

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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Swami Agnivesh, the Crusader is No More



(21 September 1939 – 11 September 2020)

**A life spent fighting bonded labour and
for democratic, secular values, ends**

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Tributes to Sh. Kiran Nanavati, Sh. B.D. Sharma:



With regrets I inform the sad demise of my humanist friend Mr Nanavati Kiran in Gujarat yesterday. We were close friends for several decades. He was a dynamic worker in the field, did magic to explain things rationally. He participated in study camps, field studies. We toured together to Shantiniketan for All India Radical Humanist Camp and he came to Andhra Pradesh at my request. Lovely fellow. We had regular correspondence. Terrible loss.

Narisetti Innaiah

Sad news, Kiran Nanavati passed away. He was in hospital for a rare blood disease; was improving but suddenly went down. Kiran was such a lovely person, a good human being and a thinker. Great loss to the humanist movement in such challenging times ahead. Please convey my deep condolences to the family.

Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, Chairman,
Indian Renaissance Institute.

SAD.....SAD

Humanist-Rationalist Activist Kiran Nanavati (skeptical, as he himself liked to be called) has expired.

Jayanti Patel

I last talked to him about a matter of public concern some weeks back; requested him to write something about it, because I thought he could write on it better than I could. He agreed and did write.

Vinod Jain

His demise is great loss to the humanist movement. Deep condolences to his family members.

Veeranna Gumma

Please send a letter of condolences on behalf of IRI and IRHA to the family of Shri Kiran Nanavati. My heartfelt condolences.

S. C. Jain

So sad news of demise of Kiran Nanavati. Om Shanti. Om Shanti. RIP

Satish Chandra Varma

Our Deep Condolences on the demise of Kiran Nanavati, an active Radical Humanist from Gujarat today. Rationalist Association of India, AP Rationalist Association, Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu express condolences on the sudden demise of Kiran Nanavati.

Meduri Satyanarayana

I am shocked to learn about the demise of Kiran Nanavati bhai. He was a very spirited man.

D.N. Rath

DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF SHRI BADRI DASS SHARMA

Advocate, Supreme Court of India

We salute you for your indomitable courage, foresight and perseverance. Your pioneering spirit has been a beacon of light for us. We reaffirm our commitment to live up to your standards.



(18.03.1926–13.09.2014)

Late Sh. B.D. Sharma

With a deep sense of gratitude, remembered by:
S.C. Varma, Vikram J. Sikand, Ms Deep Shikha Bharti, Atul Wadera, G.S. Singh, Ved. P. Arya
(Advocates, Supreme Court of India)
13.09.2020

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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Founder Editor:

M.N. Roy

Advisor:

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

Editor:

Mahi Pal Singh

Editorial Board:

Ramesh Awasthi, N.D. Pancholi,
Dipavali Sen, Sangeeta Mall

Printer and Publisher:

Satish Chandra Varma

Send articles and reports to:

Mahi Pal Singh at E-20/162-163,
Sector 3, Rohini, Delhi- 110085.
(M) 9312206414, 8178491055
Landline Ph:- 011-41828291

or E-mail them to:

theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or
mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com

**Please send Subscription/Donation
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The Radical Humanist to:

Satish Chandra Varma, Treasurer IRI,
A-1/103, Satyam Apartments, Vasundhara
Enclave, Delhi- 110096. (M) 9811587576.
Email ID: scvarma17@gmail.com

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October 2020

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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Articles and Features :

Why the Indo-Naga Peace Process Is Dead

The political parties, including those supported by the Naga nationalists have only worked for their narrow political interests and have not put forward any vision for the Naga people. There is a bankruptcy of both political imagination and ethics in their dealings with the people.

Nandita Haksar

The failure of the Indo-Naga peace process is very much like the story Gabriel Garcia Marquez tells in his book *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.

In the novel, the setting is a small village in Colombia; here the setting is in a corner of India. Like in the *Death Foretold*, everyone knows that the murder is going to be committed; everyone has played a role in the crime. There is no one who is not complicit.

POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONFLICT

The Naga national movement was born at the height of the Cold War and the fear of the West and the Indian Government was that it could become a Communist stronghold. China hoped to keep the Nagas within its sphere of influence.

Pakistan, China, the USA and Britain all played a role to keep alive the idea that the North East region was not a part of India. There was even a plan to make it a kind of Hongkong.

David R. Syiemlieh in his book, *On the Edge of Empire: Four British Plans for North East India, 1941–1947*, has documented how the idea of keeping the North East region excluded was part of a secret British plan during the closing years of their rule, discussed at the highest levels of the colonial administration for setting up a Crown Colony comprising the hill areas of North East India and the tribal areas of Burma.

The strategic and geographical location of the North East, boxed in by four countries viz.,

China (Tibet), Burma, East Pakistan, and Bhutan, with only a 22 km wide chicken-neck corridor of Siliguri linking it with mainland India, fitted well into the scheme of the colonial rulers to turn the region into their ‘Crown Colony’ under the ‘Coupland Plan’.

The leaders of the Naga national movement, including Z A Phizo rejected this proposal in the hope of negotiating with the Indians after they got their independence.

However, the geo-political significance of the Naga homelands has ensured the continued international interest in the Naga movement for sovereignty. And, China has continued to play a significant political role in sustaining the movement.

It is not in the interest of any of these countries that the Indo-Naga conflict is resolved.

THE INDO-NAGA RELATIONS

It is important to remember that there has been a section of Naga nationalists who have always thought it wiser to negotiate with the Indians. These Naga nationalists also wanted all the Naga-inhabited areas under one administration within India, even if the unification with the Naga-inhabited areas in Myanmar was not immediately possible.

These Naga nationalist leaders include T Sakherie, an Angami, and Runsung Suisa, a Tangkhul, both members of Phizo’s Naga National Council. Suisa stood for elections on Congress ticket and won from the Outer

Manipur constituency in the 1957 general elections. It was Suisa who had suggested that the Nagas become a part of the Indian Union much on the same terms as the Princely States had acceded, by which he meant the Nagas have autonomy on all matters except defence, foreign affairs and communication.

The Indian leadership failed to take the Nagas seriously, dismissing them as primitive tribals and in response to their demands, the Indians sent in their security forces. And thus, began a history of brutal suppression of Naga people and their growing alienation from the Indian state.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

However, the geo-political significance of the Naga homelands compelled the Indians to negotiate with the Naga insurgents.

Three people can be credited for bringing the Indian Government and the Nagas to the negotiating table. It was Deepak Dewan, the editor of a Delhi-based weekly called *North East Sun*, who wanted an exclusive interview with Th Muivah, underground at that time. And he finally managed to get the interview with the help of Grinder Muivah, Th Muivah's brother's son. The interview was published and then Dewan took Grinder to Rajesh Pilot and the wheels of the peace process were set in motion.

In July 1995, P V Narasimha Rao, the then Indian Prime Minister, met the two National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) leaders, Isak Chishi Swu and Th Muivah in Paris. Successive prime ministers, too, personally met the Naga leaders.

And finally in 1997, the NSCN leaders and the Government of India resolved to sit across and discuss the possibility of peace. The Indian Parliament was informed and the process began.

The peace process was based on three basic conditions:

1. The peace talks will be unconditional. By

this, it meant there would not be talk of having an arrangement within the Constitution of India.

2. The talks would be held at the highest level, in other words, the negotiators would be a person directly responsible to the Indian Prime Minister and on the Naga side, Th Muivah holds the position of Prime Minister in the Naga underground government.

3. The talks would be outside India.

4. There would be an elaborate mechanism for maintaining a ceasefire; and with some conditions the Naga Army were allowed to carry their arms and have their camps, which were to be designated.

This meant that the Naga Army officers were allowed to carry their arms as long as they were not seen; but they could have their arms within the Designated Camps.

A senior former Indian Army officer was usually in charge of the ceasefire monitoring along with senior officers of the Naga Army.

Throughout the peace talks, the Nagas ran their parallel government and the Naga Army continued to train new recruits.

However, one can see this framework is unique and seemed to offer a level playing field for negotiations.

MANIPUR FACTOR

The first obstacle to the peace process was the demand of the NSCN that the ceasefire should not be confined to the state of Nagaland since the organisation had operations all over the North East. They wanted the ceasefire to be without territorial limits.

The Manipur Government objected because they said this demand was an indirect way of claiming that the hill areas of Manipur were a part of the Naga homelands.

From the point of view of the Meiteis, the erstwhile Princely state of Manipur had always included the hill areas. There were many traditions which linked the Hills with the Valley from ancient times.

The Nagas of Manipur have, from the time of Indian Independence, asked for a separation from the Valley of Manipur which is dominated by the Vaishnavite Hindus and some Meitei Muslims; whereas the tribal people of the Hills mostly follow Christianity. It was these conversions that caused the chasm in the Manipur state.

There are some Naga intellectuals who have also supported the idea of the unity of the Hills and Valley. Others have pointed out the Hill people have not been treated equally and remain backward and without basic amenities.

The Nagas and their supporters argued that India had created three states in 2000, Jharkhand by bifurcating Bihar; Chhattisgarh by bifurcating Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand from bifurcation of Uttar Pradesh. Later, the state of Telengana was carved out from Andhra Pradesh, so why could the Naga-inhabited areas not be consolidated under one state? The Centre had the power to do so.

Yes, indeed there was nothing in the Indian Constitution that prevented the Government of India from conceding the Naga demand. However, the dismembering of Manipur would lead to bloody clashes between the armed groups; and there are more than 20 groups representing all the communities living within the state with international links.

NAGALAND FACTOR

The Nagaland state Assembly has passed six resolutions demanding the merger of Nagaland state with the contiguous Naga inhabited areas: the first one was on December 12, 1964, and the last was on September 18, 2018.

The Nagas of Manipur had passed similar resolutions. For instance, Suisa was one of five hill leaders named by the president of the Manipur State Darbar to participate in the Constitution-Making Committee in 1946. However, Suisa and the other hill leaders did

not attend the first session of the Committee. On August 13, 1947, he chaired a meeting of hill leaders, at which the assembled demanded that the hill peoples should have the right to secede from Manipur after a five-year period.

But the Nagaland government under S Jamir played a significant role in dividing Nagas of Nagaland and Nagas of Manipur into two camps. At one time, the Congress party had passed a resolution supporting the integration of Naga-inhabited areas; but under Jamir, the Congress party played a major role in the divide and rule game.

ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

The Indian and western intelligence agencies have played a big role in manipulating the Baptist church in undermining the possibility of a socialist vision of Naga society. It has been the church which has run the most vociferous anti-communist campaigns in the past and continues to attack the NSCN for trying to bring socialism into the Naga society.

The intelligence agencies have played a big role in the Indo-Naga conflict as well as in the peace process. These intelligence agencies have played the divide and rule game with deadly consequences. Today, the Naga national movement is divided into many organisations and the NSCN is now divided into at least five separate groups.

These divisions have come about in part by the growth of tribalism, and the divide between the Nagas of Manipur and the Nagas of Nagaland.

The Naga nationalists see the creation of the state of Nagaland as a device to create a schism between the Nagas. And today, the Nagas of Manipur staying in Nagaland state are denied the basic rights because they are not recognised as tribes within Nagaland.

The intelligence agencies were also responsible for the arrest of Th Muivah in 2000

and also the arrest of Grinder Muivah. The senior Muivah was arrested in Bangkok on his way from Pakistan for the peace talks. Grinder was arrested at Kolkata on his way back from Bangkok after meeting his Uncle in jail.

Grinder was framed in a case of conspiracy to hijack a plane from Mizoram to rescue his Uncle. It was obviously a trumped up case and was withdrawn later.

The intelligence agencies have recruited many Nagas who have also played a role in sabotaging the peace process. And in part, the NSCN leadership is afraid that any promises made will be rescinded.

NEGOTIATING A PEACE DEAL

The NSCN leaders who are negotiating have no experience with negotiations. Their earliest advisor was a lawyer called Michael van Walt van Praag and he helped the NSCN become a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation. Michael has been the legal advisor to the Dalai Lama in the negotiations with the Chinese. He also had an NGO, Khreddha.

Michael van Walt is a mediator and has facilitated peace processes and advised parties engaged in such processes in Africa, Asia, the South Pacific and the Caucasus.

The NSCN also had another foreign lawyer to advise them, Anthony Regan, who is a constitutional lawyer specialising in constitutional development as part of conflict resolution. He has lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for 15 years and in Uganda for over three years.

With the help of these lawyers, the NSCN travelled to various parts including Papua New Guinea and even South Africa. But, without the knowledge of the Indian Constitution they could not possibly come up with a viable document on the basis of which they could negotiate. And their legal advisors did not know the workings of the Indian Constitution, so some of the

suggestions they had were already in the Indian Constitution.

The NSCN had just one demand: the unification of the Naga inhabited areas under one administration – at least within India. A similar process was on among the Nagas of Myanmar with one faction wanting to be a part of the pro-democracy movement while Khaplang wanted to continue to fight for independence.

NON-PLAN PUT FORWARD

The peace process did not progress from 1997 to 2010. The only issue that was discussed was the issue of extension of ceasefire to Manipur, the presence or absence of designated camps in Manipur and various cases of ceasefire violations on both sides.

In 2010, the interlocutor of long years, Padmanabhaiah, was replaced with another interlocutor, R S Pandey, who had been Chief Secretary in Nagaland. It was he who put forward a Non Plan which had some concrete proposals.

The Non Plan suggested the possibility of a Pan Naga body which could unite all the Nagas in different states without changing the borders of the existing states.

What exactly this would mean was not clear. So, in 2011, the NSCN invited a group of lawyers from various parts of the world (with the approval of the Indian Government) and there were two-day deliberations on how the proposals in the Non Plan could be concretised. The lawyers included Prof Yash Ghai who had been responsible for the new Kenyan Constitution. I was there in the meetings.

The NSCN also had a small group of its senior members study the Indian Constitution to try and put together a document on the basis of which concrete negotiations could take place.

However, the proposals put together after long and hard deliberations and submitted to the NSCN never saw the light of day.

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Ravindra Narayana Ravi, a police officer of 1976 batch, was special director of the Intelligence Bureau in 2012. He was the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee from 2014. He was appointed as Deputy National Security Advisor of India on October 5, 2018, and Governor of Nagaland state in July 2019.

It was Ravi who is credited with brokering the Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015. There is a controversy over the exact wordings of the Agreement. The NSCN version of the “original agreement” is given below:

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (GOI) AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST COUNCIL OF NAGALAND (NSCN)

1. The political conflict is about six decades old. Attempts have been made for its comprehensive resolution through discussions between the Government of India and the representatives of the Naga people from time to time. A fresh attempt in this regard was initiated through a political dialogue between the GOI and the NSCN in 1997.

2. The GOI and the NSCN dialogue led to a better mutual understanding. While the GOI in expression of the understanding recognised the unique history and position of the Nagas, the NSCN understood and appreciated the intricacies of the Indian system.

3. With such an understanding and with due appreciation of the imperative of the contemporary realities and regard for future vision, both sides have agreed to reach an agreement that will end the violent confrontation once and for all, and will usher in comprehensive progress consonant with the genius of the Naga people.

4. Both sides have understood each others respective positions and are cognisant of the

universal principle that in a democracy, sovereignty lies with the people. Accordingly, the Government of India and NSCN, respecting people’s wishes for sharing the sovereign power as defined in the competencies, reached an agreement on August 3, 2015 as an honourable solution. It was successfully concluded and they are confident that it will provide for an enduring inclusive new relationship of peaceful co-existence of the two entities.

4. The two sides agreed that within this framework of agreement, details and execution plan will be worked out and implemented shortly.

The signatories are: Isac Swu, Chairman NSCN; Th Muivah, General Secretary NSCN; R N Ravi, Representative of Government of India.

Soon after the signing of this Framework Agreement, Isac Swu passed away.

FUTURE VISION FOR PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

Herein lies the core of the problem – Phizo’s vision of a nation which had no classes and was based on race and tradition has little meaning in the changed conditions of the 21st century. The Naga society today is as deeply divided along class lines as any other. The large scale immigration of uneducated Naga youth to different parts of the country and abroad testify to the growing class divide which is converting some Nagas into migrant workers and others into prosperous middle classes.

And the Naga traditions are deeply patriarchal; women have been denied representation in public bodies on the grounds that it was against tradition.

The NSCN vision of a future Naga society is a nation based on religion, and their slogan Nagaland for Christ would make their nation a theocracy. There has been little tolerance for outsiders, whether it is migrants (at least in one case a migrant was lynched to death) or for religious minorities like the Catholics, who have

been not allowed to bury their dead.

The Naga intelligentsia have been critical of the NSCN on many counts, but they themselves have not produced an alternative vision for a more inclusive Naga society. They have also not produced a critique of colonial scholarship which they uncritically incorporate in their studies of their society.

The fundamentalist nature of their religion makes them allies with the Americans and the West, and so the word socialist in the NSCN name is meaningless.

Human rights movement has also served to delegitimise any political debates and have confined the Naga national question to merely a question of human rights. Human rights and other civil society groups have become over dependent on foreign funds without once questioning the politics of that funding and the agenda of the agencies.

The political parties, including those supported by the Naga nationalists have only worked for their narrow political interests and have not put forward any vision for the Naga people. There is a bankruptcy of both political imagination and ethics in their dealings with the people.

Thus, the Naga national movement has become an identity movement without any vision

for a future that envisages a programme for the development of the Naga people, who have sacrificed and suffered so much in the hope of living in a society which offers them freedom from oppression and self respect.

As for the Indians, they have shown little interest in the entire Indo-Naga peace process and have not questioned the lack of transparency. The media has not reported the real issues and often enough written stories based on handouts by intelligence agencies on the mistaken belief that the agencies represent Indian interests. In the end, the failure of the Indo-Naga talks will hurt Indian interests as much as it does the Naga people.

The vast majority of the Naga people live without regular water supply and electricity; many do not have money for education for their children; majority of Nagas do not have access to health care or to housing. And after the pandemic, many are staring at only a bleak future for themselves and their children. It is the future of these people that should have been at the heart of the Indo-Naga peace talks, but it never was.

The author is a human rights lawyer, teacher, campaigner and writer. The views are personal.

Courtesy NewsClick, 27 Aug 2020. 

Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to: theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or post them to: **G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extn. I, Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201005 (U.P.)**

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

Has BJP bungled in Kashmir?

Amulya Ganguli

‘If the National Conference and PDP make handsome electoral gains in the valley and call for the restoration of the former state’s lost status, how will the rulers in Delhi respond?’ asks Amulya Ganguli.

While the judiciary is taking its time in deciding on the legality of the snuffing out of Kashmir’s special constitutional status by the Union government last year, some of the so-called mainstream parties of the province have spoken their mind.

But, as the BJP has said, are they day-dreaming or are they no more than a ‘stray group with a hidden agenda’, as several former judges, bureaucrats and personnel of the armed forces have said about the case of contempt before the Supreme court?

An election in the Union territory will clarify which of the two views are right.

But, for the moment, the ruling party at the Centre may be wondering whether it acted in

haste in **releasing** some of the politicians of the Kashmir valley such as former chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah.

For, what they have said on their release on the government’s ‘spiteful measures’ in Jammu and Kashmir cannot but be disconcerting for the BJP.

Equally disturbing is their assertion about trying to restore the former state’s ‘unique’ identity.

Up until now, no such voices were heard in the valley.

Instead, it was all peace and quiet, enabling the national security adviser to eat **street food** standing outside rows of shops with downed shutters and far right **European politicians**



IMAGE: For the first time after the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah addresses a press conference at his residence in Srinagar. Photograph: Umar Ganie for Rediff.com

enjoying boat rides on the Dal lake during a conducted tour.

But, now, has the bubble burst?

Will Farooq Abdullah and Co continue to offer explanations for the hushed atmosphere by saying that the people did not come out on the streets in protest to avoid being killed?

The problem in a democracy with letting dissenters out of jail is that they cannot be kept quiet.

And once one of them speaks out, others in Kashmir and elsewhere will join in and, soon, there will be a chorus which will attract nationwide and even international attention.

Yet, they cannot be incarcerated again.

That will give the jailors a bad name.

Meanwhile, the scene in the outside world can change.

There is a possibility, for instance, of a new government assuming office in America which may be less indulgent towards India's Kashmir policy than the Trump White House.

If the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party decide to bury their differences in an hour of existential crisis in Kashmir and join hands, as the joint statement issued by them and three other parties shows, the '**king's party**', set up apparently with the BJP's blessings — the Apni Party of former PDP member Altaf Bukhari — may find the going tough.

If, as a result, the National Conference and the PDP make handsome electoral gains in the valley and call for the restoration of the former state's lost status, how will the rulers in Delhi respond even if they regard such a reversal to an earlier position 'next to impossible'?

But a summary refusal to accept the demand of elected representatives of the people will be politically and diplomatically problematic at home and abroad.

Such a stance can induce rethinking even among parties which went along with the BJP in Parliament to abrogate Article 370 if and when the parties of the valley claim, as Farooq Abdullah has already done, that the step was taken to implement the Sangh Parivar's agenda and not the nation's.

In case the perceptions change, the BJP may realise that it has bungled in Kashmir.

Its policies were apparently based on the belief that the party's success in two successive general elections meant that it was here to stay virtually forever, ruling for half a century from parliament to the *panchayats*, as Union Home Minister Amit Anilchandra Shah once said.

Not only that, the BJP interpreted its electoral success as a mandate for ending 1,200 years of 'slavery' under the Mughal and the British and ushering in an Indic rule which meant the implementation of the *parivar*'s agenda with the **abrogation of Article 370** on top of the list.

But what if there are murmurs of resentment in the valley, as the statement of the five Kashmiri parties portend?

Will the Centre send back the **10,000 troops which it had recently withdrawn** from the Union territory?

Will that signal a failure of policy?

The BJP is apparently in something of a jam.

Amulya Ganguli is a writer on current affairs.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, August 27, 2020 

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**

Delhi Riots Witness Who Named Police Says Cops Now Targeting Her Son

Rubina Bano, who is nine months pregnant, moved the Delhi High Court for protection in August.

Betwa Sharma

NEW DELHI — In March 2020, Rubina Bano filed a complaint in her local police station accusing local policemen of violently attacking women at a peaceful protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act at the behest of Kapil Mishra of the Bharatiya Janata Party on 24 February.

Rubina also said that supporters of BJP lawmaker Mohan Singh Bisht participated in the Delhi riots in February, the worst communal violence in the national capital in decades.

Since then, Rubina, in a recent phone conversation with *HuffPost India*, said that she and her family have been living in fear. Rubina, who was three months pregnant at the time, said she was at a protest against the CAA in Delhi's Chand Bagh neighbourhood in February when she was hit with rifle butts by the policemen who forcefully broke up their protest.

In June, the Delhi police issued a public statement claiming that some of those who had filed complaints against the police were actually complicit in the violence. In July, menacing strangers began appearing outside her home, she said.

On 7 August, in a court hearing where Rubina was seeking protection from the Delhi High Court, the prosecutor for the state Amit Prasad told the High Court that the "application seeking non-bailable warrants has been filed but no coercive action has been taken on account of her pregnancy."

Then just last week, on 22 August, two plain clothes policemen showed up outside her home to summon her teenage son and nephew to the local police station to question them in connection with the riots. The police, Rubina said, showed



Courtesy Rubina Bano: Delhi riots survivor Rubina Bano and her husband

her son an image of him and his cousin captured from the CCTV camera just outside their home.

The screen capture, which *HuffPost India* has not seen, purportedly shows the two boys standing outside the house with a cricket bat and a wicket. Rubina says the boys were playing cricket when the riots broke out.

"They are now calling every day and saying send your children to the police station or we will come and arrest them," a harried Rubina told *HuffPost India*, earlier this week.

Rubina is now a little over nine months pregnant, having missed her delivery date, and living with police protection – the same force she has accused of assaulting her with batons back in February.

Rubina's experience, rights activists say, reveals how the Delhi police is harassing witnesses in the course of the investigation into the February riots in the national capital.

A report, *Manufacturing Evidence: How the Police is framing and arresting constitutional rights defenders in India*, released on 13 August

by *Polis Project*, a New York-based research organisation, said that in the aftermath of the riots, the Delhi Police has established “a veritable reign of terror in Muslim neighborhoods” such as Rubina’s, by repeatedly summoning young Muslim men for interrogations that go on for hours, making a mockery of social distancing amid the Coronavirus pandemic, and using coercive methods.

The Indian Express on 16 July reported that an order dated 8 July, signed by Special CP (Crime & Economic Offences Wing) Praveer Ranjan, stated that the arrest of “some Hindu youth” from riot-hit areas in Northeast Delhi had led to a “degree of resentment among the Hindu community” and “due care and precaution” must be taken while making arrests. The order was addressed to senior officers heading probe teams, and asked them to “suitably” guide the investigating officers.

Fifty three people were killed in the Delhi riots, the majority of them Muslim. Most of the property that was looted and burnt was of the Muslim community.

The Delhi Police maintains it is carrying out an impartial and unbiased investigation.

BJP leaders Mishra and Bisht have both denied any role in the violence.

A widely circulated video has documented Mishra threatening violence a day before the riots broke out.

‘Too afraid to get an ultrasound’

The police summons for their son and nephew has upended the lives of Rubina and her husband Mohammed Islam.

“Should I go to the hospital or stay at home to protect my son? I don’t want to lose one child as I welcome another,” said Islam, explaining how he was torn between helping his pregnant wife and his son.

“The rioting is over, the people who carried out the violence are gone, but there is no end to our suffering. I don’t think we’ll ever be free of fear if we continue living in Delhi,” he said.

Rubina, for her part, says she is living with the consequences of speaking out against powerful men. The investigation into her son, she believes, is retaliation for her accusations against the Delhi Police.

The strangers showing up at her home, and skulking around her lane, have frightened her to the point that she was forced to move the Delhi High Court in August, seeking protection.

Judge Vibhu Bakhru in his 7 August order noted that state counsel Prasad assured the High Court that Rubina’s allegations about strangers showing up at her house would be inquired into and she would also be “provided sufficient protection to enable her to avail medical services considering the advanced stage of her pregnancy.”

Rubina said that starting from earlier this week, a male and female constable accompany her when she steps out of the house.

“It is the ninth month of my pregnancy but I’m living in such terror that I’m hiding in my house and I’m afraid to even step out to get an ultrasound,” she wrote in the statement that she sent to the Delhi Police on 30 July.

Islam and Rubina have waited a long time to have a child. Rubina’s two teenage children, Daraksha and Saquib, are from her previous marriage, Islam said, but he has always loved them like his own. While his wife Rubina had “some education,” Islam said that their children had taught him to write his name.

“I have raised them. If anything should happen, I will be the one in pain,” he said. “I’ve always been a very scared person. When I leave home, I say this *dua* to not get into any kind of trouble so that my children are not left alone in the world.”

Rubina’s complicated pregnancy amid the riots and the Coronavirus pandemic, have made what should have been days filled with anticipation to ones filled with dread. Ever since the Coronavirus pandemic hit, Islam said the factory where he makes shirts and pants has

been closed for business.

Islam says he has so far borrowed Rs 20,000 from the factory owner, who will deduct Rs 2000 from his salary every month once work resumes. He hopes to repay his debt in a year.

With their child on the way, Islam is desperate for the factory to reopen.

"I would love to have a baby girl. They are such a joy," he said. "Having a baby brings joy to a family, but with our problems growing and growing, I don't when we will be happy again."

Should I go to the hospital or stay at home to protect my son? I don't want to lose one child as I welcome another.

Trauma

Five months after the riots, Islam says he can still remember that terrifying night in February when he thought Rubina was going to die because of the blows to her head. He had to get her to a hospital amid the violence.

There was nowhere to go but for the Al Hind Hospital in Mustafabad, two kilometres from where they were hiding, Islam recalled. They arranged for a scooter and she was propped between two relatives and driven to the small clinic where the wounded were pouring in.

Islam said that he followed on foot, scared stiff the whole time.

"It was chaos outside," he said.

As the riots raged on for another two days, Rubina was effectively trapped at Al Hind as there was no ambulance to get her to a better equipped hospital.

When they finally reached the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the doctors sent him out to get an injection at two in the morning, and kept Rubina waiting for a bed for almost 12 hours, until she felt so sick that they went back home, he said.

A few days later, Islam said, the Guru Tej Bahadur (GTB) hospital, the government hospital near their locality, refused to admit her.

In her complaint dated 18 March, Rubina said that GTB hospital refused to treat her or

make a medical legal complaint, or MLC, detailing her injuries. An MLC from a hospital is a standard requirement for police complaints in which a victim has been injured.

"What could we have done? There were so many wounded who were coming back from there without treatment," said Islam, explaining why they left GTB hospital without a proper MLC. "They only seemed to be taking those who were in an ambulance. They refused Rubina twice."

I don't think we'll ever be free of fear if we continue living in Delhi.

Where to survive?

Islam said he didn't know how involved Rubina was in the anti-CAA protests in Chand Bagh. Those days, when the factory was open, he said he left early in the morning for work and returned late in the night, putting in overtime to supplement the Rs 8,000-10,000 he makes every month.

"Lots of women from the neighborhood used to go," he said, of the sit-in protests that garnered international attention. "We have our two worlds. I would have never stopped her. What's the point in being happy or sad about it now? What has happened has happened."

Islam says that as long as they are in Delhi, he believes his family is always going to live in fear of the police showing up at their door, but there is nowhere else for them to go.

It's been too long since they left their villages in Uttar Pradesh, and while Islam still sends some money home to his parents, there is no going back.

Neither of them has any land or knowledge of farming, Islam said, and working as agricultural labourers was something they can do for only a few months during the planting and harvest seasons.

"What will we do in the village? All we will have is a roof to hide under?" he said. "This is our home. We have to try and survive here."

Betwa Sharma is Politics Editor, HuffPost India

Courtesy **HuffPost.com**, 27/08/2020 

‘Delhi police arresting Muslims on fabricated charges’

Prasanna D Zore

‘1,300 Muslim youth have been arrested since the riots began and pressure has been constantly mounted on the Delhi police to create a narrative that these youths started the riots.’

Zafarul Islam Khan, former chairman of the Delhi Minorities Commission, dwells upon how the Delhi police is trying to twist facts and why, despite clear evidence of riot-mongering against Bharatiya Janata Party leader Kapil Mishra, is adamant on giving him a clean chit. The concluding segment of a two-part interview:

In the first part of this interview you mentioned that you do not entertain great hopes, but truth must be told and placed on record.

What does this tell you about the system that our lawmakers have designed and the integrity of the institutions our Constitution has created?

There are certain quarters in the government who are very much interested to twist the whole thing and create a new narrative (*about who are responsible for the commission of Delhi riots*).

This is also why they have done selective leaks for their friends in the *godli media* (*media that allegedly spins tales for the benefit of the ruling party in power at the Centre*).

Look at the various charge-sheets and status reports that they have presented in the courts. So much so that the sessions judge said that you (*the Delhi police*) are looking only at a particular angle. The (*Delhi*) high court also made a similar assertion.

So, there are people who are interested in twisting the entire narrative and have even used the offices of the solicitor general too to create a narrative that suits their political purpose and ideology.

I can't name any names, but this (*the people who are twisting the narrative for political benefit*) is very apparent.

Are you again pointing fingers at the Union home ministry?

I am not pointing fingers at anybody, but, of course, anybody who is involved can feel that there are certain people interested in giving the Delhi riots a certain twist (*that benefits them politically*).

You also said that from February 24 itself, your Commission intervened forcefully to stop the riots. What were these measures that could not stop the riots from spreading as they continued till February 27th and so many people died?

Look, we don't have any police or army at our disposal.

We could speak to higher officials, we could send messages to the police, to the lieutenant governor, to the chief minister, to the DCP (*deputy commissioner of police*) of north east Delhi, to the SHOs (*station head officers*), the heads of local police stations and we were doing that.

If you look at our annual report, which is also online now, you will find that from the 24th (*of February*), we had been conveying through various ways, through notices, through e-mails, through tweets, seeking intervention from the law and order machinery in charge of Delhi.

Even during the attack on Jamia Millia Islamia students on the 15th of December, I was standing at midnight in front of two police stations to help people who were arrested from Jamia Nagar.

Who do you think fomented communal riots in Delhi and who benefits from it?

The same forces which are benefiting from communal tension all over the country; same forces who think that through communal polarisation they can create captive vote banks, protect existing ones and also create new ones.

They certainly reap electoral and political dividends and become powerful politically and spread the ideology of hatred in our country.

What were some startling facts that came out in the Delhi Minorities Commission's Fact-finding Report on Delhi Riots 2020?

Everybody knows. The fact-finding report has also established that the riots started with the speech of Kapil Mishra and the Delhi police is still adamant to give him a clean chit; they say there is no relationship between the violence and his speech.

Hours after Mishra's communal speech, Delhi began to burn.

In fact, in his speech he can be heard warning the DCP of the area, who was standing beside him when he was daring the police that they will take to the streets (*take the law and order in their own hands if anti-CAA protestors were not emptied out from*

Shaheen Bagh).

So there is a clear relationship between what he was saying or doing and what followed within hours.

And after that when violence started, those who were being attacked must have naturally defended themselves.

Ironically, the Delhi police have filed cases against them for starting the riots, for planning the riots, for bringing people from outside.


I have been living in Delhi for the last 35 years and I don't think that any Muslim individual or locality would have this kind of guts to bring people from outside to start a riot.

That the Delhi police have actually charged people for doing exactly that is beyond my imagination.

But still, this has been made out, and now they are trying various ways of putting pressure on the Muslim youth who have been arrested under fabricated charges.

1,300 Muslim youth have been arrested since the riots began and pressure has been constantly mounted on the Delhi police to create a narrative that these youths started the riots.

All this is being done by the Delhi police to build and bolster a stereotypical image of Muslim youth.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, August 31, 2020 

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Is this an investigation into a “conspiracy” or is the investigation itself a conspiracy?



Statement released by Activists of Anti-CAA-NRC-NPR movement in a Press Conference held on Zoom on 4th September 2020

This press conference has been called in the backdrop of a continuing attempt by the Delhi Police to falsely implicate activists of the anti-CAA/NRC/NPR movements as the masterminds of the brutal communal violence in parts of North-east Delhi in February that led to the death of 53 people, and injured hundreds. Over the past half year, the supporters and participants of these protests continue to be summoned by the police, harassed and subjected to long interrogations. Several young activists and students also continue to languish in prison under the

draconian anti-terror law – UAPA – for almost 6 months now, without any official charges framed against them. Despite inconsistencies and lies that have been rebutted publicly, the Delhi Police has continued unrelentingly with the theory – not coincidentally propounded by the ruling dispensation – that the roots of the conspiracy of the riots lie in the protests against CAA.

However, on several occasions since December 2019, leaders and supporters of the BJP were seen inciting people to take the law into their own hands and making hate speeches. It would have been reasonable to expect any fair investigative agency to probe the impact such speeches had on the gradual breakdown of law and order in Delhi and subsequently its complete collapse in parts of North-

East Delhi between 23-26 February. After all, the majority of targets of the Delhi violence – as pointed out even in the affidavit filed by the police in court – were Muslims, their livelihoods, properties and places of worship. But instead, the ‘investigation’ of the conspiracy behind the riots has chosen to target exactly those whom these hate speeches were made *against* – the participants and supporters of the protests against CAA/NRC/NPR.

On more than one occasion, the police has tried to build a ‘chronology’ of events as part of this conspiracy. In this version, the conspiracy of these riots began with the anti-CAA protests in Jamia Millia Islamia and Shaheen Bagh in mid-December. The chronology then goes on to detail other major

anti-CAA protests in Delhi as all part of this conspiracy and the prominent voices as conspirators. This ‘chronology’, however, is conspicuously silent on the actions and statements of leaders of the BJP and actual incidents of violence since December.

We want to ask a few pointed questions to the Delhi Police, about which it has maintained an evasive silence:

- On 25th February, a statement was released by the Press Information Bureau, after Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a meeting attended by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal. The statement said, “Shri Shah noted that the professional assessment is that the violence in the capital has been spontaneous.” However, just a few days later, the Home Minister contradicted his previous statement and stated in the Lok Sabha that the riots were a pre-planned conspiracy? This was even before any investigation had begun into the riots. Is the entire investigation just a façade to arrive at pre-meditated conclusions already announced before the investigation had even commenced?
- Why is the chronology by the police silent on the two incidents of shootings on protestors that happened in Jamia Millia Islamia and Shaheen Bagh on 29th January and 1st February? Why is the chronology silent on the statements made by Anurag Thakur exhorting his supporters to shoot whom he considers as traitors on 27th January – just a few days before the two shooting incidents?
- Between December and February, BJP leader Kapil Mishra made several inciting statements asking people to shoot the ‘traitors’ in December 2019, calling the upcoming Delhi elections a battle between India and Pakistan in first week of February 2020, and also threatening in front of the DCP that his supporters will take the law into their own hands if the police does not clear the protestors. Does the Delhi police not consider these utterances as clearly an attempt to provoke violence and promote disaffection and divide between communities?
- During the violence, multiple videos emerged of persons associated with the ruling dispensation openly inciting and participating in the violence and carnage. In one such video, which was streamed live on Facebook from Maujpur, a woman named Ragini Tiwari is seen openly asking people to kill or die. Why does her name not find any mention in the chronology of the ‘conspiracy’ put out by the Delhi Police? Reports have also surfaced accusing BJP leaders like Satya Pal Singh, Jagdish Pradhan, Nand Kishore Gujjar and Mohan Singh Bisht. Why has the police not taken cognizance of all this so far?
- A video showed officials of the Delhi Police assaulting four brutally injured men, and forcing them to chant the national anthem. One of them, 23 year old Faizan, subsequently succumbed to the injuries he sustained in this assault. Has the Delhi Police initiated any actions against its personnel who were involved in this assault, that led to the death of one person?
- Has the police even taken cognizance of the brutal custodial torture meted out to one of the arrested persons Khalid Saifi?
- Has the police ordered any probe to several accounts where police

allegedly was complicit in the violence, directing mobs pelting stones or looking the other way when mobs were indulging in violence in front of them. There have been multiple occasions showing Police breaking CCTV cameras too. Are these charges being fairly probed?

- Many of those already arrested were initially in different FIRs. It was only after they secured bail in the cases for which they were initially arrested, that the police implicated them in the conspiracy case under UAPA. Is this a ploy to keep protestors in jail for long periods, without the need to provide evidence or frame charges? Why is a draconian anti-terror law like UAPA being used to probe this case?
- It has also come to our notice that the police has been coercing people it has summoned for questioning to give false statements. Is this a desperate attempt by the police to buttress its conspiracy theory in the absence of any real credible evidence?
- Confessions made in police custody have no value as evidence in deciding the guilt of anyone. But there has been more than one instance of 'confessions' of those arrested making their way to the press. This has been done despite a High Court ruling regarding one of the accused against such leakages of the details of the investigation to the press. Why is the police trying to prejudice public opinion against those arrested, even before it has officially framed any charges?
- In its latest line of questioning, the Delhi Police has been grilling people on their about conversations in some Whatsapp groups with hundreds of members. Isn't it ridiculous to believe

that riots of this scale were conspired for several weeks in Whatsapp groups with hundreds of people and the police never got to know about them? Or is the police pursuing this line of argument in order to safeguard real culprits?

The impunity granted to the supporters of the ruling dispensation in the clear incitement to violence seems to be a repeat of the impunity that the Delhi Police has provided over decades to the political leaders who were involved in inciting and participating in the 1984 anti-Sikh genocide. However, this time, the Delhi Police seems to have gone one step ahead, and while providing impunity to the *netas*, it has started targeting the students and activists who have been critical of the regime.

The entire country witnessed massive protests against the discriminatory CAA-NRC-NPR. The protests were peaceful, democratic and continuously spoke about the supremacy of the constitution and unity in diversity of the nation. The protests were mostly led by women and saw spirited participation by all sections of the society. This current witch-hunting of anti-CAA protesters is not only an attack on a few individuals. Such a sinister profiling of the democratic mass movement basically criminalizes our basic right to protest against the policies of the ruling dispensation of the day. It erodes public faith in rule of law and chokes democratic dissent.

We reiterate our opposition to CAA-NRC-NPR and shall continue our peaceful and democratic protest against such anti-people laws. We demand a court monitored investigation or an inquiry into this investigation under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, by sitting/retired judge(s) of the higher judiciary.

APOORVANAND, HARSH MANDER, KAWALPREET, UMAR KHALID, YOGENDRA YADAV 🌈

NAPM condemns the arrest of former JNU student and youth activist Dr. Umar Khalid

Delhi police must stop coercing 'confessional' statements to manufacture evidence and refrain from painting the democratic anti-CAA protests as a 'conspiracy against the state'

Repeal the Draconian UAPA | Free All Anti-CAA Protestors

Arrest Kapil Mishra and all those who incited the 'Delhi Riots'

14th Sep, 2020: The spate of repression and arbitrary arrests of anti-CAA activists and students continues in the capital, with yesterday's late-night arrest of young social justice activist Dr. Umar Khalid, after 11 hours of intense 'interrogation'. The Delhi Police has arrested him on the basis of manufactured evidence through coerced statements, falsely accusing him of being the 'master mind' behind the 'Delhi Riots' of February, 2020. It is now learnt that the Court has remanded him to "10 days police custody" so that he can be further interrogated over data and documents running into "11 lakh pages"!

As firm believers in a democratic ethos, we are anguished and outraged at the relentless silencing of young and progressive voices by this regime, many of who happen to be Muslims, students, activists and academics. The speeches by all of them during the vibrant women-led anti-CAA mass protests are available for public scrutiny and by no stretch of argument can they be interpreted to be 'inciting hate or violence'. Quite to the contrary, they all are promoting love, peace and constitutional values.

Notably, anticipating the impending arrest, Umar Khalid had written to the Delhi Police Commissioner on 1st Sep, with regard to the statements being extracted from witnesses in order to frame him under several charges including UAPA, sedition and conspiracy for murder. Following this, on 4th Sep, four senior civil society members including Prof. Apoorvanand (Delhi University), Mr. Harsh Mander (former IAS officer and peace activist),

Mr. Yogendra Yadav (National President, Swaraj Abhiyan) and Kawalpreet Kaur (student activist, AISA), along with Umar Khalid addressed a press conference highlighting the "continuing attempt by the Delhi Police to falsely implicate" activists of the anti-CAA movement as the 'masterminds of the February riots'.

Yesterday, Sri Julio Ribeiro, retired Police Commissioner of Mumbai and DGP Gujarat & Punjab, wrote to the Delhi Police Commissioner in which he spoke out strongly against the clearly biased investigation and said: "*The Delhi Police has taken action against peaceful protestors but deliberately failed to register cognizable offences against those who made hate speeches which triggered the riots in N.E. Delhi.*" Today another 9 IPS officers from different states have written to the Police Commissioner regarding the flawed investigation into the Delhi riots and requested him to "*reinvestigate all riot cases fairly and without any bias based on sound principles of criminal investigations to provide justice to the victims and their families and for upholding the rule of law*".

Despite these interventions and over 1,000 well-known citizens writing to the Delhi Police, the latter, clearly under instructions from the Union Home Ministry has gone ahead with another arrest on false grounds, while ignoring those who have publicly incited violence in Delhi. Most prominent among this is Mr. Kapil Mishra, a BJP leader caught on video inciting mobs to violently attack anti-CAA protestors, who is still roaming free. Mr. Mishra has infact circulated

a fresh video today, equating the Delhi violence to the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack and calling for 'death penalty to the activists'! We would like to remind the Delhi Police that compromising investigation to serve political dispensations is an act of gross unprofessionalism and an attack on the democratic institutions and values of this country, which they are supposed to uphold.

In the past six months, under the cover of lockdown, many young students and activists have been arrested under UAPA and most of them including Gulfisha Fatima (Student, DU), Ishrat Jahan (Congress activist), Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal (Students and Feminist Activists of Pinjra Tod), Khalid Saifi (United Against Hate), Meeran Haider (President, RJD Youth Wing, Delhi), Asif Tanha (Jamia student), Sharjeel Imam (JNU scholar), Shifa-Ur-Rehman (President, Jamia Alumni Association) continue to languish in jail. Their bail applications in the UAPA matter has been repeatedly rejected and some of them have reportedly faced severe torture in custody. All of them have been falsely charged with being part of a 'conspiracy' to incite the Delhi riots'.

The Delhi police has now issued summons to film makers Rahul Roy and Saba Dewan who appeared for investigation today. A large number of other activists and students in the capital have been questioned in the past few months, phones of many of them seized and all of them put under heavy surveillance. Others who are under the radar include Sitaram Yechury of CPM, Prof. Yogendra Yadav, Prof. Apoorvanand, Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Adv. Mahmood Pracha, Chandrasekhar Azad (Bhim Army), although the Delhi police issued a clarification that Mr. Yechury, Mr. Yadav and Ms. Ghosh have not been 'arraigned as accused in the supplementary charge sheet'.

During these months, on multiple occasions the trial courts have observed that the media has been peddling false information and making selective leakages, leading to a biased trial by

sections of the compromised fourth estate. It is high time we come together and stand up against this colossal injustice, contest the convolution of facts, where innocent people are being arrested on false charges, while those who incited the violence are being let scot-free. We urge all the peace, justice-loving and democratic-minded citizens of our country to rise in rage against the toxic narrative being spun by this regime to quell all rightful questioning of its unjust policies and such blatant undermining of the rule of law.

Given the overall political context, no amount of 'urging' the powers-that-be is likely to make a difference, but we must prepare ourselves to fight this battle of narratives in the true spirit of Satyagraha, as stated powerfully by Dr. Umar Khalid himself, "*We won't respond to violence with violence. We won't respond to hate with hate. If they spread hate, we will respond to it with love. If they thrash us with lathis, we keep holding the tricolour.*"

NAPM demands the immediate:

- ***RELEASE of Dr. Umar Khalid and all the anti-CAA protestors who were part of a completely legitimate and peaceful protest like lakhs of other citizens across India.***

- ***SAFETY of Umar and all the anti-CAA activists in both police and judicial custody.***

- ***REPEAL of UAPA and the sedition law which have become instruments of violation of fundamental freedoms and civil liberties.***

- ***ARREST of all right-wing political and other leaders including Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Verma, Komal Sharma, Rambhakt Gopal, Ragini Tiwari etc. against who clear evidence of inciting hate and violence is available in the public domain.***

- ***REPEAL of CAA-NRC-NPR which are, per se, unconstitutional and violative of the principles of just and equal citizenship.***

(To be Contd.....on Page - 23)

Nine Former Police Officers Call Delhi Riots Investigation ‘Flawed’

“Real culprits of the violence belonging to majority community are likely to go scot free.”

The Wire Staff

New Delhi: Nine former IPS officers have written an open letter to the Delhi Police Commissioner, S.N. Shrivastava, attempting to draw attention to the many ways in which they believe that the investigation into the Delhi riots of February, 2020, are ‘flawed.’

The letter is signed by Shafi Alam (former Director General, National Crime Records Bureau), K. Saleem Ali (former Special Director, CBI), Mohinderpal Aulakh (former Director General of Police (Jails), Punjab), A.S. Dulat (former OSD on Kashmir, Prime Minister’s Office), Alope B. Lal (former Director General (Prosecution), Uttarakhand), Amitabh Mathur (former Director, Aviation Research Centre and former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat), Avinash Mohananey (former Director General of Police, Sikkim), P.G.J. Nampoothiri (former Director General of Police, Gujarat) and A.K. Samanta (former Director General of Police (Intelligence), West Bengal).

The nine former top cops are all part of the Constitutional Conduct Group, under the aegis of which retired officers belonging to the various services often take up matters of public interest and welfare. The policemen begin the letter by saying that their fellow CCG-member, and famed former IPS officer, Julio Ribeiro’s letter to Shrivastava is one that has their endorsement.

“Kindly revisit the actions of the police under your command in Delhi to determine if they have been true to their oaths taken at the time of their induction into service,” Mr. Ribeiro had written in the letter.

The police officers have called the investigation into the riots “partisan and politically motivated.”

“...[W]e would like to say that it indeed is a sad day in the history of Indian police that investigations and challans submitted in the court by Delhi Police in connection with riots of this year are widely believed to be partisan and politically motivated. It pains all those police officers, serving as well as retired, who believe in upholding the rule of law and our Constitution.”

The officers have also made mention of what the *Indian Express* had first reported and what Delhi police had later attempted to stymie: the fact that Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Praveer Ranjan has written to senior police officers heading probe teams that the arrest of “some Hindu youth” from areas in North-East Delhi, where the Delhi riots took place in February, has led to a “degree of resentment among the Hindu community”.

The officers write:

“We were sad to note that one of your Special Commissioners had tried to influence investigations claiming resentment among Hindus over the arrest of some rioters belonging to their community. Such a majoritarian attitude in the police leadership leads to a travesty of justice for the victims of violence and their family members belonging to minority communities. This would further mean that real culprits of the violence belonging to majority community are likely to go scot free.”

Notably, BJP leaders Kapil Mishra and Parvesh Verma and Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur are among those who have not been named in a single FIR. The former was found responsible for triggering the violence

by a fact finding team of the Delhi Minority Commission.

The policemen also held that the practice followed by Delhi Police in investigating these crimes, that of basing investigations on alleged confessions, is violative of fair investigation practices.

“What pains us more is implicating all those who spoke and joined protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). They were simply exercising their fundamental rights of freedom of speech and peaceful protests as guaranteed by the Constitution. Basing investigations on “disclosures” without concrete evidence violates all principles of fair investigation. While implicating leaders and activists, who expressed their views against CAA, all those who instigated violence and are associated with the ruling party have been let off the hook.

“Such investigation will only make people lose faith in democracy, justice, fairness and the Constitution. A dangerous thought that may ultimately shake the pillars of an orderly society and lead to breakdown of law and order.

In the end, they request reinvestigation with fairness.

“We would, therefore, earnestly request you

for reinvestigation of all riot cases fairly and without any bias based on sound principles of criminal investigations to provide justice to the victims and their families and for upholding the rule of law.”


The letter comes on a day when social activist and JNU scholar Umar Khalid was arrested in what is a controversial attempt to establish his link with the Delhi riots.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 14 September 2020. 

Contd. from page - (21)

NAPM condemns the arrest of...

As representatives of various people's movements from across India, committed to constitutional values, we call upon the Delhi police and the Home Ministry to end this vicious hounding of peace-loving activists and instead hold the actual culprits of the violence in the capital from Delhi-February accountable and render full justice, compensation and rehabilitation to all families affected by the violence.

We are committed to a continued struggle against this climate of fear, terror, lies and hate. 

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Indira Gandhi's Emergency Was Open and Face-to-Face; Dictatorship Today Wears a Mask

India's 'cow-faced-tiger' dictatorship seems to have used the judiciary to repress the voice of public interest by using Prashant Bhushan's tweets as an excuse.

Devanoora Mahadeva

During a recent phone conversation with senior counsel Ravi Varma Kumar, I asked him, "How is the Supreme Court doing?"

We were talking in the background of the judgment by the three-judge Supreme Court bench which found that Prashant Bhushan's tweets were in contempt of the court.

Ravi said, "The judiciary itself makes an allegation; it initiates proceedings itself and then proves the case, and then passes a judgment saying the allegations have been proven that is what has happened in our Supreme Court."

The three-judge bench did not even seriously take account of the reply submitted by Bhushan before passing its orders. I felt like visiting the Supreme Court to ascertain whether the statue of the goddess of justice, who has a blindfold on and carries balancing scales so that she may be fair, still exists. Because the judgment by this court was blind.

The Supreme Court lawyer, Gautam Bhatia, captures this judgment well with a metaphor, "It reminds me of the times I used to take a football from the halfway line, dribble it across the pitch, and kick it into the goal – without any opposition players on the field."

This is the game that has been played in the judiciary.

So what is in Bhushan's tweet? It goes like this:

"When historians in the future look back at the last six years to see how democracy has been destroyed in India even without a formal Emergency, they will particularly mark the role of the SC in this destruction, and more

particularly the role of the last four CJIs."

This tweet should have given reason for reflection. This tweet, and the other on the impact of the lockdown on justice, should have been seen as product of distress. The distress one feels while trying to save the sinking dignity of the court. But Bhushan's tweets have been described by the three-judge bench as acts which shake the very roots of the judiciary. And they have passed judgment as if their emotions are the law. But they have also acted out of fear.

Today, fear has overwhelmed not just the judiciary, but the entire country, including the executive, the legislature. This fear has not even spared the media. This fear has not allowed any autonomous institution to remain autonomous. We get a clue about this fear in what Justice Markandey Katju said:

"But Gogoi (I refuse to call him justice) committed much greater misconducts, of various kinds, and practically prostrated before the BJP-run government and handed over almost the entire Supreme Court to the political executive, giving up its solemn duty of protecting the rights of the people."

That is precisely why, when those political leaders who take their oath of office in the name of the constitution, state that, "We have come to change the constitution", nobody dare accuse them of contempt. Even if they burn the constitution, it will not be contempt of the courts. But the tweets of Prashant Bhushan that seek to protect the dignity of the court are seen as contempt by these judges. After seeing this, Justice Markandey Katju's words

flooded my mind.

India has probably never had to endure such a plight since Independence. Even during the time of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, one could find at least some pockets of resistance within the judiciary, the Election Commission, the federal system of the country, the Reserve Bank of India, CBI, media etc. That Emergency was like a tiger. Indira Gandhi was an aggressive dictator. It was all face-to-face. Yet, even if repressed, protests overflowed.

But now? What exists now is a 'cow-faced tiger emergency'. It comes across masked as a saviour. But behind the mask, the regime does all that is not supposed to be do. It never comes face-to-face. Instead, what we call the four pillars of the constitution, together with all autonomous institutions as well as the country's federal structure, have had their necks slashed and spines crushed. It's true that these institutions still have their form. But they are barely half-alive. As a consequence, they can only work after understanding the gestures and desires of the cow-faced-tiger, the dictator who oversees the political executive.

In order to make this more understandable, consider what happened in the United States. President Donald Trump put out a call to law enforcement – “dominate...you have to dominate” – in response to the nationwide flare up of violence triggered by the killing of George Floyd, an African American man, by the Minneapolis police. In response to Trump's call, the Houston police chief, Art Acevedo, fearlessly stated,

“This is not about dominating. It is about winning hearts and minds... We don't want ignorance to ruin what we have managed to do to restore normalcy...Let me just say this to the President of the United States...Please, if you don't have something constructive to say, keep your mouth shut”.

If you take this and apply it to our situation then everything will become self explanatory.

Now when you come to India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, called a “versatile genius” by a Supreme Court judge, India is drowning under the ignorant blows of demonetisation, GST etc. Unemployment is eating us away. The country is moving from poverty to hunger. The government can only run on the selling of public wealth to private companies. So a surgery has been done at the level of more or less all fundamental government institutions, including the judiciary, media, CBI, RBI etc to control the flare up of public ire. Because of all this, the public interest today has been orphaned.

Prashant Bhushan has dedicated his entire legal career to this orphaned public interest. After consigning the public interest to the garbage dump, the aim is now to repress its very voice. India's 'cow-faced-tiger' emergency seems to have used the judiciary to repress the voice of public interest by using Prashant Bhushan's tweets as an excuse.

While writing all this, after overcoming anger, pain and regret, I thought that maybe – just maybe – Bharat Mata must be warming up for the birth of a leadership with the potential of a Gandhi-Ambedkar-JP, hence this allegation against Bhushan; hence the political imprisonment of this land's conscience with the arrest of Anand Teltumbde and others.

Devanoora Mahadeva is a Kannada writer who has been conferred with the Padma Shri as well as the Sahitya Akademi award both of which he returned in protest against the growing intolerance in the country. A public intellectual and Dalit activist he has been a guiding force to various social movements in Karnataka and the country.

Translated from the Kannada by Rashmi Munikempanna 

In my own voice : Azaadi

Sagari Chhabra

It is the eve of Independence Day, 14th August and as I write this the faces of the freedom fighters I have met and recorded over the years, flash before me.

Sushila Nayar was deep into meditation when I met her at her home. I waited and after what seemed a long time she opened her eyes and gave me an exquisite smile. She was soft-spoken and gentle but her memory was sharp. She recalled being jailed with Gandhi and Kasturba inside the Agha Khan Palace detention camp, shortly after the Quit India movement was announced. She said she was studying to be a doctor at Lady Hardinge College in Delhi but went to Bombay because 'we knew something was going to happen'.

Once jailed, Sushila attended on Bapu during his 21 day fast and at some point she feared they would lose him as his condition deteriorated. Seeing the young Sushila distraught, Bapu told her, if God felt he (Gandhi) had any purpose left to serve he would keep him alive. Throughout the determination for freedom through non-violent means remained through a myriad ways; when Mahadev Desai and then Kasturba later died inside the jail, their bodies were cremated inside and despite the tragic deaths no one was prepared to surrender to the terms of the British.

She also said, Bapu felt that for nonviolence to be effective the whole country had to be non-violent. If violence broke out anywhere he would suspend the movement but then he said we are now surrounded by violence. Then the answer came from within, for non-violence to be effective it had to *act in the midst of violence*.

I also recall meeting Lakshmi Swaminathan Sahgal who was in Singapore when Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose arrived. Under his leadership she set up the Rani of Jhansi

Regiment the first all-woman military regiment with one thousand five hundred women volunteering from Malaya and Burma. These heroic women trained in arms, witnessed the bombing of the Red Cross hospital by the British and when asked to disband even gave a petition to Bose 'signed in blood' recalled Gouri Bhattacharya Sen demanding, 'we want to go to the front and die for the cause'.

Netaji realized the tide was against them and marched with them through a grueling 21 day trek through the forests of Burma. Janaki Thevar the second to command the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, recalled how two of the Ranis— Stella and Josephine were killed in a firing but no one broke down.

When the British reoccupied Malaya, each of the Ranis were interrogated and put under house arrest but no one reneged.

Freedom is both indefinable and intrinsic to the dignity of a human being. Despite giving so much for the cause of freedom, the havoc of Partition caused many to return to Malaya. Gandhi Nathan, - a Tokyo cadet - recalled that he could not get admission to the Indian Military Academy nor get a job so he had to return to Malaya. His only dream was to serve India he said with a faraway look in his eyes as he sat in his home in Kuala Lumpur. Many gave so that you and I could walk in free India.

The idea of India was that people of all religions and those who professed no religion would live together in harmony and peace. Gandhi had envisaged the era of climate change and had urged that people consume, 'each according to his need and not greed'. Ambedkar had warned we were entering an era of political freedom but not one of social and economic freedom. But we reassured him that this time it would be different, we were

free at last and would extend the frontiers of freedom to all. This was fraternity.

14th August is also the birth anniversary of Kuldeep Nayar the journalist who was jailed during the Emergency but who lit candles this day at the Attari-Wagah border. Delhi had been the city which beckoned all, as Netaji's rallying cry was 'Dilli Chalho' but the terrible carnage witnessed in February in which 53 people got killed - mostly of the minority community but also of the majority community, makes one wonder, whatever happened to that idea of India?

What breaks my heart is that those who have been writing for peace have been called in for questioning or had false charges foisted against them. Apoorvanand teaches at Delhi University and his writings and conduct are a living breath of ahimsa. At a meeting when someone talked in anger he reminded him that '*hamaari bhasha hamesha ahimsatmak ho*' — our language must always be non-violent. Harsh Mander who led the Aman Ka Karavan to the families of those who have been lynched in free India — unbelievable but sadly true — expressing remorse on behalf of the silent majority. His speech saying, 'they will give us hate, we will give them love' how can it be called a 'façade of peace'?

And when three journalists from the Caravan magazine who in the course of their


journalistic duties are stopped, beaten almost strangled by a camera strap and the woman journalist — whose name has not been declared for safety reasons — is sexually molested with a man actually exposing his private parts to her, I hang my head in shame and wonder, whether the idea of India is being disrobed.

It was never a perfect society for it had sharp cleavages having lived with centuries of oppression but the vision our founding fathers and mothers embodied in a beautiful document — the Constitution — envisaged liberty and equality — both social and economic — and fraternity that extends to us, women too!

If what happened to Apoorvanand, Harsh Mander and the journalists of Caravan goes unchecked, the very idea of India — its plurality, free press and expression of dissent - will be dismembered forever. Perhaps if Kuldeep Nayar were alive today he would light *mombattis* in Delhi, or Gandhi would fast, to remind us what we really are - *ahimsatmak*. But then again, for non-violence to be effective it will have to act within the violence.

Author:

Sagari Chhabra is an award-winning author & film-director. She is director of the '*Hamaara Itihaas*' archive.

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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**)

Social Reforms – a Reality Check

Mr. Narendra Nayak and friends have been having a discussion on social reform. I was a part of that. But then I wanted to say something in a different strain. So I am starting here.

For the sake of those who are resisting reforms so that their customs, traditions, practices, and belief systems could be guarded against change, I should desist from talking in terms of evolution. But they will permit one to talk in terms of development. They should permit one to refer to their own history. They should permit one to talk about their own past.

Humans were hunters and gatherers before they slowly and gradually learned farming. Those hunters and gatherers could never settle down and were always on edge. Humans started settling down with the growth in their knowledge about farming, and with the tremendous developments in farming. This was a fundamental change in the entire human history. But to accept this change they must have overcome their earlier customs, traditions, practices, belief systems, in fact, their entire behaviour, in order to ‘reform’ their life, in order to improve their life. These improvements meant assured food, less exertion, and more rest. This is human history.

From farming at scattered places to more clustered places led to the growth of villages. They agreed for this change, for it provided greater security to them. When there were so many villages around and there was so much production of a vast variety of things, its consequences were bound to promote the development of cities. These developments were calling for reforms at every step of the way.

The next is for the religious people who resist reform. They all have heard, read and seen (in the case of Hindus) the lovely stories of Ram, Sita and Lakshman. After banishment for fourteen years, they walk one after the other to the jungle and in the jungle they construct a beautiful hut for themselves. Ram has bow and arrows to

defend themselves. So the years pass on. There should be no reason for anybody to try to change the customs, traditions, practices, and belief systems of the believers.

The followers of Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman have every right to do what they do and believe what they believe in. It is quite another matter that they never realized that like their idols none of them is walking on foot all the time, that none of them is living in a jungle, that none of them is hunting and gathering like Ram and Lakshman, that none of them normally would like to defend themselves with bows and arrows. They would resist reform as best as they could but still continue to take the help of a variety of tools and other offerings of modern civilization. They walk not on the foot but take a cycle, or rickshaw, or car or bus or train or maybe an airplane. They would not like to live in a hut in a Jungle but in a house in a village or town or city or a metropolis. They would not like to be a hunter-gatherer but would like to buy their grocery and innumerable other items of daily use from a market or a mall. Instead of depending on the bow and arrow for self-defense, they would prefer to give a ring to the local police. This listing can go on but it need not to.

These followers of their idols have in actuality changed so completely that if at all their idols were to appear in person to check on their followers, they would not be able to recognize these followers, as their own followers.

When these ladies and gentlemen send their little ones to school or their grown-ups to college, universities or technical institutes of higher learning they refuse to realize that they have been accepting change and reform at every step of the way. It is like one who has passed graduation but wants to continue to believe in everything he or she lived through during the primary classes. 🌈



Vinod Jain

The Insecurity Syndrome

P.A.S. Prasad

‘Cowards die many times before their deaths. The valiant never taste of death, but once,’

quote from Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, uttered by Caesar when his wife beseeches him not to proceed to the Senate due to bad omens and her terrible dream foretelling the assassination of Caesar. Yet undaunted, he proceeded and was stabbed to death by his associates, above all also stabbed by his dearest friend Brutus. Caesar dropped his sword, to defend himself disheartened, last straw, exclaiming *eu tu brutus*, then fell Caesar

We have the story of Alexander, who drinks the medicine by looking at the face of his physician, in spite of receiving a report that his physician was going to poison him. When an astonished physician asked him how he could consume the concoction, with such a report, Alexander told him that when he looked at the physicians face while reading the report, he was sure the report was false.

We learn from history that Napoleon used to gallop on horseback between the warring armies on the firing line during a raging battle, to inspire his soldiers to dizzy levels, risking his life in utter recklessness.

What is manifestly evident in the above episodes, is the utter lack of self preservation, devoid of a total sense of insecurity, great physical courage and mental strength. They were all dictators in a way but beloved of their people. Incredible self confidence. They believed what they believed was right. They drew their strength from their respective people.

We find a sense of insecurity among people at all levels, sometimes occasionally depending on the circumstances. But this sense of insecurity is heightened among certain rulers and heads of govts., when they come to power by questionable means, or they were not sure of

their policies whether liked or not by people when such policies are forced on people, resulting in misery, hunger, decess, separation from their near and dear and large scale deaths. Their actions do stem from a feeling of guilt but had to be imposed on people for a different agenda for some selfish, political gains or for sticking to power by any means. There will be no ethical foundation or an edifice of morality in public life. The great philosopher, thinker and Nobel laureate and Champion of peace, Bertrand Russell was emphatic in stating that people should never sacrifice their lives because their rulers tell them to do so for the country; the rulers urge people to do so for retaining their power. Russell could observe the happenings and motives at the top as he himself was the grandson of a prime minister and two of his uncles were Viceroy in India. He was an Earl himself but never used to sport it. He was a plain Bertrand Russell.

Coming to our own country of recent times, all the leaders in the freedom struggle and the people following them were utterly devoid of any sense of insecurity, physical danger or fear for their own self. Gandhiji set them free from any fear either of bullets, jail or *lathis*. They believed in the cause and righteousness of their struggle. It was an unarmed struggle of the people for the freedom of their motherland. There was no hate or rancour against the rulers.

Gandhiji was oblivious of personal danger. In spite of an unsuccessful bomb attack, he declined protection of any kind and soon fell to the bullets of an assassin.

Coming to India after independence, the Nehru family stands out as a shining example of incredible physical courage. In spite of escaping narrowly a bullet fired at him during one of his trips to Kashmir, due to timely saving him by Sardar Baldev Singh the then Defence

Minister, Nehru continued going in an open vehicle standing with folded hands with a friendly smile for people on both sides of the road. It was the same Nehru even on his last birthday in Ranchi. I was present with my wife and four year old daughter for throwing flowers at him from my daughter's hands. We knew the route. We stood at the corner of two roads. There were only a few people that day. Sure enough his cavalcade arrived, two vehicles in front then Nehru standing and waving from his open vehicle. My daughter of course threw flowers at a smiling Nehru.

Another incident when Nehru's plane engine caught fire. He went on coolly reading Krishna Menon's speech in the UNO. He even chided his panic stricken staff. He told them that the pilots were attending to the trouble and they need not be agitated. Soon after, the plane made a forced landing somewhere in Andhra Pradesh. After that when a relief plane was arranged, the pilots who brought him earlier were in doubt whether Nehru would trust them again. But they were stupefied when Nehru insisted that only they should take him again. He was often advising people to live dangerously.

When Sardar Patel's plane had to make a forced landing on a village street, he was more worried about the pilots' safety than his own. When the surprised pilots asked him the reason for his great concern for them, he told them that he was an old and sick; his life was not much left but the pilots were young and their whole long life was before them!

Indira Gandhi was a class by herself. In spite of the warning of the then super spy of India Ramendranath Rao not to keep Sikh body guards in the aftermath of operation blue star, she retained them and was assassinated by her Sikh body guards. After the Bangla Desh war when she visited Nagpur, after her arrival at the air port, being welcomed by dignitaries, my ten year old daughter could easily manage to give her a bouquet when Indira Gandhi just got up on the

open vehicle. My daughter was thrilled when she elicited a smiling *Dhanayavad* from her.

When Morarji Desai's plane crashed in Assam, the crew were killed and his own son sustained fractures, he coolly walked out of the plane to the nearest police station to report the matter. It was later revealed that in spite of adverse weather report, he undertook the journey. He had the moral courage to accept and go to Pakistan to receive Pakistan's highest civilian award from Zia-ul-Haque. Similarly he met Gen. Moshe Dayan, the Israel's hero of that time at the Delhi Airport secretly at midnight as in those days it would have severe repercussion in the Arab world. But he later admitted, he went ahead in what he believed was right in the interest of the country. He never compromised on principles.

I.K. Gujral, after becoming P.M., visited the golden temple in Amritsar. At that time terrorism was still a factor in Punjab, but it was reported that he did not allow any security cover for him saying that he was a son of Punjab and no one would harm him there. He was so confident of the love of people there.

Coming to chief ministers, Biju Patnaik is a text book case of reckless courage. He was an ace pilot. When Pakistan sponsored tribal forces attacked Kashmir and were approaching Shrinagar, it was Biju Patnaik who landed the first plane of Indian armed forces amidst great danger. He was said to have even rescued by air, a great feat, in a Dakota, the President of Indonesia surrounded by Dutch forces. A street was named after him by a grateful country. While he was C.M., there was minimum security detail. Exasperated with his actions, one person could slap him in public but Biju Patnaik gifted Rs. 250/- to the bewildered slapper, patted him. That gift was in appreciation of his courage in slapping the C.M. in public.

Likewise there may be a galore of exemplary courage of people in high places.

In this context special mention has to be

made about the great son of Andhra Pradesh, T. Prakasam, rightly called the Andhra Kesari. He was premier of erstwhile Madras Presidency and then the first Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, from 1 October 1953 to 15 November 1954, after state's reorganisation. He was the epitome of great moral and physical courage. He was boldly disagreeing with Gandhiji on certain issues. The love of the people of Andhra Pradesh for him was boundless. His birth place district was named after him, i.e., Prakasam district. He was accessible to everyone. He sacrificed crores worth of properties and a lucrative legal practice during the freedom struggle. His probity in public life was such that he lived on a pension of ₹ 750 p.m. granted by the govt. till his demise with no assets of his own. He cared nothing about his personal safety. In and out of power he was the same. He never had any insecurity problem. The love of his people was his only security.

Coming to Atalji - he was loved by all sections of people. His popularity equalled Nehru's.

He was never shy of the press. His parliamentary performances were dazzling. He was people's P.M. He had no insecurity problem. He had no phobia of any type. He was a natural leader born to rule with people's loving consent. His policies were never harsh. But he was firm where it was necessary, an ideal P.M. for this country. He respected Nehru so much and he had his photo on the wall behind his chair in the P.M.'s chamber.

Our present P.M., Sri Modi ji is a total contrast to the previous P.M.s. Exceptions being Indira Gandhi's insecurity problem with a section of her party people and her fear of being toppled by them and again during the Emergency the guilt feeling haunting her. But as far as people were concerned, she was confident of their love for her. In J. Jayalalithaa's case it is similar fear of her political foes coupled with the guilt feeling of amassing huge wealth by questionable means,

but she too was immensely loved by her people.

Modiji came to become P.M. with the baggage of Gujarat riots haunting him as well as the knowledge that he was elected P.M. by a negative vote as there was no opposition worth the name. The people hardly knew him. People reposed confidence in him for the sake of stability as the country suffered under coalition govts. These factors as well as his ideology of R.S.S. have made him obsessed with insecurity. On top of this, his decision of sudden imposition of Demonetisation hurt all sections of people, especially the middle class and the poor sections of the entire population. It was worse than the Emergency of Indira Gandhi. The move was a disaster. The economy was down. The people suffered enormously. In this process he became distant from the people. Scared of confrontation, no press meets, his sense of insecurity was overpowering. He put himself in a security shell, inaccessible except for a few. He was not even coming out openly against the wrong doings and utterances of his party leaders across the country. Justice has never seemed to be done under his regime. When he was re-elected again for the same reasons as before, the party patted itself that demonetisation was heartily accepted by the people.

Then came the horrendous sudden imposition of lockdown. The misery, the hunger and every kind of human suffering are unparalleled in Indian history, which again plummeted the economy. This move too further alienated the P.M. This P.M. is a tragedy for this country. People wonder what sadistic pleasure he gets out of the agony of people. This move too resulted in utter failure as he was forced to lift the lockdown resulting in Covid spreading with cyclonic speed. He makes himself scarce, only surrounded by sycophants. His insecurity syndrome is a text book example. He requires constant assurances from his party people and other higher-ups about his great leadership qualities and how happy people are in his benign

rule. They make it rigmarole of expressing their unstinted faith in his leadership in these trying times. He lacks moral courage to confront people face to face. Secretive about failures, he cannot withstand adverse comments. It is reported that he does not like to read any intellectually stimulating material. He is much concerned about his own safety, has virtually cocooned himself after the advent of the pandemic.

The sense of insecurity of the P.M. is also manifest in his selecting Gujarat cadre officers who had worked in Gujarat while he was C.M. there, for key positions in the central bureaucracy. He is unable to trust others. He

wants pliable officers who will do his bidding implicitly. A few days back the plum position of CAG, the guardian of audit accounts of all govt. agencies, also went to a seasoned Gujarat cadre officer. It is reported that two aircrafts similar to the US President's Air Force One for the P.M. and the President have been ordered at a huge cost for more security with advanced technology for safety, and by the by, the attendant swank.

His rule has soundly ignored the cardinal principles of good governance of politics with principles and policies with compassion. The slogan of *Ramarajya* remains a mere slogan. 🌈

Subhas Chandra Bose — A flawed hero

Uday Balakrishnan

Bose's role in the freedom struggle is well known. But history often forgets his connection with the likes of Hitler and Mussolini



More than 75 years after his disappearance—or more likely, his death in a plane crash—in

August 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose remains a popular Indian hero. His life has been commemorated in books and films including Shyam Benegal's *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* and the Amazon Prime video series, *The Forgotten Army—Azaadi Ke Liye*.

At heart an aspiring strongman — his model was Kemal Ataturk — Bose believed that a “government by a strong party held together by military discipline” was best suited for India.

Many alarmed by the divisive and corrupt nature of democracy in this country would agree.

Bose had an extraordinary capacity to inspire people at all levels. Amongst those who bought

into his vision were, at one end, the late Lakshmi Sehgal — the famous head of the Indian National Army's all-woman unit — and at the other, Perumal, an orderly who had once served in Bose's entourage and now living (as journalist Amrith Lal and artist Riyas Komu discovered to their surprise) in a rundown Tamil locality in Yangon, Myanmar.

Leaving India

Even as he remained a member of the Congress, Bose never ceased aspiring to be a revolutionary. He convinced himself, and a lot of others, that only force would drive the British out of India and that he was the man to lead the charge. Former civil servant and author Achala Moulik recalled how her father Monin Moulik, an academic in Rome in the 1930s, arranged and then accompanied Bose to a meeting at the Grottanelli weapons factory to purchase arms for the struggle for freedom that the latter saw coming.

Bose represented a violent revolutionary thread in India's struggle for freedom, which Mahatma Gandhi strongly opposed, and with good reason. After the Chauri Chaura incident, where a mob set fire to a police station killing 22 policemen in February 1922, Gandhiji was convinced that violence beget violence in a country as volatile as India, and was best avoided. Unsurprisingly, early in his second term in office as Congress President in 1939, Bose was compelled to resign after, as historian Sugata Bose noted, "having been comprehensively outwitted and outmanoeuvred by Gandhi".

Once he had left the Congress and the huge organisational backing as well as the all-India platform it gave him, Bose's chances of reclaiming his once primary position in the freedom struggle were lost, so long as he was within India. Bose came into his own only after he had made his dramatic escape to Nazi Germany.

Away from India, Gandhiji, Nehru and the Congress, Bose could do what he was best at

— galvanise and lead people. His broadcasts were heard clandestinely by many in India, and were inspiring not the least because in them he emphasised the inevitability of the British defeat and of the Japanese and, therefore, his own triumph. He was astonishingly successful in raising an army of 40,000, more than half of which comprised Indian soldiers who had fought on behalf of the British and were in Japanese custody.

The sensational aspects of Bose's life — and there were many — make for good copy and evoke awe at his brilliance and derring-do. His academic success in Cambridge and his clearing the ICS but refusing to be inducted into the elite service, inspired a whole generation of freedom fighters.

His daring escape from Calcutta (now Kolkata) and reappearance in Germany in April 1941, his long submarine journey to Japan in 1943 and assumption of the leadership of a resurrected Indian National Army — so well brought out by Hugh Toye, Sugata Bose and other biographers — is the stuff of legends. But there was another, and darker, side to Bose.

Wrong kind of company

Blinded by his intense dislike for imperialistic Britain, Bose did more than just make friends with its enemies, who were even more ruthless — he collaborated with them, a fact that Indian historians gloss over. It is inconceivable that Bose was not aware of the ongoing pogrom of the Jews in Germany. That was no secret and everyone in Berlin knew this, just as they were aware of the infamous Platform 17 of the Grunewald railway station in Berlin from where Jews were dispatched in their thousands in cattle cars to Auschwitz, starting soon after Bose made himself at home in the city.

In his well-researched book, *Bose in Nazi Germany*, historian Romain Hayes brings out how well Bose got along with the Nazis, amongst them Ribbentrop, Himmler and Goebbels. As he states, "for a relatively unknown exile, Bose

rapidly earned the trust and respect of the Nazi leadership. Hitler thought highly of him, as is attested by a private conversation he had with his entourage in early 1942, in which he described Bose as having eclipsed Nehru.”

The Nazis treated Bose well. He could meet other Indians and broadcast to his countrymen. They also ensured he lived a luxurious life in a fine house in the best part of Berlin. He was even provided with a costly chauffeur-driven car. He moved easily with Hitler, Italy’s dictator Mussolini and Japanese Prime Minister Tojo.


Bose showed great solidarity with his Axis hosts, going so far as to make a widely publicised visit to Nanjing, which was controlled by a Japanese puppet regime headed by Wang Jingwei. This was a mere six years after the Japanese army had massacred and raped between 50,000 and 300,000 of its residents in 1937-1938, infamously known as the ‘Rape of Nanjing.’

As Romain Hayes tells us, “Had Bose chosen a more moderate path akin to that of his

less temperamental colleagues such as Azad and Nehru, and remained in India he would have played an important role, even a possibly decisive one, in the post-War period, opposing not only Partition but the emergence of the Gandhi-Nehru regime.’

Bose undoubtedly was a great nationalist and patriot. Arguably his greatest contribution to India was his unwavering commitment to secularism, something that later became the cornerstone of the Indian republic.

However, in collaborating with genocidal regimes with imperial aspirations which would almost surely have delivered India from one form of colonialism to another, Bose had erred grievously. If only for that reason, he will remain a flawed hero in history and also remembered as one who had wrongly believed that the end justifies the means. It almost never does.

The writer is a former fellow at NIAS, CEU Budapest and at CCS-IISc, where he also taught
Courtesy **BusinessLine, the Hindu**,
September 04, 2020 

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MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT: The need of the hour

Nabarun C. Ganguli

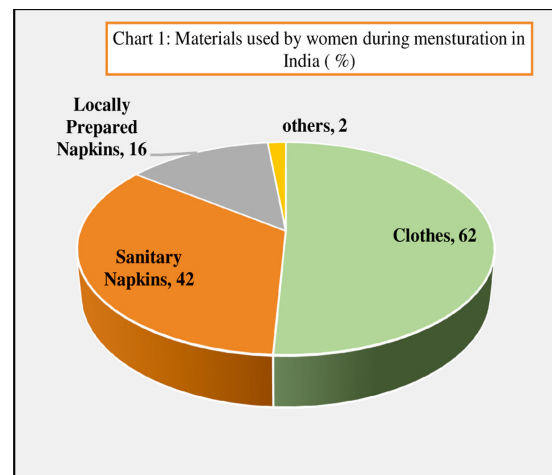
The world today is facing the threat of a highly contagious virus Covid-19 and because there is no vaccine yet, precautions are the best solution. For prevention from virus, it is advised to maximize staying indoors, maintain social distancing, avoid gatherings, wash hands repeatedly with soap or else alcohol-based sanitizers may also be used in emergencies. To have favourable effects on health and immunity, one has to take a balanced diet, immune booster hot drinks and do light physical exercise regularly. During these hard times, women need to pay more attention to their health and particularly during their menstruation. At times of menstruation, the natural ability of a women to fight diseases gets decreased. Therefore, to keep themselves safe from probable infections, women should pay more attention on their hygiene and nutrition than usual days which they often neglect in order to take care of the family and doing regular household chores.

The physiological process of menstruation starts in a woman's life between 10 to 15 years of age i.e. the puberty age or the start of adolescence and lasts till the age of roughly 49-50 years. This span of age is the reproductive age in a life of a woman.

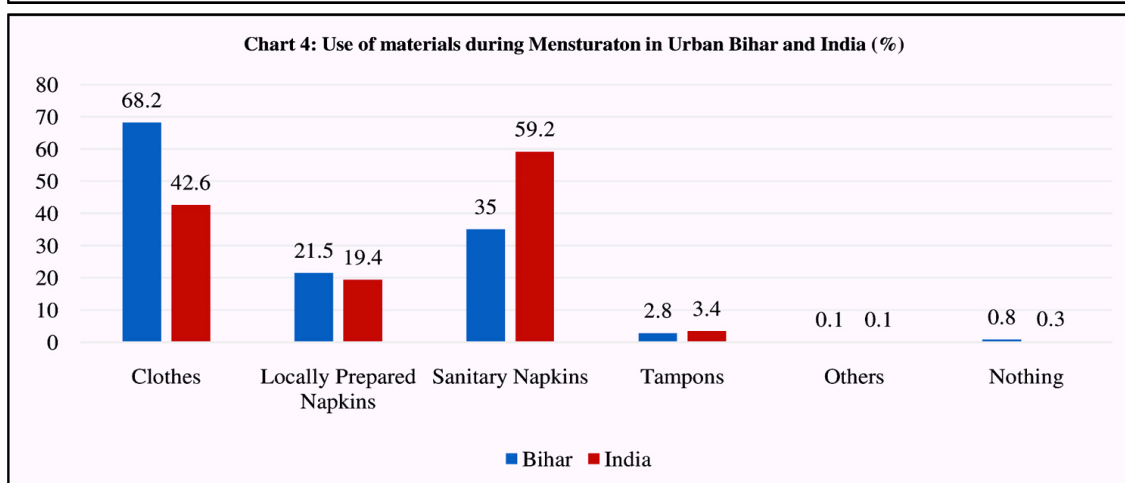
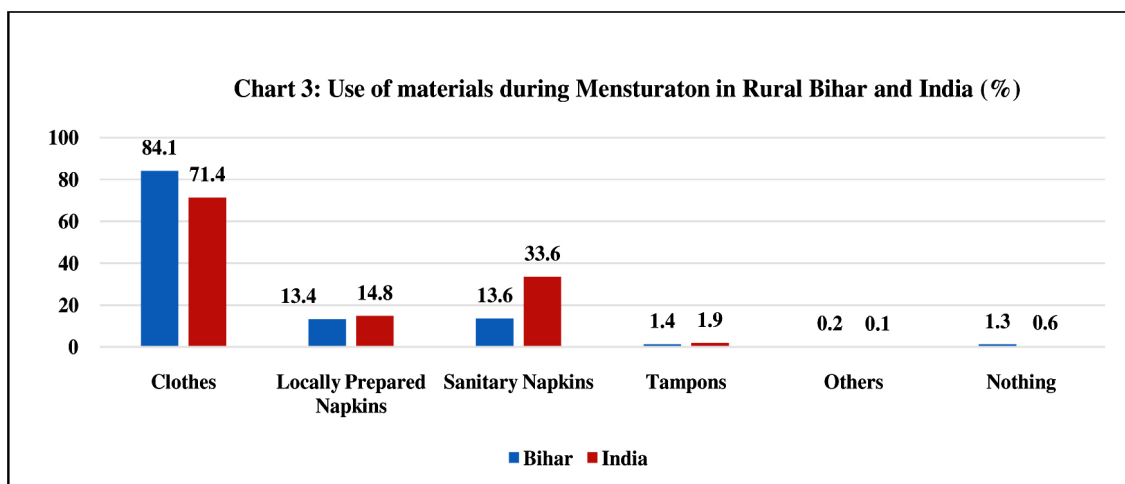
As per estimated figure of 2019 based on Census 2011, out of 137.96 crore population of India, the estimated female population is 67.24 crore, which constitutes almost 48.7% of the total population and of which 64.8% i.e. 43.59 crore is the number of women who are in the age group of 10-49 years. Similarly, out of 12.48 crore estimated population of Bihar, the population of women is 5.98 crore, which constitutes almost 47.9% of the total population and of which 59.9% i.e. 3.58 crore is the number of women who are in the age group of 10-49

years. This is a large number, so it is very important to know what kind of measures she takes to maintain hygiene during menstruation.

In our patriarchal society women's menstruation is still a taboo and is a big hush-hush. She is never able to openly express about her needs for menstrual hygiene products. According to NFHS 4 (National Family Health Survey), 2015-16, only 42% of women use sanitary napkins across the country and in Bihar it is only a meagre 16%. Chart 1 and 2 below show that 62% of women in India and 82% of women in Bihar still use the traditional stuffs like clothes or others during menstruation.



A little extensive study shows that this problem is more complicated in the rural context. In rural Bihar, where female account for 47.9% of the total rural population, only 13 to 14% use sanitary napkins, whereas the usage is 33.6% in rural India (Chart 3). However, the urban data is slightly better where it is 35.0% for urban Bihar and 59.2% for urban India (Chart 4). According to NFHS 4, 57.6% of women in India and 31.0% in Bihar follow hygienic measures during menstruation.



It is worth of thinking that the glitches which the women would be facing during the lockdown will be even worse than the normal times.

Encourage Local NGOs to increase the coverage of Menstrual Products

There are a wide range of menstrual hygiene products available in the market. The most easily available and affordable are the Sanitary Napkin Pads. These products are mainly marketed showing their attributes about their appropriateness or cultural acceptability or easy usability or cost effectiveness or easy disposability or allowing mobility or even having minimal environmental impact. Since past few years, beside big commercial houses, manysmall and mediumsized commercial as well as social


enterprises, both in manufacturing and selling of these sanitary napkin pads have entered the market. Social enterprises are generally non-profit entities and commonly known as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations). Not only the government institutions, but these non-profit organisations also manufacture and/or distribute sanitary napkin pads, along with programme support such as education and counselling on the subject issue, either independently or in collaboration with specific government departments to support governmental welfare programs. But inopportunately they are facing steep competitions to scale-up their operations resulting in whatever little could the

beneficiaries can get from these non-profit organisations are sadly getting deprived of. Thus, to leverage the coverage of menstrual products mainly good quality sanitary pads at lower costs, partnerships of development partners or government or big manufacturers with local suppliers is needed. These types of partnerships could incentivize production and coverage in areas with large unmet need. Such a system could develop sustainable supply-side which will ultimately cater to the needs of the women living in far flung remote rural areas.

Conclusion

Clean and hygienic menstrual management requires awareness and cooperation. But discussions on menstruation is still prohibited in

our country. People feel uncomfortable talking about the subject. Moreover, there are lack of information and thus prevailing misconceptions in the society prevents the women in getting a dignified women hood. The dominant misapprehensions in the society stops the women from seeking their needs for proper menstrual hygiene management. Proper menstrual hygiene is essential for the health, education and empowerment of women. Therefore, again and again the fact comes out that if we have to build a healthy and strong society, then women's health should be an important subject for us.

The Author **Mr. Nabarun C. Ganguli**, is Director, ONOH Foundation, Bihar 

The author wrote:

Greetings from ONOH Foundation!!

'Hope you and your entire team is at your best of health and keeping safe in these difficult times.

ONOH is a new organisation working in the field of Menstrual Hygiene in the districts of Bihar and Jharkhand. My interest and inspiration in writing to you is that menstrual hygiene and its management is one such issue, which still remains less spoken of, even in today's twenty-first century. Menstruation is very much a normal physiological process in every woman's reproductive life. But, unfortunately very little attention is paid to proper Menstrual Hygiene Management because of shackles of shame and taboo. And due to these hurdles, the women feel under-confident resulting in an un-empowered womanhood. Sir, I have worked in both, multinational commercial organisation as well as in an international NGO, each for more than ten years. Now, as mentioned above, I have started a small non-profit organisation of my own and working in the field of women's health. I have come to know the challenges of a rural as well as not so affluent woman, who face hindrances even in getting proper hygiene materials for use. It is a very relevant issue that requires more attention alongside our country's other goals for prosperity and women's dignity.

Sir, your most esteemed journal publishes the most concurrent and concerning issues of socio-political importance. This is read by the best logical minds of our country. Your platform is very much the voice of a common people and is noted and referred to by the policy makers and the bureaucrats also. Any article published by you would definitely get the much needed wide coverage. Therefore sir, this is my earnest request to kindly publish this article which is still less spoken of.

Thanks in advance for this help.

Regards,
Nabarun Chandra Ganguli
Director
ONOH Foundation,

Memorandum to The President of India on behalf of PUCL, Delhi; Janhastakshep and Citizens For Democracy

PUCL, Delhi, Janhastakshep and Citizens For Democracy had planned to hold a demonstration on 28th August 2020 at Jantar Mantar raising certain demands relating to the release of intellectuals, writers, professors, students, anti-CAA activists implicated in Bhima Koregaon, Delhi violence and other accusations, repeal of CAA and UAPA, restoration of articles 370 and 35-A. However the police informed us one day before that the gathering for demonstration would not be allowed due to restrictions imposed on account of COVID-19. Therefore we issued information to participants that physical gathering had been deferred due to covid-19 restrictions and that we would submit a memorandum to the President.. Two of the participants reached Jantar Mantar on 28 August with two banners. inspite of heavy rain. We had decided to hold symbolic demonstration with four persons. They took out two banners and were attempting to display them. . There was large police force; some policemen immediately pounced upon the banners and took the same in their possession. One of the participant i.e. Amit Srivastava tried to argue with them and he was taken away in a van. The police told them that they would neither allow any banner nor even a single demonstrator at Jantar Mantar. The usual place of demonstration at Jantar Mantar was totally surrounded by police barricades and was emptied of vehicles and people. Soon after I (N.D. Pancholi) reached the place and police told me also the same thing. I inquired about Amit Srivastava and he was soon brought back. However they allowed us to submit our memorandum to the President of India. Amit Srivastava and myself were taken to the President House in a police van where we delivered our memorandum at the reception.

Memorandum is as follows:

28TH August, 2020

To
THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
NEW DELHI 110001.

REPRESENTATION OF DEMANDS

HON'BLE SIR,

On behalf of our civil liberty organizations we bring to your kind notice the alarming situation in the country. In the midst of growing poverty and unemployment coupled with the miseries wrought by the present pandemic, the state apparatus is busy in making continuous assault on the fundamental rights of the people. Those who wish to exercise their right in voicing their protests in peaceful ways are sought to be suppressed and victimized. Large number of young students are being falsely implicated in for participating in peaceful protests against Citizens Amendment Act, 2019. The real culprits involved in inciting the recent violence in Delhi are moving freely and victims of the violence are being made accused. The police in Delhi under the control of the Home Minister at the Centre is being misused against innocent social activists and members of the minority community. The proceedings relating to the recent Delhi violence

pending in various courts is sought to be manipulated towards one particular end – even a court had expressed its surprise the way the Delhi police is proceeding, violating the established procedures and norms for fair investigation. A senior police officer is reported to have issued a circular to the lower officials that where members of majority community are involved, the police officials should proceed cautiously. The ordinary citizens are dismayed over open exhibition of communal trends in the police establishment. The political leaders who openly expressed provocative communal slogans against members of a minority community and peaceful anti-CAA protesters and who did their most to incite the violence are being unashamedly protected.

The situation relating to human rights prevailing all over India is also very dismal. Intellectuals, writers, human right activists, journalists, who raise their voices in favour of the downtrodden, weak and minorities are sought to be silenced by implicating them in false cases. About 12 such academicians, writers, professors, human right activists, advocates are in prison of the last many months, some of them even going to complete two years of detention. Some of the names are Anand Teltumbde, Sudha Bhardwaj, Gautam Navlakha, Varavara Rao, Arun Ferriera, Vernon Gonsalves who are falsely implicated in Bhima Goregaon case. Two years have passed but even charges have not been framed in court. In this manner it might take decades for the case to reach final conclusion. UAPA is being flagrantly misused for arresting the innocents and keeping them in jail for years.

All those who cherish democracy and rule of law in the country are anguished that the Citizens Amendment Act 2019 was enacted and articles 370 and 35-A were abrogated. These steps are calculated attempts to destroy our constitutional values. CAA is clear violation of the preamble and article 14 of our constitution as well as international provisions to which we are signatory. It is for the first time in the history of constitutional development of India that a religion has been used to discriminate a particular community. It is not only an assault on our constitution but also violates all values enshrined in our glorious humanist traditions.

The manner in which articles 370 and 35-A were abrogated is against all democratic norms. The affected people, i.e. the people of Jammu & Kashmir were never consulted before imposing on them a dictatorial system. Large number of the political leaders and activists in Jammu * Kashmir were arrested and many of them are still in imprisonment. It was claimed that these measures were necessary for economic development for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. While taking these steps we forgot the popular anecdote richly used by the opposition leaders in their election speeches during elections of February-March 1977 declared in January 1977 during the ‘emergency’ : that ‘a bird would always try to get out of the cage even if that cage is made of gold’. Last one year since 5th August 2019 has shown that the alleged development of Jammu and

Kashmir is a hoax. History of development of human civilization tells us that people prefer their freedom more than their curtailed rights even if assured of better economic life.

And there are some prominent media TV channels which are competing with each other in spreading hate and venom against one community to the enjoyment of concerned governmental agencies whose task is to curb hateful campaigns.

Therefore our demands are as follows:

1. Withdraw cases filed against the intellectuals, writers, professors, students and others falsely implicated in cases relating to Bhima Goregaon and Delhi violence;

2. Release anti-CAA protesters as they have been arrested with a view to silence them;
3. Release large number of citizens kept in unlawful detentions in Jammu and Kashmir;
4. Restore erstwhile statehood of Jammu and Kashmir;
5. Restore articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian Constitution;
6. Repeal CAA and UAPA.

We shall be highly obliged.

N.D. Pancholi, Ish Mishra, Amit Srivastava

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES, DELHI; JANHASAKSHEP;

CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY 

Reader's Comments:

'Stop the witch hunt and persecution of Conscientious Dissenters: PUCL'

With reference to the above on page 19 of your esteemed journal dated September 2020, I want to ask a simple question: Why do the organizers of Bhima Koregaon event not celebrate the victories of the British in the battles of Plassey and Buxar? In these two battles the British defeated the Nawab of Bengal and the Nawab of Awadh and cut into pieces the Mughal Empire. These two are bigger victories than the victory at Bhima Koregaon. In the first two battles the Dalits of these areas namely the Dusadhs who were treated as untouchables by the Hindu society fought for the British and defeated the Nawab of Bengal and the Nawab of Awadh. They were uprooted and the British established themselves firmly in the Indian Peninsula. Then came 1857 and the Mughals were bundled out of the Red Fort. Bahadur Shah Zafar, whose name means Bahadur Shah the Conqueror, ran out of the Red Fort in the wee hours from the water hole which brought in water from the Yamuna river. Babur came on horseback and his descendant Bahadur Shah Zafar ran out of the water hole, took a boat from Yamuna Ghat and landed near Nizamuddin Dargah. He had the jewellery and ornaments of the Mughal dynasty with him which he deposited at the dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Oliya for safe keeping because his armies had failed to save him. He then hid himself in the Humayun's library from where Humayun had fallen down and landed on his head killing him instantly. The same library saw the final end of the Mughal Empire when Zafar, the conqueror, was arrested from there by the British.

Why do the organizers of Bhima Koregaon not celebrate these three battles of Buxar, Plassey and 1857 in which they fought for the British and won. Why only Bhima Koregaon? The reason is that at Bhima Koregaon the Brahmins of Pune lost. They want to rub salt into the wounds of the Brahmins and not Mughals who lost bigger battles than Bhima Koregaon battle.

This shows their political agenda, vicious agenda to divide the Hindu society and sow the seeds of bitterness.

I have taught in Delhi University for 41 years and know some of the names mentioned. I saw a faculty member of DU taking out a bunch of papers from his hat and handed it over to another colleague in Arts Faculty during DUTA Elections. He used to walk on his fours therefore no one could doubt that he could be a courier of Naxalites.

These so called intellectuals are not clean. I have much more to say but it may waste your time. I know you will not publish it because Radical Humanist is radical in name only.

Regards, **A.L. Rawal**, 5 Sept 2020.

The editor wrote back:

Dear Mr. Rawal, your reaction will be published in the RH for October 2020 for others to react. You will be proved wrong at least in one thing - that your comments will not be published in the RH. I hope that you will revise your opinion about the magazine and its editorial policy.

Regards, **Mahi Pal Singh**, Editor, RH

How the dead weight of Leninism is crushing Communist Parties

Bhaskar Sur

One misconception about communist parties is that they follow Marxism while actually they entirely depend on Lenin for their ideological outlook as well as organizational structure. They are outdated replicas of the Russian Bolshevik Party which was born in 1903 at the second conference. From that date Lenin recognized the existence of Bolshevism as ‘a stream of political thought and political party.’ In his seminal text ‘What is to be Done’ (1903), he outlined his conception of a revolutionary party as a centralized, highly disciplined striking force, working legally and illegally, to undermine the existing system and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. It was not to be a party of the people as most continental social democratic parties were but one comprised of totally committed revolutionaries. Such an un-Marxist conception led to much disagreement among the Marxists themselves. The great Rosa Luxemburg criticized Lenin’s conception of a vanguardist party which, she rightly feared, would hold the working class in tutelage. Trotsky, who at that time was in the Menshevik camp, saw it as a conspiratorial outfit and put his views with a rare clarity, “The organization in the party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organization; and finally Dictator takes the place of the Central Committee.” It tragically turned out to be true with the revolution he did so much to bring about. It was his nemesis to be hounded out by the Dictator and be brutally murdered in exile.

A Bolshevik/communist party considers itself as the embodiment of the proletarian class consciousness. It takes upon itself the onerous responsibility to lead the proletariat to the conquest of power. Naturally, it knows the truth

about the Dialectics of society which none else can claim. It is based on ‘democratic centralism’ - a terrifying oxymoron. In reality, the word democracy serves as a fig-leaf for centralism. We are to assume there is much ‘internal democracy’ though one can never hope to express his views freely. Lenin says, “The ‘freedom of criticism’ is itself a defective phrase and expressed an inherently false if not a hypocritical notion. Criticism must be subordinated to the truth.” As the Party alone is in possession of this Truth, ipse facto, all criticisms must be subordinated to the Party. Communist parties foster a culture of uncritical subordination - a kind of mental slavery. Bertrand Russell with an uncanny insight noticed that in a communist party, a person would unquestioningly follow the Party directive even though in his personal life he is least subservient. Such is the miracle of ideological indoctrination! For a ‘true communist’ party allegiance is above all human relationships, personal doubts and conscience. The Party, in other words, is a new god, omniscient and when in power, omnipotent as well. Such a party, however perverse in conception, might have been necessitated by Russia’s political backwardness and authoritarian atmosphere which made open political activity impossible. But to perpetuate it and set it up a model to be replicated in other countries, was a monumental blunder. In a democratic set up such an organization is not only anachronistic but an abomination and a menace.

In most countries where race, ethnicity and caste matter, the principle of democratic centralism becomes a means at the disposal of the dominant elite to monopolize power

within party in perpetuity. In India there has been a convergence between centralism and Brahminism. In all Indian communist parties the privileged upper castes rule the roost. Without any exception, they are the bastions of Brahminism. In Bengal they were voted to power for no less than seven times but power remained firmly in the grip of the upper castes which constitute only 5% of the population. The two chief ministers - Jyoti Basu and Bhattacharya - were from the upper castes. No *shudra* or Muslim was considered suitable for the post. In Latin America persons with white lineage dominated the leadership, depriving the Blacks or native Indians. For the same reason the communist parties are also bastions of male supremacy and gerontocracy. The only woman Secretary of Russian Communist Party Anna Balabinova was hounded out before she could complete her term and the Indian Communist Party, now a century old, has not yet been able to elect a woman General Secretary though Indian National Congress, a bourgeois party elected no less than six. Once someone can make it to the all powerful polit-bureau, through hard work, blind allegiance or by virtue of his caste or race, he can hope to be there till the cold hand of Death intervenes. They grow old, suspicious and malicious making themselves comfortable by forming around them a coterie to tighten their grip over power. All communist parties are run by a bunch of old fogey, who in their hoary imbecility, prevent new aspirants. The young men in disgust break away to form a new party apparently for 'ideological reasons' and sadly, to replicate the cycle over again. Communists, however, are blissfully unaware of their Brahminical, racist, patriarchal or geriatric character. The class ideology comes handy for the elite to hold on to power. It creates illusions: they are made to think they are moving towards a revolution when actually, they are creeping towards

extinction.

There is a sharp division of labour and entrenched hierarchy within a Leninist party. The real workers are 'whole timers', the professional activists who have gone through ideological indoctrination and ready to make any sacrifice for the new god - the Party. They can be compared with the *Mamluk* fighters or Janissaries under the Ottomans (who were often castrated) while the theoretical leaders remind one of the Jesuit fathers. Those on the higher rungs of hierarchy enjoy more power and status but those on the polit-bureau are beyond any effective control by the rank and file. Now, such an organisation may suit a dictatorship but only for a time being. Communists, both ideologically and organisationally, are therefore authoritarians. They may speak of democracy as a strategy or as a ruse in order to hide their real programme - the overthrowal of the phony democracy and the establishment of the real one under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. For CPI (M) it is 'People's Democracy', the kind of democracy that thrived under Mao and Enver Hoxa. The collapse of Soviet system at the end of the last century did not stir them to question Bolshevism, to doubt or discard old practices. Even now, when they are fast losing their support base, they have the same faith in untrammelled power, same cynical distrust for democratic institutions and same ideological arrogance. It reminds me of Satyajit Ray's celluloid classic 'Jalsaghar' (The Music Hall) where an old and impoverished landlord retains all his aristocratic arrogance and arranges a grand musical soiree just to settle score with a *nouveau riche* rival and die a happy death. Are our surviving communists preparing themselves for such a happy death?

Taken from the Facebook post of Bhaskar Sur 🌈



Vladimir Illich Lenin



Courtesy the Hindu, 7 September 2020.