind him.

Tragically, these well-meaning Indians were mistaken in giving Narendra Modi the benefit of doubt. For the third reason that Modi has been such a disappointment as Prime Minister is that he remains a sectarian Sanghi at heart. In his public statements, he has been careful not to appear outrightly communal-though even here he can slip, as in his notorious remark that he could identify those protesting against the Citizenship

Amendment Act by the clothes they wore. In any case, his silences have spoken most eloquently in this regard. His silence when his MPs and even a cabinet minister were publicly praising alleged lynchers of innocent Muslims, his silence when his Home Minister was suggesting that Muslims were 'termites', his silence when the BJP IT Cell relentlessly communalized the incident of the Tablighi Jamaat, and above all, his endorsement of the nakedly discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act all show that he remains committed to the core Hindutva dogma that this is essentially a Hindu country, and that Indian Muslims must forever be proving their loyalty to the Motherland or else risk persecution.

When the energies of Narendra Modi's party and of his government are so substantially taken up with showing Muslims their place, it is scarcely surprising that the economy was in free fall well before COVID-19, that our media was threatened and intimidated, that our public institutions were compromised, that social peace was so fragile. For a politics based on polarization can never be conducive to a nation's progress.

If the *Acche Din* promised by Narendra Modi in May 2014 still remain elusive a full six years after he became Prime Minister, then the buck must stop with Narendra Modi himself. Not the death of a trusted colleague, not the incompetence of a few officers in his inner circle, but his own megalomania, his own suspicion of experts, his own reluctance to share credit, and his own inability to transcend the sectarian ideology that he embraced as a young man - it is these traits of Narendra Modi himself that explain why history will judge him far more harshly than his naïve and trusting supporters believe or hope.

(Ramachandra Guha is a historian based in Bengaluru. His books include 'Environmentalism: A Global History' and 'Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World'.) 

Global Human Rights Body Calls Activists’ Detentions ‘Arbitrary’, Demands Release

The International Federation for Human Rights ‘urged’ India to release ‘immediately and unconditionally’ all the activists mentioned in the letter.

The Wire Staff



The arrested activists named include Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita, Akhil Gogoi, Safoora Zargar and Meeran Haider.

New Delhi: The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (IFHR) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah terming the detentions of several Indian human rights activists ‘arbitrary’. The IFHR has raised concerns, saying the activists have been arrested for “their participation in peaceful protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (CAA)” in the last few months.

The letter highlights the cases of Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, student activists who have been associated with the anti-CAA protests in Delhi and were arrested recently by the Delhi police.

“The Observatory firmly condemns the arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of Ms. Devangana Kalita and Ms. Natasha Narwal, as they seem to be only aimed at punishing them for their legitimate human rights activities. Their detention takes place after the arrest of other human rights defenders earlier this year for protesting against the CAA,”

the letter read.

In addition to Kalita and Narwal, the IFHR has also expressed concerns over the arrests of and charges against Meeran Haider, Gulfisha Fatima, Safoora Zargar, Shifa-ur-Rehman, Asif Iqbal, Akhil Gogoi, Khafeel Khan and Umar Khalid. All of them have been detained or charged in 2020 for their role in the anti-CAA protests that broke out in December across the country.

The IFHR has also pointed out that due process was not followed in the arrests of these activists – many of whom are women. Zargar was arrested and kept in solitary confinement despite being pregnant.

The letter also says that the international body is “concerned about the ongoing arbitrary detention and judicial harassment under the UAPA of several other human rights defenders, including Mr. Sharjeel Imam, Mr. Khalid Saifi and Ms. Ishrat Jehan, which is seemingly in retaliation to their opposition to the CAA.”

The IFHR has ‘urged’ India to release ‘immediately and unconditionally’ all the activists mentioned in the letter. It has urged the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to intervene in the cases. It has also said that ‘all acts of harassment’ against activists must end.

“Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by India,” the letter said.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 1 June 2020. 🌈

India Registers Low ‘Academic Freedom Index’ Score in New International Report

A new report proposes a score for each country to help determine the level of academic freedom its universities and academic centres really enjoy.

The Wire Staff

Bangalore: India has a low score in a new global index of academic freedom, a performance that mirrors its poor ranking on global indices of media freedom and is likely to heighten concerns about the Modi government’s attitude towards constitutionally protected liberties.

The index proposes a score for each country to help determine the level of academic freedom its universities and academic centres really enjoy, and which the researchers behind the idea say could be used to understand a university’s attractiveness in addition to its infrastructure, research output, etc.

Specifically, the index and accompanying report try to quantify the freedom of university scholars to debate politically and culturally controversial topics without fearing for their safety or studies, and without any external influence on the institutions’ affairs, based on a combination of factual data and the assessments of 1,800 academicians worldwide.

The authors, affiliated with the Global Public Policy Institute, the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (FAU) Erlangen-Nürnberg, the Scholars At Risk Network and the V-Dem Project at the University of Gothenburg, have thus prepared what they call an academic freedom index (AFI). The index has a maximum value of 1, although a historical analysis the authors undertook indicates the value has reached up to 4 in the last century.

According to this analysis, India has an AFI of 0.352, comparable to the scores of Saudi Arabia and Libya. Curiously, countries that scored higher than India include Pakistan (0.554), Brazil (0.466), Ukraine (0.422), Somalia

(0.436) and Malaysia (0.582). Uruguay and Portugal top the list with scores of 0.971 each, followed closely by Latvia and Germany. At the bottom are North Korea (0.011), Eritrea (0.015), Bahrain (0.039) and Iran (0.116).

India is also one of a handful of countries whose AFI dipped by at least 0.1 points in the five years until 2019. But the authors advise caution: “While there is evidence of a deteriorating condition for academics in both [Brazil and India], the extent of the AFI score’s decline seems somewhat disproportional in comparison to earlier periods in the countries’ history, as well as in comparison to other countries over the same period.” Even so, India’s relative position in the rankings is not entirely surprising, and seems to be broadly reflective of state interference with institutional autonomy. Katrin Kinzelbach, a professor of political science at FAU, who conceived the AFI and led the report’s creation, told *The Wire* that their enterprise intends to capture the level of interference agnostic of its source. But Indian scholars have complained of state interference the most in numerous anecdotal accounts captured in the media in recent years, e.g. canceled seminars and talks, politically biased appointments, filing of criminal cases against student leaders for political speech, books withdrawn from course curricula, etc.

In the last six years, encompassing a little more than one term of Narendra Modi as the prime minister of India, the country has seen many protests by – and incidents of physical violence against – students and academics. One of the first such protests happened at the Film

and Television Institute of India, Pune, when students protested the government's attempts to interfere with the institute's management, curricula and even cultural events on campus.

That was in June 2015. Since then, numerous universities around the country, most notably Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in the national capital, have had to contend with more and more political interference, some of it prompted by agitations led by the ruling party's student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, or else pushed directly by the party through the education ministry.

The AFI has eight components. Three are based on factual data and the remaining five are 'expert-coded': they're based on the 1,810 scholars' assessments "integrated in a Bayesian measurement model". The components are:

1. Freedom to research and teach
2. Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
3. Institutional autonomy
4. Campus integrity
5. Freedom of academic and cultural expression
6. Constitutional protection of academic freedom
7. International legal commitment to academic freedom under the the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
8. Existence of universities

The answers to questions pertaining to the first five considerations is a degree. For example, the options for the first question are 'completely restricted', 'severely restricted', 'moderately restricted', 'mostly free' and 'fully free'.

A common issue with such responses is that the calculations involving the answers will assume the differences between successive options are equal, but in reality they're often not.

Kinzelbach acknowledged this concern to *The Wire* – but also said she doesn't think "there is a better alternative for an index of this kind."

In addition, she said this is also why she and her colleagues had published an index, not a 'ranking': "precisely because rankings wrongly suggest equidistance between ranks. In our report, we also suggest comparing countries' academic freedom performance in five broad bands or status groups." As a result, Kinzelbach said, "I don't think that an ordinal scale with a slightly different wording would have led to vastly different assessments."

Next, each indicator-year datapoint for a country is included in the dataset only if at least three country-experts answer the operative question. Each country-expert is chosen after filling a form in which they are required to list at least two professional references and "publications in support of their expertise".

According to Atanu Biswas, a professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, the report's accompanying 'codebook' doesn't have many details about the technique used to "integrate" the assessments, called "Bayesian factor analysis". Biswas only said it's used "widely in psychometry and educational statistics".

Madhusudhan Raman, a postdoctoral fellow at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, also cautioned against over-interpreting conclusions based on one figure. "A country that registers 'strong' GDP growth may well have done it on the backs of an exploited labour force, and indices are often blind to these transgressions," he said in an email.

This said, the report notes, "The AFI is publicly available and continuously updated, and its data can be freely used by researchers from any field who are interested in issues related to academic freedom." The authors also "invite scientific scrutiny of the country experts' coding and hope that more experts will contribute their assessments in the years to come, providing validation, improvements, and additional nuances as applicable."

Courtesy **The Wire**, 7 June 2020. 

The Brahmanas

Vinod Jain

At one place in his book 'The Principal Upanishads' Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan wrote a small explanatory piece on the Brahmanas. In the first para he says:

“The elements of the ritualistic cult found in the Vedas are developed in the Brahmanas into an elaborate system of ceremonies. While in the *Rig Veda* the sacrifices are means for the propitiation of the gods, in the Brahmanas they became ends in themselves. Even the gods are said to owe their position to sacrifices. There are many stories of the conflict between *Devas* and *Asuras* for world power and of the way in which gods won through the power of the sacrifice.

The hymns of the Rig Veda that were used to propitiate the gods and goddesses so that the Rishis (and others) may get from them the worldly things and security etc., is referred to differently here. Those gods and goddesses there were an extension of the idea and relationship of cause and effect. Realising that everything must have a cause, the people of the Vedic period thought that forces like rain, wind etc. must be guided by persons more powerful than ordinary human beings. Those gods and goddesses, imagined to be human-like but more powerful, were propitiated for above benefits.

Now, as pointed out here, the Brahmanas show a significant shift. The practices of the Vedic period are referred to as 'elements of the ritualistic cult in the Vedas'. It further says that the same is 'developed in the Brahmanas into an elaborate system of ceremonies'. So the Brahmanas are an elaborate system of ceremonies. It further says 'while in the Rig Veda the sacrifices are means for the propitiation

of the gods, in the Brahmanas they become ends in themselves'. We have noted in the earlier piece on Rig Veda that in the Rig Veda we find proofs of simple primitive rationalism. But in the Brahmanas they become ends in themselves'. So, a significant shift is that the earlier form of simple primitive rationalism is given up. An elaborate system of ceremonies takes its place. But then a startling statement comes forth: "Even the Gods are said to owe their position to sacrifices." the Vedas that were believed to be the the greatest documents of yore gets turned into something that could be played around cheaply.

How did it happen? Why did it happen? Was it due to the development of some kind of brahmanism that wanted to show the power of its priests to the general public? Was it this factor that increased the power of the priests and reduced the position of the Rig Vedic gods? The stories of *devas* and *asuras* suggest the same kind of thing. But these by and large are questions to be explored by students of history. The students of history will also note the admission that the 'the cult found in Vedas are developed in the Brahmanas'.

Dr Radhakrishnan adds: "it is not the mechanical performance of a sacrificial rite that brings about the desired result, but the knowledge of its real meaning. Many of the Brahmana texts are devoted to the exposition of the mystic significance of the various elements of the ritual. By means of the sacrifices we 'set in motion' the cosmic forces dealt with and get from them the desired results. The priests who knew the details of the aim, meaning and performance of the sacrifice came into great prominence. Gods became

negligible intermediaries. If we perform a rite with knowledge, the expected benefit will result. Soon the actual performance of the rite becomes unnecessary. Ritualistic religion becomes subordinate to knowledge.

I should like to compare this with the modern day knowledge produced by a scientist or a bunch of scientists and then the daily 'ritual' that follows it and done by lay people countless number of times the world over successfully. A group of scientists work on and find the knowledge about electricity and magnetism and place it before the populace in usable form. The people, the lay people, even little children can thereafter mechanically perform this ritual. But every time this ritual of merely pushing a button is performed, the desired result is there: the light or fan or the AC or the TV is on or off. As a matter of fact this gets repeated in countless number of cases countless number of times all around the world everyday. The whole argument in the above quote thereby gets lost.

We can say that the knowledge of the forces of nature once known can be put to a variety of uses for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

But the above quoted text about the Brahmanas shows at least three different tendencies of that time. One, after the implied materialism of the Vedic period, an attempt is there to completely turn it around and push the ideas of mysticism. Two, to lay the groundwork of a priesthood that needed the dose of mysticism that would *delude* the people. And, three, this dose of mysticism gradually and increasingly gave the priestly class a hold over the people. This could be used for exploitation.

"The Brahmanas are convinced that life on earth is, on the whole, a good thing. The ideal for man is to live the full turn of his life on earth. As he must

die, the sacrifice helps him to get to the world of heaven. Says Dr. Radhakrishnan in the next para.

If the Brahmanas were convinced that life on earth is, on the whole, a good thing, then they should have accepted its implication. Its implication is materialism. They should have accepted it rather than deny it and introduce mysticism. This introduction of mysticism, therefore, suggests an ulterior motive on the part of the priestly class: they wanted to control the people. But they came forward with a weak argument. If life on Earth is a good thing, why should they aspire to go to heaven? This shows a certain stage of development of the relationship between the good life on earth and the need to go to heaven. They must have later on corrected it to serve their purpose better by saying that life on earth is bad therefore look forward to a better life in heaven.

"While the Vedic poets hoped for a life in heaven after death, there was uneasiness about the interference of death in a future life. The fear of re-death, *Punar-mrutyu* becomes prominent in the Brahmanas. Along with the fear of re-death arose the belief of the imperishability of the self or the atman, the essential part of man's being.... Under the influence of popular animism which sees souls similar to the human in all parts of nature....," said he in last para.

We see here evolution of ideas and of philosophy, during the Vedic era and after. They were thinking of death, and of life in heaven after death. Then they thought life is due to atman. That atman is imperishable. Then there was the popular idea of animism which sees souls similar to the human in all parts of nature.

(To be Contd....on Page - 40)

The Fifth Tantra

P.A.S. Prasad

The fifth Tantra, (being the last Tantra of the ancient Indian treatise the Pancha Tantra) deals with ill considered hasty actions. It is pertinent, however, to quote from the introductory stanza of the fifth Tantra of the Panchatantra, in the popular translation of Arthur W. Ryder into English from the Sanskrit text.

Deeds ill known, ill recognised,
Ill accomplished, ill devised-
Thought of these let no man harbour;
Take a warning from the barber.

The history of the world is replete with a galore of such actions perpetrated by rulers of countries inflicting horrendous misery, pain and death on their people.

A few classic, well known instances are:

Emperor Nero burning existing Rome before building a new Rome.

Ordering the entire population of Delhi by Tughlaq to move to Daulatabad along with shifting of the capital and again reversing it after the damage was done.

Bajirao in Maharashtra delaying by six hours on the advice of his priest going to the battle of third Panipat resulting in total rout of his forces resulting in far reaching repercussions for the country.

Napoleon's invasion of Russia ending in total disaster. At a later date this was even criticised by the very successful dictator Kamal Pasha of Turkey.

In World War II, Hitler in spite of the utter defeat of a military genius like Napoleon's invasion of Russia, before him, rushing into war with Russia to be finished once for all.

So was the case of Japan bombing Pearl Harbour without properly assessing its own strength as well as the might of America.

Coming to the recent history of India after

independence: The Kashmir issue is a classic case. Nehru took a hasty decision in stopping our troops in hot pursuit of the retreating Pakistan sponsored tribal attack allowing the occupation of the region now known as POK. Actually it was just very easy to integrate at that point of time the entire princely state of J&K which was one of the many princely states of British India on the eve of Indian independence. This POK under Pak control has brought in its train very serious problems of Kashmir faced by India, leave alone espionage and terrorist activities.

The imposition of emergency during the Indira Gandhi era just to save her position and power even after being unseated legally was a great blunder. Had she stepped down, her image and her moral stance would have made her immensely popular and she would have won any subsequent election without a campaign. It was an ill considered hasty action without caring for the consequences which impacted all branches of the constitution. Her popularity and moral standing took a severe beating. All this apart, the misery and hardship caused to the people of all strata of society. She did not reckon with the stature and moral standing of stalwart leaders like Jaya Prakash Narain, Morarji Desai, George Fernandez and more such popular leaders who would rise up against her. The whole episode is a black mark in the history of modern India.

Now coming to the catastrophic ill considered two decisions of the BJP govt. of the present times. Demonetisation decision crushed the ordinary people only. The announcement was made without sufficient volume of ready cash to meet the demand. The people's plight was harrowing. The elite, the influential and those who could befriend the bank employees got away with all that they

wanted. The bank sector employees suddenly became the new rich segment of society. Of course the gold jewellery shops made a lot. Not even one influential person right from a village to the metro was found in the long queues of ordinary people waiting before banks to exchange their notes. This tragedy was avoidable if careful planning and a thought was given on the decisions impact.

Next great human tragedy which was also so easily avoidable is the Lockdown-I imposed and being extended from time to time. This has caused human misery not witnessed anywhere in modern times.

The rulers knew well before hand what they were going to do. They could have at least given a week or ten days time by announcing the date in advance. They could have announced the date just before the Bhopal swearing in drama. This would have given at least bare enough time for all those wanting to return to base. The Lockdown, thus would have taken place on the dot, without the horrors of migrant labourers being stranded at places without a roof, money, clothes and necessities of life instead of being asked by the PM again and again with his apologies, and seeking some more sacrifices from the already suffering masses.

As usual, the ordinary people had to endure and bear the inhuman brunt. The worst sufferers, the forgotten factor, are the migrant workers. Their tragedy has made us ashamed and embarrassed; their plight has made us feel guilty beyond belief. There is no such parallel in modern times anywhere. Our inhumanity to fellow beings can never be forgiven. Our ethics, our often spouted ancient heritage proved our hollowness.

The majority verdict in favour of the BJP in the Parliamentary elections is conveniently mis-interpreted, resulting in chest thumping and back-patting as they believe and want/others to believe that it was all due to the magnificent

leadership and also an absolute endorsement of their policies, little realising that it was the lack of a viable opposition and leaders of stature in their ranks that a mandate was given to the ruling party - as something is better than an unworkable coalition govt as in the past.

Summing up: The present climate is similar to the fifth act of a Shakespearean tragedy. The ruling elite display towards the population the same interest and concern we all have for ants moving in and out of anthills, going about in long rows in search of food, getting crushed by humans trampling on them without giving a thought to the creatures below on the ground toiling incessantly for survival.

The ruling elite have also exposed their utter lack of confidence and trust in the state chief ministers, and lack of national interest and patriotism to the extent they think that they alone are endowed with it, by not taking them into confidence before imposing horrendous decisions on the people.

The precepts laid down by great human beings for good governance have been grossly violated namely:

That that govt. is the best that governs the least,

That every action of the govt. should be tested on the basis of its impact on the poorest of the poor and how many tears are wiped from the eyes of the deprived.

As a result politics without principles and policies without compassion have become the principles of practice. It is an insult to the name of Rama and Rama-Rajya whose name is often repeated for political gains and construction of temples. The word Rama not only means the divine *maryada purush* but also means happiness to self and happiness of others. Rama-Rajya stood for being utterly sensitive to the happiness and well being of every individual and the entire populace as well. Do the *Ram bhakths* of present day India know this? 🌈

Book Review :

South India to North America; Journey of a Journalist Readings from the Autobiography of Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

N.D. Pancholi

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah, a prominent radical humanist and seasoned journalist, has brought out his autobiography under the caption 'South India to North America; Journey of a Journalist'. I have started reading it and went through five chapters depicting his early life from his birth to adulthood. Born on 31st October, 1937 in 'Pathareddy Palem village ' in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh Innaiah gives interesting insights into the social, economic and political environment that prevailed at that time. He was born in the British colonial era when Andhra Pradesh had not come into existence. His district was part of the Madras Presidency which also included present Karnataka.

Innaiah tells his school life and describes his school headmaster who was also a stage actor. Once the headmaster played the role of Krishna and the make-up person asked him to remove his moustache. The teacher refused to do so demanding evidence to show whether Krishna was always without moustache!

Innaiah was facing difficult times trying to get education in school, Many times his name would be struck off from the rolls for nonpayment of school fee. When his dress suffered wear and tear, he yanked the laced curtain of the door of his house, wrapped it around shoulders and attended the school for six months in that manner.

He vaguely remembers elections which took place in 1946 with restricted voting. (In this election 'Radical Democratic Party' formed by M.N. Roy had contested with forceful presence all over India.)

He used to go to movies where there used to be different portions for people to sit i.e. floors, benches, sofas and boxes.(It reminds

me of 1950ies when I used to see movies in Chandni Chowk, Delhi where cinema halls provided benches in the front row, then chairs in middle, and sofas and boxes at the back. The lowest price of the ticket was five annas for which we used to stand for a couple of hours in queue at the ticket window). The usual phenomena was that movie watchers had to withstand the ordeal of frequent interruptions as the film reels snapped from time to time.

There was a rule prevailing in Guntur district that a rickshaw would not carry more than one person, while in contrast in another town Vizianagram a rickshaw was permitted to carry two persons. People of Guntur felt discriminated and a representative team in which Innaiah played prominent part met the district officials of Guntur challenging the rule with the request that rickshaws at Guntur should also be allowed to carry two persons. Their demand was accepted and it was taken as a great victory.

Another interesting episode is that the University Vice Chancellor, Govindarajaulu Naidu proposed conferment of an honorary doctorate on Chief Minister N. Sanjiva Reddy. He took the decision without taking permission from the Senate. In addition, there was the angle of the VC trying to ingratiate himself with the Chief Minister. Brother of Innaiah, who was one of the senators, objected the move. Ignoring the objection, the Vice Chancellor went ahead and conferred the honorary doctorate. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy became Dr. Sanjiva Reddy. Soon a petition was filed in the Nellore court challenging the V.C.'s decision. Challenging the Chief Minister was not an easy task at that time. However, realizing the gravity of the situation, the Chief Secretary to the government issued a

circular to the effect that Sanjiva Reddy's name should not be prefixed with 'Dr.' until the court gave its verdict.

During his college days he came into contact with M.N. Roy's ideas and his followers in Andhra.

Innaiah undergoing penury conditions had to settle at a job at the rate of Rupee 1 for a day in an office. When elections came in 1955, the general impression was that communists would sweep and form government in Andhra as they posed a formidable force. Makineni Basavapunniah, the prominent national leader of the Communist Party gave fiery speeches and used to declare that once the Communists assumed power, they would yoke the rich and fat women and make them plough the fields, It created quite a sensation in the area. To defeat

the Communists, the Congress, Praja Socialist and Krishikar Lok Parties fielded candidates jointly. All national leaders, including Nehru, campaigned in the elections. Attending those meetings and hearing top leaders was a great experience to Innaiah. The communists miserably failed and got only 15 seats.

Innaiah also served for two years as personal assistant to N.G. Ranga who had founded the Swatantra Party and was its President at that time. Innaiah had occasions to meet and interact with prominent leaders, including C. Rajagopalachari. N .G. Ranga would travel in first class while Innaiah would accompany him in the third class in the train as his assistant. At that time trains had three classes: First, Second and Third.

(To be continued ...)


The Brahmanas

Contd. from page 36 ...

That was early history. Much of which is lost, much of which is shrouded in mystery. It is for the historians to unravel it.

We should come out of the delusion and ignorance that prevailed for such a long time in our past. We Indians may not have pursued the ideas and philosophies of our past further, but others have. People in the west gave the studies a different direction. Earlier studies meant only speculation. But in recent times 'speculation' was left aside and 'empirical investigation' was resorted to. Empiricism is the theory that all knowledge is derived from experience and observation. This is the scientific method. This is more reliable and open to one and all.

Let us in this light go back to the quoted paragraph above. We today know that life, human or non-human, is not dependent on atman, that atman has no existence whatsoever, that life is a property of matter that evolved in a certain stage of evolution of Earth. Also that there is no heaven or hell, that there is no re-birth or re-death and no after-life assumed on the basis of the idea of the imperishable atman. Similarly, there are no souls and no scope for the existence of animism.

But we must study our past and reconstruct our history. 

The Radical Humanist on Website

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

Mahi Pal Singh

Some Fascinating Factual Stories of Agehananda Bharati, a Well-known Philosopher

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

(Agehananda Bharati, originally Lois Fischer from Austria, was an outstanding scholar who worked in cultural anthropology department of Syracuse University, USA. Earlier he started his career in Germany where he met Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose. Fascinated by Hindu thought he came to India and joined Ramakrishna Ashram where he edited volumes of Vivekananda. Then he met a renowned Hindu monk in Benares and converted himself as Hindu. He toured all Sankara Mutts on foot, met and discussed Hindu philosophy with Sankaracharyas. He worked in Delhi and Benares Universities and finally met M. N. Roy at Dehra Dun in 1950s. He was thoroughly convinced of Humanist thought and started spreading the thought. He published several scholarly books which were brought out by Chowkamba series, Varanasi. Great tradition and Little traditions of India; Light at the Center, Ochre Robe (autobiography) and a few monographs were well known. He specially studied Tantric tradition and toured Assam, Thailand, Japan, Ceylon for first hand experiences. During 1987 at the invitation of Dr Innaiah Narisetti he delivered M N Roy centenary memorial lectures in Osmania University and Ambedkar Open University. His writings are kept in archives of Syracuse University, USA. Some of his books were translated into Telugu by Dr Narisetti Innaiah and Telugu Akademi published them. His original autobiographical book Ochre Robe was banned in India at the instance of Ramakrishna Mutt and then he republished it from USA by changing the script.)

I invited Mr Swami Agehananda Bharati to deliver two talks on M N Roy for the centenary celebrations in 1987 at Hyderabad. He was teaching at Syracuse University, New York at that time. He readily agreed and came without asking for travel expenses. That was great.

I arranged two talks of Agehananda Bharati, one at Osmania University and another at Open university in Hyderabad.

The talk at Osmania University went off well. Mr Soundararajan, (at present *Purohit* of Chilukuru Venkateswara Temple near Hyderabad airport) was teaching in Osmania University. He welcomed Mr. Bharati and made certain comments about Ramanujacharya's thought.

Agehananda Bharati gave his talk for one

and a half hour covering various aspects of Indian thought and concluded with the philosophy of M N Roy. He condemned Soundararajan's remarks about Ramanujacharya as immature.

The second lecture was delivered in Andhra Pradesh Open University. At the end the academic staff put some questions for which he answered ably. The whole talk was recorded.

Interesting!

When Agehananda Bharati arrived at Hyderabad, we put him in the guest house of the Osmania University. He was in his suit. Staff members formally visited and greeted him.

Next day the staff members came to take him to the lecture hall. Then Agehananda was in his *sanyasi* ochre robe. The same staff

members prostrated and touched his feet. Later Agehananda commented to me saying that it was the miracle of *sanyasi* dress!

When I sought permission to translate the works of Agehananda into Telugu he readily gave permission. Earlier his Ochre Robe was banned by government of India. There were critical remarks about Ramakrishna Mission and Vivekananda in one of his books. Then Agehananda published the same book in the USA and gave permission to me to translate it into Telugu. I did and also published it. I also translated a few of his works into Telugu like 'Great Tradition and Little Traditions in India', which was published by Telugu Akademi, Hyderabad.

Next time by the time I visited Syracuse University, Agehananda Bharati was no more.

He passed away with cancer during 1992. But the University preserved his works and I saw them there.

In India Agehananda Bharati met Roy at Dehra Dun during 1952. A friend of him was taking him to the Himalaya visit and stopped on the way at Dehra Dun at Roy's residence, 13 Mohini Road. The friend asked him to sit in the car and he left to greet Roy. Then Roy came out and asked: Swamiji, will you come into my house for some time. Agehananda obliged and in the sitting room they talked and remembered German culture and life while sipping whisky. Agehananda forgot the time and spent the whole night there. That was a turning point for Agehananda Bharati. He changed and studied Roy. Later Agehananda published a few monographs about Roy's thought. 🌈

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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We request readers and sympathizers to donate generously for the above project as this literature will go long way in enriching the humanist and renaissance movement in the country.

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My America Tour

*Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy
(AGK)*



**Late AGK (Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy)
personally narrated to me the following incident.**

Subhas Chandra Bose was defeated in the Congress Working Committee and removed as President of the Congress. This was the conspiracy of Gandhi and his followers. Tripura Congress Conspiracy occurred and then Bose returned by train to Lucknow. At the railway station no Congress person came to receive him.

In those days several Andhra students were studying in the Lucknow University. Among them were a few followers of M N Roy. They received Subhas at the station and took him to the a hostel of Lucknow University. Bose relaxed there with them. The leading person among them was Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy (known as AGK). They put Bose at ease and treated him well.

**That was Gandhian culture and Congress politics in those days.
Dr. Narisetti Innaiah**

Ancient scientists are punished

Burning at stake



becoz not agreed with majority.

(Goutham Pasula's Facebook post shared by Dr. Narisetti Innaiah)

**Even Today Dissenters are Targeted and Persecuted, and
that too even in the so-called 'Liberal Democracies'!**