

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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100th birthday of Ravipudi Venkatadri



612

**At the 100th birthday celebration of Ravipudi Venkatadri at
Radical Humanist Center, INKOLLU, AP on 9th Feb. 2021**



**N.D. Pancholi (in the middle) at
Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, A.P.**



THE RADICAL HUMANIST

Vol. 84 Number 12, March 2021

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Editorial :

The Country Stands with the Farmers and their Movement

Mahi Pal Singh

More than a week before the actual event the farmers had declared that they would hold a tractor march on Republic Day, the 26th January 2021 in which thousands of tractors would take part and every tractor would display the national flag. In this way they would celebrate the Republic Day along with the nation when the armed forces would march on the Raj Path and the farmers would march with their tractors on the outer ring road. However, the Delhi police did not allow them to march on the outer ring road. Ultimately, both the sides mutually agreed on some other routes on which this march would take place. The tractor march was also to start after the march of the armed forces was over. But this agreement did not hold ground and some farmer groups started the march earlier and after some confrontation with the police, they reached the Red Fort and even entered it. Some miscreants climbed the ramparts of the Red Fort and hoisted a religious flag on the pole on which the Prime Minister unfurls the national flag every Independence Day when the country celebrates the Independence Day.

It was not a proper thing for anybody to climb that pole and to put up any flag there even if it was a religious flag which is otherwise respectable. But putting up even a religious flag at the pole, at which the national tricolour, which represents the secular and democratic India, is unfurled every Independence Day, was in no way proper. It was also highly improper to hold a confrontation with the police, indulge in violence and to enter the Red Fort. Since the Red Fort has become a symbol of our independence, the whole incident was rightly seen as an affront to

our national ethos. It was also condemned by all the farmers' unions, political parties and every individual who saw the incident on the TV set. So far so good. But the BJP leadership has been making a lot of hue and cry on the incident, calling it an insult to the national flag and the whole nation. What is noteworthy is that the miscreants did not remove or insult the national flag in any way because there was no national flag on the pole where a person put up a different flag. What are even more noteworthy and objectionable are that 'all' the farmer leaders and protesting farmers are being painted as the participants and promoters of that incident and being labelled as anti-national elements. The central government and the ruling BJP have launched an all out campaign to defame and destroy the farmers' movement. This was being done and is still being done with impunity by the BJP leaders and most of the media, particularly the '*godi media*', is following their footsteps and trying to hold the farmer leaders responsible for the untoward incident in every TV discussion on the incident for which a few misguided and mischievous individuals were really responsible. Hardly any TV channel appreciates these farmer leaders for the tractor march which was completed on three agreed routes by lakhs of farmers in thousands of tractors peacefully in a dignified manner, in the same manner as has their protest at Delhi borders been conducted and continued for the last three months. The conduct of the '*godi media*' rightfully reminds one of lapdogs who dutifully and faithfully wag their tails continuously to please their masters, justifying the tag of '*godi media*' as attributed to them by Ravish Kumar of NDTV.

The two leaders of the Red Fort mob, Deep Siddhu and Iqbal Singh, have already been arrested and one hopes that their links and motivators will be exposed if the police conduct their investigation in a fair manner without fear and favour. It is intriguing how these people were allowed to start their march earlier than the fixed time and that too to the Red Fort covering a long distance from Singhu border when they had made their intentions clear a day before the planned tractor march.

If, however, one looks at the incidents that followed the Red Fort incident, apart from the conduct of the '*godia media*' which has been relentlessly blaming the farmers' union leaders for it, there remains no doubt that the incident was only one part of the deeper conspiracy to defame the farmers' agitation and their leaders and somehow or the other bring about the end of the agitation which has been intensifying and spreading throughout the country with every passing day, spreading dissatisfaction with the Bharatiya Janata Party and its leaders not only among the largest community of farmers but also among other people in general as a result of which Manohar Lal Khattar's helicopter was not allowed to land at a village where he was scheduled to address a gathering of local people and many villages have banned the entry of BJP leaders into their villages, and the anger of people, particularly of the farming community, against the BJP can be fatal for the BJP's electoral plans.

After issuing many statements against the farmers' agitation and their leaders immediately after the Red Fort incident and seeing that all the people had condemned the incident, the BJP saw it as an opportune movement to crush the movement and decided to forcefully remove the farmers first from the Ghazipur border. Cases were filed against almost all the farmer leaders for the Red Fort incident, including Rakesh Tikait, who was leading the agitation at the Ghazipur border. A large number of armed police

personnel were sent to the border. The District Magistrate and senior police officers also reached there and served a notice to the farmers to vacate the place immediately. Water and electricity supply to the place where the farmers were camping, was also cut. There were rumours that Tikait was to be arrested from there, who even decided to surrender to avoid brutalities on the farmers by the police if the administration decided to remove them from there by use of force, which seemed to be their plan. But soon Rakesh Tikait received the information that about 200 BJP workers led by two local BJP MLAs, Nand Kishore Gurjar and Sunil Sharma, had arrived and gathered below the flyover on which the farmers had set up a stage for their speakers and were sitting in agitation, and that the BJP workers were carrying lathis and other arms with them. On learning this, Tikait declared that he would not let the BJP goons attack farmers after he surrendered himself to the police and that now he would continue to sit in agitation there even if he was killed there. In an emotional voice, tears trickling down his cheeks, he declared that he was giving up even water and would drink it only when farmers brought water from their villages in protest against the stoppage of water supply to the farmers at the border.

Rakesh Tikait's appeal to the farmers, who were a little demoralised after the Red Fort incident, had a miraculous and electrifying effect. Thousands of farmers started from their villages in Muzaffar Nagar and other places with Ganga water or water from their own wells on their tractors and other vehicles for Tikait and other farmers at the Zhazipur border. Then it was the turn of the administration to get demoralised. It did not have the courage to remove the farmers forcibly from there that night. This incident happened on 28th January and from 29th January thousands of more farmers started reaching the border carrying water.

A similar incident happened at the Singhu

border where about 200 people, claiming to be local people, carrying national flags and lathis gathered there and shouting slogans like '*Tirange jhande ka apmaan, nahin sahega Hindustan*' (India will not tolerate the insult to the tricolour), and also slogans against the farmers' leaders, attacked the farmers sitting there, pelting stones at them. They also demolished the tents erected there, also damaging the property of farmers kept in those tents. This was done in full sight of the large contingent of police present there many of whom were later seen shaking hands with these 'local people'. The fact that everybody else, including the media persons, was completely banned from proceeding towards the Singhu border and was stopped at least two kilometres away from that place, and these 'local people' could reach there easily, as if on a conducted tour by the police, raises serious suspicions of the complicity of the administration and political class in the attempt to remove the farmers from the agitation site. They were the sponsored, trained, motivated and committed goons of the BJP who were dutifully performing the task assigned to them by their leaders. But this attack by the BJP workers also backfired as farmers who had left for their villages earlier felt it as an attack on the honour of the farming community by the BJP and from the very next day thousands or more farmers started arriving at the protest site to support the agitation and to participate in it.

Seeing that the farmers' movement was getting stronger and stronger and that '*khap mahapanchayats*' being organised in various districts of U.P., Haryana and Punjab etc. were pledging their support to the farmers' movement and also asking their members to join the agitation at the Delhi borders, the BJP leadership neither was nor is finding a way out of the imbroglio, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, speaking in the Rajya Sabha on 8th February 2021, himself tried to defame those intellectuals, civil society members and social

activists who have lent their support to the farmers' movement by calling them '*andolan jeevi*' and '*par jeevi*', meaning thereby 'those who live on movements' and 'parasites'. By making these remarks he has only exposed his hatred for those who agitate against oppression, injustice and misrule, as did our freedom fighters like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Patel, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev and scores of others like them, against the British rule in India and why not because no person belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), of which he is a very loyal member, is known to have participated in the country's independence movement. In fact, Mr. Narendra Modi, who never feels shy of using the names of leaders of the independence movement, like Sardar Patel and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose for political gains, himself is not known to have participated in any movement whatsoever. That is basically the reason why he does not understand the sacrifices of those who suffer so that others may live happily and that is also why he has not uttered a single word of sympathy or condolence for more than two hundred farmers who have died suffering from extremely inimical weather conditions during the farmers' agitation in the last more than three months. That is why various BJP leaders have been calling the farmer leaders Naxals, Khalistani terrorists, pro-Pakistan and pro-China anti-nationals, etc. and taking clue from his remarks, J.P. Dalal, the agriculture minister in Haryana's BJP government, went a step further and said that those farmers who died at Delhi borders during the farmers' agitation would have died at their homes also in any case – a very insensitive and uncivilized remark – like that of his leader. No BJP leader has criticised or condemned his remarks because they are no different. The attitude of the central government, particularly of Prime Minister Modi, has been

confrontationist rather than conciliatory towards the farmers from the very beginning of their movement. All the BJP ministers, MPs, MLAs, spoke persons etc. know this very well, and knowing it very well that no action will be taken against them by the party high command, and following that line, regularly issue such statements from time to time. It is a practice in the party to support and reward rather than punish such people for such remarks.

In view of the later events as enumerated above it can fairly be concluded that people like Iqbal Singh, Lakkha Sidhana and Deep Siddhu, who led the crowd of farmers who indulged in violence and disrespect to the Red Fort and its sanctity were in fact BJP agents who were dutifully performing their assigned duty so that the government could use the incident to defame the farmers' agitation and its leaders and to crush the movement which has become a headache for the ruling BJP who does not know how to bring an end to it given the ego of one person. The fact that Deep Siddhu, the main accused, has been photographed with Amit Shah and also Mr. Narendra Modi at his official

residence, do point to his connection with the high ups in the BJP. If one understands it, it becomes easy to conclude how the miscreants reached the Red Fort and how the so called 'local people' reached Singhu border with arms and freely indulged in stone pelting at the farmers. The farmers have remained united against the government's attempt to bring about a division among them and the fact that they genuinely feel that the three farm laws are meant to destroy agriculture and farmers in the country has helped them keep themselves united as it is a unity of purpose and a question of their survival. They have also continued their movement in a non-violent manner and have remained calm and composed even in the face of attempts to incite them by launching attacks on them. No amount of oppression and authoritative suppression of dissent in the farmers or the activists supporting them can destroy their movement. The whole country stands with the farmers in their movement for better lives for themselves and their posterity. No government, however dictatorial, can ignore them for long. 🌈

Notice for General Body Meeting of Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)

As per the decision of the Board of Trustees taken in the Zoom Meeting held on 6th February 2021, it has been decided to hold the meeting of the General Body of IRI on 17th and 18th April 2021 at Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. All the members are invited to make arrangements for attending the same. For booking of accommodation at the GPF please email your requirement to: mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com or contact at: 9312206414.

Detailed agenda for the meeting will be circulated soon and also published in the April 2021 issue of The Radical Humanist.

Dated: 18.02.2021

Mahi Pal Singh
(Secretary, IRI)

Articles and Features :

100th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF RAVIPUDI VENKATADRI: 9th FEB 2021

100th Birthday celebrations of #Ravipudi Venkatadri was enthusiastically celebrated at Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, Andhra Pradesh on 9-2-2021 with majestic flavour.

The Programme started at 10 am and continued till 3 PM. It was a unique spectacle.

Several Guests from Delhi, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh attended the Celebrations and paid hearty

tributes on behalf of their organizations to Ravipudi who was in good health and high spirit. N.D. Pancholi, Vice Chairman of the Indian Renaissance Institute, felicitated him on behalf of the Indian Renaissance Institute and delivered Key address on the occasion. Representatives from various rationalist, humanist and civil liberty organizations, including Andhra Pradesh Rationalist Association, Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu felicitated him.

Speakers included :

1. K. Hanumantha Rao, President Rationalist Association AP
2. Prof. C.G Halli Murthy, Karnatka,
3. Srinu Pattathraman, Kerala, Chairman, Rationalist Association of India
4. Shaikh Babu, Treasurer, Rationalist Association of India
5. Kavi Hari Babu, General Secretary, Radical Humanist Association Inkollu
6. Prof. Mayanna Swami, Karnataka
7. Dr. Rachapalam Raghu, President Charavaka Kala Peetham, Nellore,
8. Chunchu Seshaiyah, Ex. President A.P.Rationalist Association
9. Prof. Guraita Ragavaiah, Vishakhapatnam
10. Dr. Gumma Veeranna, President A.P.Rationalist Association,
11. Shaik Darya Vali, General Secretary, A.P.Rationalist Association
12. Dr. Berram Sundra Rao, Teacher
13. Representative from Chirala Senior Citizens Association
14. Kalamtali, Chirala
15. Kalyanan Chandrasekat. Amaravati Rationalist Association
16. Retati Venkateswarlu, President, Amaravathi Rationalist Association 17-19:
Ch. Vijaya Lakshmi, Ch. Bharati, Bhawani, grand daughters of Ravipudi Venkatdri

Meduri Satyanarayana, General Secretary, Rationalist Association of India also spoke while managing the whole function.

They spoke about his valuable contribution to the rationalist movement and rationalist ideas. He has written over 90 books, mostly in Telugu. His work translated in Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada was also released on the occasion.

He had received Merit Award from

Kondaveeti Venkata Kavi Sahitya Peetham, Guntur on 25-1-2021 at Chirala.

He was presented “Dr. A.T. Kovoov National Award” from Bharateeya Yuktivada Sangham and “Modern Charvaka National Award “from Charvaka Kala Peetham , Nellore, on this day. A souvenir on his life and movement was released. His book” Edi Satyam, Edi Satyam Kadu” (To be Contd....on Page - 11)

KEY-NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY N.D. PANCHOLI, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE, IN FELICITATION FUNCTION OF RAVIPUDI VENKATADRI, THE RENOWNED RATIONALIST, ON HIS 100th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION ON 9TH FEBRUARY, 2021 AT THE RADICAL HUMANIST CENTRE, INKOLLU, ANDHRA PRADESH (INDIA)



Dear friends,

I, on behalf of the Indian Renaissance Institute, convey our greetings and wish Very Very Happy 100th Birthday to our revered Ravipudi Venkatadri. Indian Renaissance Institute was established by M.N. Roy in 1946 with the main objective to spread the values of rationalism and humanism, the task dear to Ravipudi ji. Today is a great day for all of us, for all the rationalists, atheists and radical humanists. It is a great celebration and I feel privileged, as well as proud, to be part of this great event. It is not only celebration of hundredth Birth day of Ravipoudi Venkatadri, but it is a celebration of the rationalist, atheist and radical humanist movement in India. He is one of the foremost rationalists and radical humanists India has produced. His contribution to the rationalist movement and ideas is legendary.

Today is also an occasion to look around and assess the prevalence of rationalist and humanist ideas in India. It cannot be denied that if we have to move towards a better future and greater humanism, we have to wage war against superstition, prejudice, against every form of irrationalism, and have to adopt and practice a scientific and rational approach to life and its problems, to preach and inculcate the scientific approach in our thoughts and actions, the approach and methods which Venkatadri has relentlessly struggled to pursue and propagate.

Many burning problems confront us today. This is no time to delve upon and discuss them in this brief talk. But one of the basic issues is widespread prevalence of blind faith, superstition and irrationalism. The result is weakening of the democratic system and democratic values. Indian democracy, even after lapse of 74 years since we attained

independence, remains superficial and unstable. Elections are fought and won, not by inviting the voters to a rational consideration of policies and programmes, but by appealing to their blind faith, communal and other collectivist sentiments. Few voters adopt a rational and non-sectarian approach in exercising their franchise. This deficiency arises from the fact that democracy has been planted in India in a cultural sub-soil which was not congenial to its desired growth. The birth of democracy in modern Europe was preceded by the renaissance movement which spanned a period of several centuries. European renaissance generated the values of rationalism and humanism, and those values, in the political sphere, found expression in democratic institutions. The foundational philosophy of renaissance is humanism. Humanist philosophy places man in the centre of its preoccupation. The famous statement of Protagoras - that man is the measure of all things - was the credo of the Renaissance. In the Renaissance the man came to be conceived in his own image. The hypotheses of a God or a supernatural power as the controlling force of human affairs became unnecessary. Humanism was the man's reassertion of himself as the creator of all ideas. In the humanist view man becomes fully responsible for himself because by his very constitution, he is a free agent - not controlled by any divine power. His free nature expresses itself in trying to overcome the restrictions imposed on him by the environment and also in unfolding his many potentialities. Renaissance heralded a new phase in the human history. It affirmed that all the achievements of human species are common heritage of mankind and not special possessions of particular groups, that voluntary cooperation to protect and promote the freedom of every individual is essential to good society.

The situation in the country is very critical.

Due to blind faith, superstition and irrationalism, it is becoming difficult to establish a truly democratic order. What we see today is that there is tremendous concentration of powers in the hands of a single individual and the opposition parties have been reduced to virtual insignificance. None of the parties, whether ruling or opposition, has internal democracy. Another sinister thing is that criticism of the policies of the governments is labelled as anti-national and seditious. The draconian laws like sedition, UAPA i.e. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, NSA are being used in a large scale and large number of human rights activists, intellectuals, journalists who criticise the actions of policies of the governments are behind bars. Media is not playing its role which it is supposed to play. Major sections of the media have become propagandist for the governments. The conduct of the higher judiciary, especially the Apex court, is not in accordance to the expectations of the people.



The question is how to establish a democratic order which will guarantee the greatest amount of freedom to the largest number of people. We, the rationalists, humanists and freedom loving individuals must be concerned with safeguarding the future of our democracy. As said earlier, the basic cause of backwardness of Indian democracy is the cultural backwardness of the people. Communalism, casteism and untouchability must be combated; superstition and blind faith

should be chased away; and a spirit of rationalism and self reliance must be spread among the people. Many individuals and groups, including rationalists and radical humanists are performing this task, these efforts must be redoubled. All those who cherish the values of democracy and freedom, should come together to defend and strengthen democratic conventions and institutions. They should come together to build up a strong and independent public opinion on all vital issues. Efforts must be made to protect civil liberties and fundamental rights of the people. These groups, without involving themselves in power politics, should try to formulate democratic solutions of pressing problems like unemployment, corruption and give them publicity. A vibrant cultural movement, based on the spread of moral values, is necessary to dispel the darkness created by authoritarian tendencies exhibited by several governments.. The history of mankind shows that the moral standard in society is improved with the spread of rationalism. As observed by Morris Ginsberg, :” The essential point in the theory of progress remains true, namely, that in the course of historical development man is slowly rationalized and that man is moralized in proportion as he becomes more rational.” Morality is rational in its origin and as well as in its development. Rationalism enables human beings to acquire knowledge of nature and also enables them to improve their moral heritage. The values of freedom, rationalism and morality together contribute to human progress. Rationalism is the enemy of blind faith and superstition. The spread of rationalism in society would raise moral standards and also would strengthen democratic values and democratic institutions. The values of democracy, the values of humanism, are essentially the values of rationalism. In fact a renaissance movement based on scientific humanism is the necessity of the entire world. Disturbing phenomena is that bogus saints continue to grow more and

more in India and they also become so popular in western world. Therefore promoting and strengthening a powerful rationalist and humanist movement is the need of not only of India but also of the entire world. As Roy said, “Our task is to spread enlightenment which will dispel obscurantism in the political and the spiritual life of the country.... We want the disinherited to come to their own and enjoy the richness and fullness of life on this earth.”

The foremost task before us is to redouble our efforts in promoting and strengthening the rationalist and humanist movement. It will lead to strengthening of democratic values and democratic institutions in the country. At present civil liberties and democratic rights requires to be defended. The radical humanists and rationalists have to find and associate with likeminded individuals to fulfil this task. There is no dearth of such colleagues. It will help us in spreading the values of rationalism and humanism. The work done and literature created by Ravipudi Venkatadari will help us in this task. Ravipudi Venkatadri has devoted his whole life to the spread of enlightenment as conceived by Roy. The best way to celebrate will be to resolve today that we shall carry on the torch lighted by Ravipudii and tread that path more vigorously and forcefully. 🌈

Contd. from page - (8)

100th Birthday Celebration...

was also released on the day. At the end there was a long queue when representatives after representatives came on the stage to garland, put shawl, pagree/tarban on him, and get photographed with him. The whole atmosphere was joyful, 30th Anniversary of Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu was also held on the day and prizes to students were. Meeting Hall constructed at Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu was also inaugurated on the day. 🌈

Media Freedom :

The attack on NewsClick must be resisted by those who care about journalism – and democracy in India

This week's raids on the independent news site aim to stifle free speech and dissent.

Nandita Haksar



NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha.
Prabir Purkayastha via Facebook

I have been reading about the attacks on journalists, arrests of activists, writers and watching how all democratic space for dissent are closing.

More than 150 journalists have been arrested, detained and interrogated between 2010 and 2020, a study by journalist Geeta Seshu has documented. Of these cases, 40% were reported in 2020 alone.

The raids this week by the Enforcement Directorate on the offices and homes of journalists of the independent news site *NewsClick* are a part of that attack on free speech, dissent and democratic space. But the political significance of the raids on *NewsClick* are of much greater political significance than attacks on individual journalists.

NewsClick has emerged as an independent news platform built over years of careful nurturing of talent and creativity of younger generation of journalists. I remember the first shabby studio in 2009 where I was first interviewed by Prabir Purkayastha, the organisation's founder, about some events in

the North East. It was just one room. People who barely knew how to handle the equipment held the cameras and experimented with the lights.

Teaching politics

Purkayastha did most of the interviews himself and without the aura or glamour of TV presenters. On the tenth anniversary of *NewsClick* in 2019, he told the audience that he had started the organisation because the younger generation learnt its politics from visual media rather than from reading like we did in our generation. *NewsClick* was a way of teaching politics to youth through the media with which they felt most comfortable.

Since then, *NewsClick* has attracted a huge amount of talent. It has become a space for them to grow collectively. One of the younger journalists who had once come to interview me said she loved *NewsClick* because the journalists were drawn from all parts of the country and from different backgrounds.

NewsClick has consistently spoken truth to power. This is not only on immediate political concerns but a wide range of issues from science, technology to culture and politics. Amidst all this, the organisation's reporting on the protest against the new agriculture laws by the farmers sitting on Delhi's borders has been exceptional. The stories have attracted some 40 million views.

I had first seen Prabir Purkayastha in Jawaharlal Nehru University in the last days of the Emergency. He had only recently been released from Tihar jail and had completed his

studies from the prison. Later, I worked with him on a court case where we challenged the privatisation of the telecommunications sector. I know of his work in the Delhi Science Forum, which aims to popularise science, and more recently in NewsClick.

I have not been able to speak to him directly so I cannot say how he would compare his experience of the Emergency with the experience on the present attack on NewsClick. But during the Emergency, even though journalists were arrested and censorship was imposed, institutions were not destroyed in the manner that is happening now.

It is ironic that *Indian Express*, which was in the forefront of the fight against censorship during the Emergency, published an article based on selective leaks by the Enforcement Directorate against a person whose personal integrity has never been questioned by even those who disagree with his political views.

It seems unbelievable that the *Indian Express* would write an article based on leaks by an organisation whose own credibility is not very high and about raids that are obviously motivated to silence dissent.

Targetting dissidents

In a statement countering reports aimed at maligning it, *NewsClick* said:

“We are, however, disturbed to note reports in various media outlets based on information allegedly provided by senior officials of the Enforcement Directorate. The selective leak of misleading facts is nothing but a malicious attempt to smear the image of *NewsClick* and discredit our journalism. It also constitutes a violation of the sanctity of the legal and investigative process.

As mentioned in our editorial statement of February 10, these raids appear to be part of a trend of deploying government agencies against those who refuse to toe the establishment’s line.”

The raids on *NewsClick* have been condemned by prominent media people across

the country. Several people have issued statements of solidarity based on their deep respect for the role *NewsClick* has played in keeping alive independence of the media.

In their statements, the journalists have voiced their own anguish at the state of journalism which, as one said, had become just about reporting tweets or the inconvenience faced by the middle class when the farmers, or Dalits or Muslims protest. P Sainath congratulated the journalists at *NewsClick* for declining to be “stenographers to power”. Veteran journalist, Pamela Philipose said *NewsClick* provides “meaning and insight through its daily efforts”.

Prabir Prukayastha has never tried to hide his political ideology and membership of an established communist party. But unlike many communists of his generation, he has built a truly democratic institution. Still, *NewsClick* has also shown that its strength lies in organisation and not being based on a nebulous “non-party political formulation”.

Purkayastha has built a strong organisations and provided leadership and direction by his clear vision rooted in ideology and political analysis. Politics and political analysis informs the reporting in *NewsClick* and makes it a solid ally of political movements that challenge neo-liberal and fascist ideology and institutions. That is why the raids and attack on the integrity of *NewsClick* needs to be opposed by all of us who care not only about journalism but about democracy.

On a personal note, Prabir Purkayastha and *NewsClick* have given me space to speak, to write even when he does not agree with my views. *NewsClick* has allowed me to be a small part of the larger community of comrades and friends even when I am far from them physically. It is a space I value more than anything else because it is the space from where we can continue battling for India of our dreams, keeping alive. 🇮🇳

‘Who are Deep Sidhu’s political masters?’

Prasanna D. Zore

‘The Modi government must tell us what this person’s connection with the BJP is.’



A protestor hoists flags at the Red Fort, January 26, 2021. *Photograph: PTI*

“We are absolutely pained at the acts of these political elements who tried to disrespect the national flag and bring shame to the nation,” **Abhimanyu Kohar**, national spokesperson of the Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh, a constituent of the 41-member Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, tells **Prasanna D Zore/Rediff.com**.

The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha has always categorically stated that the farmers’ agitation would remain peaceful. What happened during the tractor parade?

At some places there were elements belonging to a political party, who have never been part of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha from the very first day, and which this government and Delhi police are also well aware of, had entered clandestinely to sabotage our peaceful agitation.

I am talking about this person named Deep Sidhu who had campaigned aggressively for BJP MP Sunny Deol (*from Gurdaspur*), and who has

also been seen in photographs with the prime minister (*Narendra Damodardas Modi*), who along with his supporters forced their way into the Red Fort even as the Delhi police guarding the premises slept and allowed him to enter the Red Fort.

The Modi government should be held accountable for what he and his supporters did at the Red Fort.

The Modi government must tell us what this person’s connection with the BJP is and how he defied the police barricades around and inside the Red Fort; how he entered the Red Fort and who allowed him to enter the premises and let another person climb atop to engage in acts that brought us national ignominy.

If there were such heavy police deployment, then why did nobody stop him from entering the Red Fort?

The SKM has nothing to do with what

happened in Delhi and with the acts of the BJP's Deep Sidhu. Not even one of the 32 farmers' unions from Punjab has anything to do with him.

He has been at the Singhu border for more than two months now, but we never entertained him on stage.

Were all the farmers who entered the Red Fort Deep Sidhu's supporters?

No. Later our farmers too entered the Red Fort, but none of our farmers vandalised any property or created a ruckus inside the Red Fort.

The hoisting of a religious flag and slogan shouting was done by this person and others he incited. Our farmers have got nothing to do with what happened inside the Red Fort.

Do you expect the Delhi police to arrest him for trespassing into the Red Fort and hoisting the religious flag?

We have called a big meeting of all the farmer leaders and at that meeting we will ask the question: Who are Deep Sidhu's masters?

Why did this man instigate another person to climb atop the Red Fort and hoist a religious flag and chant slogans? Who are his political masters? We will ask the government to respond to these questions.

There were instances of violence in other parts of Delhi too as the police and farmers attacked one another...

At Palwal, near Faridabad, farmers were told they would take their tractor rally towards Badarpur and take a U-turn from the first signal near Delhi. But they were not even allowed to reach near Faridabad.

The police brutally assaulted them with *lathis*, destroyed ten tractors and injured dozens of farmers by hitting them on their heads. Three people suffered fractures on their hands and legs. Who is responsible for this violence?

The Delhi police assaulted the farmers without any provocation?

The top officers from the Delhi police had held very elaborate discussions with our leaders and at these meetings had given verbal permission

to take the rally on this route.

Didn't you have the Delhi police's written permission to take the tractor parade on this route?

No, the Delhi police had not given us written permission; for some reasons we could not get it. All these issues will be discussed during the meeting today.

If you did not have the Delhi police's written permission, then how could you use that route for the farmers' tractor parade?

At the several meetings that we held with Delhi's top police officers, in which I was also present, they had assured us that they will hold deliberations on our requests and finalise this route for which we had sought the permission for the rally.

We were given verbal assurances repeatedly that they will finalise the route that the farmers had sought the permission for the tractor rally.

But you did not have a written permission to take the tractor rally on this route.

No, we didn't get it (*the written permission from the Delhi police*). We kept asking for it, but they didn't give it.

This is a mass movement and when one has verbal assurances from a senior police officer that they will give us a written permission, then are we not supposed to respect his verbal assurances?

Do you think the high moral ground that the SKM has been taking all these days has been dented?

This violence has not diminished our high moral ground even a bit; in fact, it has magnified the high moral ground on which we have been carrying out our agitation peacefully.

As I have said, the people involved in acts of violence are not constituents of the SKM; we have had no relationship with them.

Having said that, because the farmers' community is that entity whose sons and daughters are not only toiling hard in the fields to

produce food for the nation but are also defending our country's borders and make up for the bulk of the police force, and whose sons accept martyrdom and come home wrapped in the national tricolour defending the nation, let me categorically state that this farmers' community absolutely respects the national flag, dying for which is in our blood.

Being so, we are absolutely pained at the acts of these political elements who tried to disrespect

the national flag and bring shame to the nation.

If their acts have hurt anybody's religious or patriotic sentiments then, even though the SKM was not part of their anti-social act, we apologise to the nation because to call for this tractor parade was our decision.

We take the moral responsibility for the entry of such anti-social elements into this parade.

PRASANNA D ZORE / Rediff.com

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, 27 January 2021. 

Nayantara Sahgal's message regarding ED Raid on News Click

The ongoing horror of all that is being done to destroy democracy and wipe out our secular democratic India built since independence is something that all freedom-loving Indians condemn and despise.

We support Prabir in the terrible ordeal he is facing.

We condemn the fascist powers attacking him. This is a scandalous and criminal attack - as are all their previous attacks on innocent Indians.

In sympathy and comradeship with Prabir and all others being outrageously persecuted.

Nayantara Sahgal

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National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) statement:

Allahabad High Court Order establishes that UP Govt had no legal grounds and violated natural justice in preventing farmers - activists from participating in peaceful protests by issuing exorbitant notices

**The Farmers' Movement cannot be quelled by
arbitrary administrative orders**

**UP Govt must end arbitrary detentions,
withdraw pending FIRs against activists**

8th Feb: The recent order of the Allahabad High Court, passed by the Division Bench of Justices Ramesh Sinha and Rajeev Singh, dated 2nd February, 2021, concluding that the Uttar Pradesh Govt had no legal grounds to issue notices to large numbers of farmers and activists, preventing them from participating in peaceful protests is a significant landmark in upholding people's constitutional right to protest and redress against whimsical administrative interference in the same. The court order clearly establishes the arbitrariness and violation of principles of natural justice in the process of notices issued by the UP Government on and after 19th January 2021, in the attempt to suppress farmers' participation in the protests organized on 26th January.

The Order was issued in a PIL filed by social activist and NAPM Convenor Arundhati Dhuru, who approached the Court in the context of many such notices issued to farmers and workers associated with Sangatin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan, Sitapur, under Sec 111 of the Cr.PC, merely on the basis of police apprehension of violation of 'law and order'. The PIL demanded the quashing of notices against 163 farmers, including women, who had been asked to pay bonds between Rs 50,000 to Rs 10,00,000, and to provide two like sureties, to ensure that they would not take

part in any kind of agitation or dharna. In addition to being patently arbitrary, these notices were grossly unjust and a mockery of the situation of already impoverished small and marginal farmers and workers, many of whom belong to Dalit and OBC communities.

As is noted in the Order itself, when the Allahabad High Court asked the learned Addl Adv General on 2nd Feb to provide reasons as to why such prohibitive bonds were demanded by various Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) under the District Magistrate (DM), Sitapur, the AAG was unable to justify the action of the State. He, however, indicated that the proceedings in the said matter were 'dropped', since there was no longer a law and order risk. The AAG also undertook to instruct the Sitapur administration 'to be careful in the future, to avoid unnecessary harassment to any person'.

Taking cognizance of the aforesaid, the Hon'ble Court disposed off the matter concluding that the administration's 'conduct should not be such which reflects arbitrariness and against the principles of natural justice'. NAPM welcomes the Order and hopes that the same would be considered in full letter and spirit across the state and the Govt would refrain from resorting to similar high-handed measures in the future, asking for bonds and sureties on flimsy, unjustified grounds.

As is known, this is just one of the many recent attempts to prevent farmers, activists and concerned citizens from participating in solidarity action with the historic farmers' protests. The Central Government, in particular, has been striving to prevent and then stop (albeit unsuccessfully) the Farmers' Protests, ranging from attempts at defamation, to control of media reporting, detentions and arrests. The UP state government has also had a significant role to play in denying citizens their constitutional right to protest. A few weeks back activist and NAPM Convenor Richa Singh was unlawfully detained at her home for a couple of days. The Varanasi administration also filed a case under 'Goondas Act' against senior activist Ramjanam.

Very recently, on 6th February, the day when the national call for peaceful chakka-jam was given by the farmers' movement, Suresh Rathod, of MNREGA Mazdoor Union, Varanasi, was detained at his home on the arbitrary grounds of potentially creating a breach of peace. His participation in the protests was prevented, as in multiple instances in the past.

A few days prior to this, an FIR was registered against social activist Nandalal Master, along with Shyam Sundar, Amit, Panchmukhi Singh and Sunil Kumar and 25 other 'unknown persons, for a peaceful village protest on 29th January, during which the effigy of the three anti-farmer acts was burnt. The archaic United Province Special Powers Act (1932) which was invoked in their case, has a history of being used in the state to quell protests, in particular protests against the BJP.

The circumstances of the pandemic also make it possible to invoke the Disaster Management Act in a targeted way against anyone trying to organize, even when adequate precautions against Covid are taken. The convenient interpretation and use of legislation to suppress in particular protests against the

centre are stark. We wish to re-assert here that legislation meant to enable addressing the pandemic situation should not interfere with people's constitutional right to organize.

In yet another poignant incident, an FIR was filed by the UP police against the grief-stricken family members of Baljindra Singh, a farmer who died at the protest site in Ghazipur, for draping his body in the tricolour. It must be recalled that a few years back, the body of one of the accused in the 'Dadri lynching case' was also draped in the tricolour, but that did not attract any legal action.

Read in the broader context of the State clampdown, the order of the Allahabad High Court comes as a reminder of the duty of the administration and the police to uphold the constitutional rights of citizens to organize and participate in peaceful democratic protests. State apparatuses cannot function as arbitrary, callous and biased forces suppressing voices of dissent.

The order, in that sense, is a vindication of those who believe in democratic values. It is in line with the call issued by UNHRC on 5th February, emphasizing the need to protect the protestors' right to peaceful assembly and expression. The State cannot use law as a tool of oppression to stifle mass outrage such as the recent farmers' movement which is only growing stronger within UP and across the country.

We call upon the UP Govt. to reflect on the implications of the Hon'ble High Court's order, in letter and spirit, and cease its attempts to muzzle democratic protests, end arbitrary detentions and arrests and withdraw all *malafide* FIRs.

We also urge the government to stop what has become an all-pervasive practice of repression of all dissenting voices. Democratic protests against undemocratic laws and practices will not stop.

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


FIR AGAINST MANDEEP PUNIA BY DELHI POLICE SCANDALOUS AND CONDEMNABLE : PUCL, DELHI

It is a shocking that the Delhi police filed an FIR against Mandeep Punia, a free lance journalist, and arrested him on the allegations that he had misbehaved with a SHO at Singhu Border, Delhi on the night of 30TH January, 2021. As per information, Punia has been carrying out assigned task of covering protests of farmers at Singhu border for the last two months on behalf of two magazines i.e. 'The Caravan' and 'JUNPUTH' and hours before his arrest he had posted a Face Book Live about the violence at Singhu border on Friday which showed that how men claiming to be locals had pelted stones on the peaceful protesters in the presence of the police. He was picked up by the police and has been accused of obstructing the police in discharge of their duties and beating police personnel. His wife claims that no information was given to his family till late night about his detention and arrest. Family came to know of his arrest only when a fellow journalist went to the police station to lodge a 'missing person' complaint about Punia.

Mandeep Punia was merely carrying out his journalistic duties and trying to place before the people a truthful account of the events taking place at the protest site. It appears that the police is trying to intimidate and threaten the journalists who are trying to place real picture of the events happening at the protest site. Though Mandeep Punia has been granted bail but the very FIR lodged against him is uncalled for and unwarranted. It is blatant attack on the freedom of the Press. PUCL, strongly condemns the police action against Mandeep Punia and demands that FIR filed against him be immediately withdrawn and case be closed forthwith.

N.D. Pancholi, Sheoraj Singh, T.S. Ahuja, Arun Maji, Shalu Nigam, Amit Srivastava, Surya Prakash, Vertika Mani

On behalf of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Delhi.


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Contd. from page - (18)

The Farmers' Movement cannot be quelled ...

We call upon all sections of citizens and democratic groups to remain ever vigilant and raise their voices in safeguarding our fundamental rights to organize and dissent, peacefully.

We continue to stand in solidarity with the farmers' protests across the country including lakhs of farmers from various parts of UP and remain steadfast in the demand for complete repeal of the three farm laws.

Medha Patkar, Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) and National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM); **Dr. Sunilam, Adv.;** **Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Shankar Singh**, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), National Campaign for People's Right to Information; **Kavita Srivastava**, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL); **Kailash Meena** NAPM Rajasthan; **Sandeep Pandey** (Socialist Party of India); **Sister Celia**, Domestic Workers Union; **Maj Gen (Retd) S.G.Vombatkere**, NAPM and many more. 

SC Should Have Declared New Farm Laws Unconstitutional: Senior Lawyer Dushyant Dave

Speaking to Outlook, Dave, who is also one of the three lawyers assisting the farmers' groups said that the Supreme Court should have declared the farm Bills unconstitutional instead of staying them.

Preetha Nair INTERVIEWS Dushyant Dave



The farm laws are unconstitutional and farmers need an assurance from the government on repealing the laws, says Dushyant Dave, senior lawyer and former president of the Supreme Court bar association. Speaking to *Outlook*, Dave, who is also one of the three lawyers assisting the farmers' groups said that the Supreme Court should have declared the bills unconstitutional instead of staying them.

Q) Now that the latest talks between the government and the unions have broken down, what is the way forward?

I would say that the farmers have to be pacified. They are very worried about their existence. Merely postponing the Bills is not encouraging or helpful for them. The farmers are not happy with the government's proposal of suspending the Bills for 18 months.

What they really need is the assurance that the laws will be repealed. If the government

shows no inclination to repeal the law, the farmers won't be interested in discussing the issue with them further. This will be merely postponing the evil day or the execution day.

Q) You have taken a critical view against the Supreme Court staying the Bills and constituting a committee.

The Supreme Court could have done that to diffuse the situation. But frankly speaking, the Supreme Court should have stayed it and said that we will hear the matter next week and declare them unconstitutional. Judges should know the law and they could have told the government that on the face of it, the laws are unconstitutional. They could have told the government that there is no case.

Q) You maintain that the farm laws are unconstitutional...

The government should work out a situation because the laws are definitely unconstitutional

and they are passed in an extremely questionable manner. The laws have a harsh impact on the farmers, their lives and livelihoods. The farmers have a viewpoint which the government should have appreciated because the government has also brought the law in an extremely hurried manner. In a pandemic situation, they passed the bills in a hushed manner in Parliament. There were only two days of discussion in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. That is not the way to pass the laws on such important issues. Here, you are changing the very structure of agriculture in the country.

Q) Why do you think the Bills will change the structure of agriculture in the country?

In most states, the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) exists and it provides a tremendous cushion and comfort zone to the farmers. APMCs also work as a collective bargaining place where farmers are able to get remunerative prices for their crops. If you leave them with the market forces, the farmers will not get remunerative prices and they won't even get the cost of their production. They will die and that's their fear. The statistics of the past four years show that the cost of production of many crops like bajra, tur dal, maze, etc was much higher than the market price. The farmers survived only because of the minimum support price. The APMC is their lifeline and the government wants to take that

away from them. Now they will have to face competition from the big corporations in the fray. We know that how monopolistic the corporates are. That is the fear of the farmers.

Q) The Centre used Entry 33 of the concurrent list to bring these farm Bills...

Entry 33 deals with the sale and supply of goods in the context of the industry. For example, in the sugar industry, if sugarcane needs to be controlled since it's the raw material of sugar, then Entry 33 can be put to use. But it cannot be used to control the agricultural products—the crops. That is not permissible at all. Otherwise, you will rewrite the entire constitution. What is the purpose?

Q) So the Bills can be challenged on this ground?

Of course, it will be. But regarding the Supreme Court today, nobody knows what view it will take. That's the fear the farmers also have. In the last four or five years, the Supreme Court hasn't decided a single case against the government.

Q) You have also resigned as the president of the Supreme Court bar association...

The reason for my resignation was that I wanted the elections to take place. Our term was over and the executive committee was a bit reluctant to hold elections. So I felt that it wasn't morally right to continue in the position.

Courtesy **Outlook**, 24 January 2021. 🌈

Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to: theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com or post them to: **Mahi Pal Singh, Raghav Vihar Phase-3, Smith Nagar, Prem Nagar, Dehradun, 248007 (Uttarakhand)**

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

Hindu Nationalism: From Genesis to Present Ruling Dispensation

Ram Puniyani

As per Indian Constitution India is a secular democratic Country. Lately Hindu nationalism has started impacting the nature of state and citizenship in a very strong way. As Indian Nationalism developed during freedom movement, Hindu nationalism and Muslim Nationalism came as opposites of Indian Nationalism. The origin of Hindu nationalism and also Muslim Nationalism can be traced to colonial period. During colonial period, when the rising freedom movement was articulating the concept and values of Indian nationalism, the section of Hindus, from the kings of princely states and upper caste elite to begin with, kept aloof from freedom movement asserted the concept of Hindu Nationalism. Hindu nationalism is a politics and a category with a specific meaning which is the agenda of RSS-BJP. Similar were the roots of Muslim nationalism.

Hindu Nationalism: Historical roots

During colonial period the rising classes of industrialists, businessmen, workers and educated classes came together and formed different organizations, Madras Mahajan Sabha, Pune Sarvajanik Sabha, Bombay Association etc. These organizations felt for the need for an overarching political organization so went in to form Indian National Congress in 1885. (1) The declining sections of society, Muslim and Hindu landlords and kings also decided to come together to oppose the all inclusive politics of Congress, which in due course became the major vehicle of the values of freedom movement. These declining sections were feeling threatened due to the social changes. To hide their social decline they projected as if their religion is in danger. They also did not like the standing up to the colonial masters by Congress, which had started putting forward the demands for different rising

social groups and thereby for India. National movement and Congress saw this country as 'India is a Nation in the making'.

As per declining sections of landlords and kings; standing up to, not bowing in front of the ruler is against the teachings of 'our' religion so what is needed according to them is to promote the loyalty to the British. They, Hindu and Muslim feudal elements, came together and formed United India Patriotic Association in 1888. (2) The lead was taken by Nawab of Dhaka and Raja of Kashi. Later due to British machinations the Muslim elite from this association separated and formed Muslim league in 1906, while in parallel to this the Hindu elite first formed Punjab Hindu Sabha in 1909 and then Hindu Mahasabha in 1915.

These communal formations argued for Muslim Nationalism and Hindu nationalism respectively. Hindu nationalists also developed the political ideology of Hindutva, articulated particularly by Savarkar in 1923 in his book 'Hindutva or Who is a Hindu?' (3) While Hinduism is a religion, Hindutva is a politics based on Aryan race, this land and elite Brahmanical culture. This was an enviable situation for British as such groups would weaken the rising national movement. On one side they quietly supported the Muslim League and parallel to this they handled Hindu Mahasabha-RSS with velvet gloves.

Hindu Nationalism: RSS

Taking a cue from the ideology of Hindutva, RSS came up in 1925, with the path of Hindu Nationalism and goal of Hindu Nation. The values of rising classes embodied in the persona of Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar, Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and many others mainly revolved around Indian Nationalism, built around the

principles of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice. The ideology of Muslim League selectively drew from some Muslim traditions to assert the class, caste and gender hierarchy of feudal society. While Hindu Mahasabha and RSS had tomes like Manusmriti to talk about similar graded hierarchies of caste and gender. Muslim and Hindu communalists were not part of freedom movement as freedom movement was all inclusive and aimed at secular democratic values. Muslim and Hindu communalists drew from glories of Kings of the past and kept aloof from anti-British struggle. (4)

Gandhi's attempt to draw the masses in to anti British struggle was the major point due to which the Constitutionists like Jinnah; traditionalists of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha further drifted away, and consolidated themselves after 1920s. The trajectory of Hindu Nationalism from the decade of 1920 becomes very clear, to be on the side of British to oppose the Muslim Nationalists and also freedom struggle. Same applies to Muslim League, as it regarded Congress as a Hindu party. The Freedom of the country and tragic partition led to Muslim Leaguers going to Pakistan while leaving sufficient backlog to sustain Muslim communalism here. Hindu Nationalists in the form of Hindu Mahasabha and RSS gradually started asserting themselves, beginning with murder of Mahatma Gandhi, who surely was amongst the best of the Hindus of that century. (5)

RSS: A Brief History

RSS was formed in 1925 in Nagpur. The immediate cause of its formation was the discomfort among the upper castes/landlord elements due to the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi as a part of freedom movement (1920). This movement brought the average people to the freedom movement; this caused discomfort to the elite sections of society. At the same time, the 'non-Brahmin movement' in Maharashtra was shaking the social relations of Brahmin-landlord on one

side and Dalit-workers on the other. The founders of RSS were inspired by the ideas of nationalism of Hitler. (6) The RSS had contempt towards the concept of Indian nationalism, which was the ideology of freedom movement of India, led by Gandhiji.

The RSS took off from Hindu Mahasabha, an organization formed by the Hindu kings and landlords. Later this organization was led by a middle class intellectual, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He propounded the ideology of Hindutva, Hindu-ness, which is the concept of Nationalism based on Brahminical values of hierarchy of caste and gender. The RSS founders were to make the concepts of Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra as their base ideology and politics. (7)

The RSS began with training its volunteers in a new version of history which was communal and had nothing to do with truth. It said that India has always been a Hindu nation and Muslims are aggressors, Muslims and Christians are foreigners. The concept promoted by Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru that India is a land belonging to people of all religions is wrong and what is needed is to build a Hindu nation and undermine the Muslim nation. It decided to keep aloof from direct electoral politics and went on to create a set of volunteers, *swayamsevaks*, trained in the ideology of Hindutva. It kept aloof from freedom movement as it was based on the values of secularism and democracy. It stood for Hindu nation and perpetuation of Brahminical values in a new garb.

It was, and is, exclusively a male organization. When Laxmibai Kelkar wanted women to be taken into RSS, they were advised to form a subordinate organization, Rashtra Sevika Samiti (1936). In the very name of this organization the word *swayam* (self) is missing as this organization, like all other communal organizations, stands for superiority of males, and believes in patriarchy. It discouraged people from participating in movements related to freedom.

(8) Barring few exceptions (K.B. Hedgewar), none from RSS went to jail during freedom movement. And those who happened to go to jail went either looking for more recruits for RSS or accidentally went to jail and later on apologized to the British and got themselves released from prison (like Atal Bihari Vajpayee). (9)

The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha held Gandhiji responsible for appeasement of Muslims, for partition of the country etc. On this charge, Nathuram Godse, an ex-Pracharak of RSS, who joined Hindu Mahasabha later, killed the father of the nation. Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel had said that it was due to the hate spread by the RSS that the country lost its father Mahatma Gandhi and Patel banned RSS for some time. (10) Savarkar was also one of the accused in the murder of Gandhiji, but he was let off for lack of corroborative evidence.

The RSS formed other subordinate organizations. One of them was Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad for working among students. In 1951, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee of Hindu Mahasabha in collaboration with RSS formed Bharatiya Jan Sangh. It raised identity related issues and resorted to war mongering by calling for Nuclear weapons to be made by India. It also demanded that Muslims should be Indianized. It remained a marginal force till it joined the Jaya Prakash Narayan movement and became part of the Janata Party. Meanwhile, RSS was silently infiltrating in all the wings of state and society, bureaucracy, police, education, media, judiciary and army. It was working to oppose the progressive liberal values by promoting religiosity and conservatism in cultural arena. (11)

Jan Sangh joined Janata Party and came to power in 1977; its leaders became a part of the Government. Using this opportunity, they planted their workers in media and other areas of the state apparatus. After splitting Janata Party, the Jan Sangh component emerged as Bharatiya Janata party on the ground of Gandhian Socialism. For electoral purposes it projected those values

it never believed like Gandhian Socialism. It lent support to Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 elections. Meanwhile, it gave birth to Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram. VHP started taking up emotive issues and Ram temple was made the center of its political credo. They went on to form Bajrang Dal on the lines of storm troopers of Nazi party in Germany. (12)

During 1960s and 1980s, it kept propagating hate against minorities, first against Muslims and then Christians. The result was anti-minority violence in many parts of the country. In anti-Muslim violence, 80 per cent of the victims are Muslims. Most of the inquiry committee reports have concluded that riots are generally begun by RSS affiliates. (13) They create one or other pretext leading to violence. Due to communalization of state apparatus, most of the guilty are not punished. Many a time, other political leaders have also used communal violence for their narrow political goals. The agitation around Ram temple created a great deal of social hysteria, leading to Babri demolition and major violence in Mumbai, Bhopal, Surat and other places. Mumbai violence of 1992-93 shook the whole country and instilled a great amount of fear among minorities.

Due to violence, the RSS base became stronger and its political wing BJP too grew up to the extent that it could grab power at the center in 1996. (14) It came to power again and ruled the country, under RSS supervision, for six years. From 1997, in order to scare away Christian missionaries from Adivasi areas, the areas where their work is leading to empowerment of poor Adivasis, it started violence and during its course Pastor Graham Stewart Stains (1999), along with his two sons, was burnt alive on the charge that he was indulging in conversion. The Wadhwa Commission, which enquired into this murder, opined that the Pastor had not done any conversion. Most horrific form of anti-Christian violence was witnessed in the BJP-ruled Gujarat and later in Kamdhamal in Orissa (2008). With

every act of communal violence, BJP became stronger. (15)

After the 9/11 incident in the US, when globally terrorist activities started going up, the RSS intensified its campaign of demonization of Muslims saying that all terrorists are Muslims. With the Malegaon blast of 2006, concrete evidences against RSS affiliate ABVP's member Pragma Singh Thakur came to light. It was her motor cycle which was used in the blast, which brought the matters to surface. It led to other RSS workers associated with the Sadhvi. (16) The role of serving military officer Lt Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit, Swami Dyanand Pande, and Major Upadhyay in the blasts was being pursued doggedly by Hemant Karkare, the chief of Maharashtra ATS, before the 26/11 terror attack took place in Mumbai in which Karkare was killed.

Most of the links of these blasts led to those who were indoctrinated into the ideology of Hindu Rashtra by some or the other affiliates of RSS. The Hindu Jagran Samiti, near Thane-Mumbai, also allegedly resorted to acts of terror. This organization is inspired by Hindu Mahasabha and RSS leaders and believes that Hindus, the Devas (Gods), are facing the Danav (demons) in the form of Muslims and Christians in the Kali Yug (Dark Ages). As per them such acts of terror should be engineered to teach these communities a lesson.

With the polarization of society on the upswing, the electoral strength went on the rise. With clever support to Anna Hazare movement, RSS combine succeeded in defaming Congress on the eve of 2014 elections. With corporate support and immaculate electoral management, the BJP came to power. From 2014 onwards apart from other phenomenon, the number of RSS *shakhas* rose phenomenally and emotive issues have created an atmosphere of intolerance in the society and has succeeded in relegating minorities to second class citizenship. (17)

Hindu Nationalists formed first Jan Sangh

(1951) and later present BJP. The major issue taken up by these nationalists was opposition to cooperative farming, public sector and undertook a program called 'Indianization of Muslims', 'protection of Cow', 'Love Jihad' and Ghar Wapasi (Reconversion to Hinduism) along with hyper nationalism, directed against Pakistan. Hate for Pakistan hints at Indian Muslims association with Pakistan and demonizes them in society.

The identity related issues have been the staple diet for religious nationalist tendencies. 'Cow as our mother', Ram Temple, Ram Setu, Abolition of article 370 and Uniform civil code has been the foundation around which emotive hysterical movements have been built. While they keep bringing to our notice as to under whose rule more riots have taken place, one forgets that the root of communal violence lies in 'Hate other' ideology spread by communal streams. And most of the communal violence led to coming to power of communal party. Its major outcome is polarization of communities along religious lines.

Present Ruling Dispensation

Modi-BJP is part of Hindu nationalist ideology. They gloss over the fact that the large masses of Indian people, Hindus never called and do not call themselves Hindu nationalists. Gandhi was not a Hindu nationalist despite being a Hindu in the moral and social sense. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was not a Muslim nationalist, despite being a devout Muslim, being a Muslim scholar of highest caliber. During freedom movement also most of the people of all religions identified with Indian Nationalism and not with religious nationalism as being projected by Modi and company. Even today people of different religions identify with Indian nationalism and not with religious Nationalism on the lines of Modi and his ilk.

Hindu nationalism is exclusive and divisive, Indian Nationalism is inclusive; rooted in the issues of this world, and not the identity related ones. Unfortunately Hindu nationalists have been raising the pitch around identity issues

undermining the issues of the poor and marginalized. The Indian Nationalism, the product of our freedom movement is being challenged by the Hindu nationalism in India, Buddhist Nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka and is a major threat to the process of democratization in those countries; Muslim Nationalism has wrecked havoc in Pakistan, and many other places.

As Modi came to power in 2014 on the promises of ending corruption, controlling price rise, controlling violence against women, none of this came true. Instead the rising prices broke the back of common people. The demonetization increased the miseries of people as nearly 100 people died while standing in the queues to withdraw their own money, and later 99.7% of currency returned to the banks. The implementation of GST was tardy and increases the miseries of traders and others. The state started being more authoritarian to the extent that many felt it is moving towards 'elected autocracy' (18). The institutions of state, which are autonomous like Election Commission, Enforcement Directorate and CBI, started showing their partisanship to the ruling dispensation.

The overall atrocities against Muslims, Christians and dalits started going up. (19) The Muslims were targeted in the name of cow-beef. Nearly 100 people died after 2014 in mob lynching. Of these over 80% were Muslims and remaining were dalits. The campaign to stop interfaith marriage took the form of intensifying the attacks on interfaith couples where the girl happens to be a Hindu. New legislations are being brought in the name of freedom of religion. These aim at preventing conversions away from Hinduism, while conversion to Hinduism, in the name of Ghar Wapasi (Return Home) is going on. Many a prayer meetings have been attacked on the pretext that conversion to Christianity is going on. Sub radar violence against Christians is an ongoing phenomenon.

The tedious and painful exercise of NRC

(National Register of Citizens) in Assam was undertaken on the premise that nearly 50 Lakh Bangladeshi infiltrators have entered Assam. People were to submit their papers related to citizenship. At the end of the whole exercise 20 Lakh people were found to be without papers. Of this 12.5 Lakh were Hindus and remaining Muslims. In major violation of Indian Constitution Citizenship Amendment Act was brought in. This gives citizenship to persecuted minorities in neighboring countries. All are eligible for citizenship barring Muslims as per this law. The response to this came in the form of massive Shaheen Bagh movement. In city after city Muslim women did the sit in's, which went on in a peaceful way (20). To disrupt this great democratic movement for withdrawal of CAA, the Delhi violence was orchestrated. In this violence 50 people lost their lives of which 2/3rd were Muslims. The major damage was done to the Muslim properties.

The communal forces are always in collusion with the big Corporate. Three new farm laws have been brought in. These laws are totally opposed by farmers as it makes them vulnerable in the hands of big corporations eyeing the agricultural sector. Huge protests are on in Delhi. Government is impervious so far and building barricades of nails and concrete wall to prevent farmers from entering Delhi to voice their protests. (21)

The agenda of Hindu nationalism is multifold. At one level it wants to put the religious minorities, Muslims and Christians on the margins. Dalits and women are deprived of affirmative action and status quo of their social situation is maintained. The civic norms have been shelved and social activists working for the cause of Adivaisis and Dalits have been labled as Urban Naxals and put behind the bars without any proper or expeditious process to give justice to them. In a as Jean Dreze points out that Hindu nationalism is a revolt of the upper caste male against the values of equality due to which dalits and women

are marching towards equality. (22) In revised edition of book on Partition Ambedkar strongly opposed the formation of Pakistan in the name of Islam. His argument was that if Pakistan is formed in the name of Islam, the path of Hindu Raj will be facilitated and Hindu raj will be a great calamity for dalits.

Way Forward

Struggle for restoration of democratic values is a big task in current times. The misconceptions against minorities have been constantly propagated through multiple channels and have become the part o social thinking to a large extent. The hatred against these sections is widely prevalent; it is this hatred which forms the ground

on which violence can be orchestrated. This violence in turn leads to polarization and coming of communal forces in seat of power. Communal forces in power in turn strengthen the RSS, the organization working the agenda of Hindu nation.

A multilayered struggle to counter the misconceptions against religious minorities is the core task. This needs to be supplemented by building the bridges of love and amity between different religious communities. The social movements for defense of human rights need to be supported and a platform of social issues has to work for the values of Indian Constitution, where fraternity, equality and justice have to accompany the liberty. Tasks are immense.

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As Modi, Mamata Battle Over Netaji's Legacy, a Look at His Thoughts on India and Communalism

"To destroy communalism is, therefore, the task of all those Indians – Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians etc. who have transcended all the communal outlook and have developed a genuine nationalist mentality."



Snigdhendu Bhattacharya

His vision of India

Bose's ideas of nationalism was a sharp departure from the school of Hindu nationalists, of which novelist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was the fountainhead. Bankim, the composer of *Bande Mataram* and the author of the iconic and controversial novel *Ananda Math*, had become one of the biggest inspirations of Bengal's

On Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee began their battle over the legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 124th birth anniversary, both kicking off a year-long celebration on the occasion of the coming 125th birth anniversary on behalf of their governments, though separately. With the state elections barely three months away, both of them are trying to highlight their sentiments for the national hero who has been one of Bengal's fondest children – Modi had two indoor events in Kolkata on Netaji, while Mamata led a massive rally.

On social media, Mamata highlighted Netaji's unifying ability, describing him as a true leader who "strongly believed in the unity of all people", while Modi highlighted Bose's *parakram* (courage/valour).

As the political battle over the leader who disappeared under mysterious circumstances 75 years ago looks set to intensify, we take a look back at his time to see what his legacies really are.

late-19th-century and early-20th-century revolutionaries, including those belonging to the revolutionary secret societies Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar Dal. Even Bipin Chandra Pal of the famous Lal-Bal-Pal trio had Hindu nationalist traits.

In Bankim's vision of India, Muslims were as much invaders and colonisers as the British. He even thanked the British for introducing the Hindus to the ideas of nationalism and self-determination, which he said helped the Hindus realise they had been under colonial rule since the first Muslim invasion of India.

The Hindu trait in the nationalist movement remained dominant even during the Swadeshi movement against the first Partition of Bengal (1905), which has been cited as one of the reasons the movement failed to get support from the Muslims. Perhaps, Rabindranath Tagore was the first to realise that the Hindus were not doing enough to earn the trust of the Muslims and he had made his opinion clear in this regard in 1908.

Even the Indo-German conspiracy of 1914-15, an insurrection attempt during WWI that was coordinated by revolutionaries based in Bengal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, New York, Berlin and Kabul, was largely a Hindu-Sikh movement with Maulana Barkatullah an exception. This, therefore, is also called the Hindu-German conspiracy.

According to historian Tanika Sarkar, the idea of India as a multicultural nation among India's nationalists first developed among the moderates of the Congress of its early years.

"Gandhi's 1909 book *Hind Swaraj* certainly saw Muslims as an integral part of India – as much a part Hindus are. Also, the extremists who came after the moderate dominance in Congress talked more in terms of Hindu glories. They made no attempt to draw the large majority of poor Muslim peasants into their boycott agitation. As Tagore pointed out, the boycott of cheap foreign cloth was a heavy burden imposed on low caste and Muslim peasants who therefore opposed the movement," she said, talking of the pre-Gandhi era in Indian politics.

It was chiefly after Mahatma Gandhi launched Khilafat and non-cooperation movements at the national scale in 1919-20 that Hindus and Muslims started working together against the British Raj.

Subhas Chandra Bose arrived at the political scene in 1921 and carried the legacy of 'Deshbandu' Chitta Ranjan Das, of whom Gandhi said after his death, "The Hindus and Mussalmans of India should know that his heart knew no difference between the Hindus and the Mussalmans... It is not for me to say how much he had done to bring the Hindus and Mussalmans together." A staunch advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity against the British colonial rule, Das had served as the Congress president in 1922 and died untimely in 1925, following which his earnest disciple Subhas emerged as Bengal's premiere political face.

Bose's idea of India was a contrast to that

of Bankim. Just like Das, Bose too had managed to bring in members of the revolutionary secret societies to the Congress's fold. But he saw India as a land of Hindus and Muslims.

He recognised Hinduism as 'the most important cementing factor' among India's ethnic diversities. "North or South, East or West, wherever you may travel, you will find the same religious ideas, the same culture and the same tradition. All Hindus look upon India as the Holy Land... Everywhere the same scriptures are read and followed and the epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are equally popular wherever you may travel," Bose wrote, and then added that the advent of the Muslims led to "a new synthesis".

"Though they did not accept the religion of the Hindus, they made India their home and shared in the common social life of the people—their joys and their sorrows. Through mutual co-operation, a new art and a new culture was evolved which was different from the old but which nevertheless was distinctly Indian. In architecture, painting, music—new creations were made which represented the happy blending of the two streams of culture. Moreover, the administration of the Mohammedan rulers left untouched the daily life of the people and did not interfere with local self-government based on the old system of village communities," he wrote.

Bose makes another significant departure from Bankim's views. While Bankim thanked Europeans for making the Hindus aware of their colonised state (under Muslim rule) and ancient glory (through the research of the Indologists), Bose blamed the British for spoiling India's nature of absorbing different cultures.

"Throughout Indian history, all foreign elements have always been slowly absorbed by Indian society. The British are the first and the only exception to this," he wrote.

"With British rule, however, there came a new religion, a new culture and a new civilisation

which did not want to blend with the old but desired to dominate the country completely. The British people, unlike the invaders of old, did not make India their home. They regarded themselves as birds of passage and looked upon India as the source of raw materials and as the market for finished goods,” Bose wrote.

According to him, the British “endeavoured to imitate the autocracy of the Mohammedan rulers without following their wise policy of complete non-interference in local affairs.”

“The result of this was that the Indian people began to feel for the first time in their history that they were being dominated culturally, politically and economically by a people who were quite alien to them and with whom they had nothing whatsoever in common.”

He remarked that the Moghul kings unified the country and ushered in a new era of all-round progress.

“During the sixteenth and seventeenth century under the rule of the Moghul emperors, India once again reached the pinnacle of progress and prosperity. The greatest of them was Akbar, who ruled in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The great merit of Akbar was not only the political unification of the country, but what was perhaps more important, the working out of a new cultural synthesis—in order to reconcile the new stream of culture with the old—and evolve a new culture. The state machinery which he built up was also based on the whole-hearted co-operation of the Hindu and Mohammedan communities.”

On religion and communal organisations

Writing about the role of religion, or Hinduism, in the formation of Indian nationalism, Bose conspicuously makes no mention of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who provided Bose’s earlier-generation revolutionaries with great inspiration. Bose mentions the role of the Brahmo Samaj movement in Bengal and the Arya Samaj movement in north India, alongside Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission and wrote, “None of the three societies had any

political mission; nevertheless whoever came under their influence rapidly developed a sense of self-respect and a spirit of patriotism.”

And while referring to the Hindu revivalism in 19th-century Bengal that played a role behind the formation of anti-British sentiments, he wrote them off by simply saying the “reactionary movement could not make any appeal to the new generation of youths”.

He had, beyond doubt, inherited the Renaissance-inspired liberal stream of socio-cultural thoughts.

Bose emerged as a strong critic of communal and sectarian politics and, in the late 1930s, banned for Congress members to simultaneously be members of communal organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, which was a practice among some leaders during the 1910s and the 1920s.

In a signed editorial in the Forward Bloc weekly, titled ‘Towards Communal Unity’, published on February 24, 1940, Bose wrote, “Communalism will go only when the communal mentality goes. To destroy communalism is, therefore, the task of all those Indians – Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians etc. who have transcended all the communal outlook and have developed a genuine nationalist mentality.”

About two months later, in another signed editorial, titled Congress and Communal Organisations, published in the May 4, 1940 issue of the same weekly, he wrote, “Thanks to Hindu Mahasabha and to papers like The Amritabazar Patrika that have suddenly developed a rabid communalism, communal venom is being emitted from day to day with a view to poisoning the minds of the Hindus in Bengal and elsewhere. But all attempts to mislead the Hindus have so far failed.”

About a week later, while delivering a speech in Jhargram of southwestern Bengal on May 12, Netaji upped his ante on the Mahasabha. He said, “The Hindu Mahasabha has deployed sannyasis and sannyasins with tridents in their hands to beg

for votes. Hindus bow in reverence at the very sight of tridents and the saffron robes. The Hindu Mahasabha has entered the political arena by taking advantage of religion and has desecrated it. It is the duty every Hindu to condemn it. Banish these traitors from national life. Don't listen to them."

On Jinnah, Savarkar and S.P. Mookerjee

Despite his aversion for the communal organisations, Bose was of the view that the Congress should not treat them as untouchables and should try to bring them closer in common interest against the British. After the beginning of the WWII, Bose reached out to various sorts of leaders, from Gandhi to Mohammad Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha. Jinnah and Savarkar upset him equally.

He described his experiences with the following words, "Mr. Jinnah was then thinking only of how to realise his plan of Pakistan (division of India) with the help of the British. The idea of putting up a joint fight with the Congress, for Indian independence, did not appeal to him at all though the writer suggested that in the event of such a united struggle taking place, Mr. Jinnah would be the first Prime Minister of Free India."

Savarkar, Bose wrote, "seemed to be oblivious of the international situation and was only thinking how Hindus could secure military training by entering Britain's army in India."

"From these interviews, the writer was forced to the conclusion that nothing could be expected from either the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha," Bose wrote.

Bose's relations with another Hindutva ideologue, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, can hardly be said to be cordial. Mookerjee, after playing a leading role in the Hindu Mahasabha from 1939 to 1949, launched the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's political arm, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, in 1951. The Jana Sangh is the ideological and organisational predecessor of the Bharatiya

Janata Party and the BJP considers Mookerjee as one of the founders of the party.

In Bengal, Mookerjee is the BJP's biggest icon for "having saved the Hindus of West Bengal by ensuring a partition of the province in 1947."

Mookerjee has recollected in his diary that when he met Bose after joining the Hindu Mahasabha and informed the latter of his plan of expanding the organisation's footprints in Bengal, Bose "...warned me in a friendly spirit, adding significantly, that if we proceeded to create a rival political body in Bengal he would see to it (by force if need be) that it was broken before it was really born. This I found to be a most unfair and unreasonable attitude to take on."

Mookerjee's ardent follower Balraj Madhok has later described how the Bose-Mookerjee rivalry reached such a level that clashes took place between their supporters.

After his disappearance – the great escape from the country in January 1941 – his elder brother and comrade-in-arms Sarat Chandra Bose carried forward the legacy of preaching communal amity. In his Azad Hindu Fauj, Netaji adopted Jai Hind as the greeting words instead of the traditional Bande Mataram and, in 1943, his Provisional Government of Free India adopted Subh Sukh Chain, a Hindi transliteration of Tagore's Jana Gana Mana, was adopted as the national anthem, instead of the Congress anthem of Bande Mataram.

It should be noted that when in 1937 the Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership decided to adopt a truncated version of Bande Mataram as its anthem – omitting the paragraphs containing worship of Durga – the decision had the backing of both Tagore and Bose.

However, in 2018, Amit Shah, then the president of the BJP, had said in Kolkata that the Congress paved the path to India's Partition by adopting only the first two paragraphs of Bande Mataram as its anthem.

Snigdhendu Bhattacharya is a journalist and author based in Kolkata. 🌈

Most frightening rise of nationalism in India, says billionaire George Soros at Davos

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, George Soros, an advocate for international cooperation, said the “biggest and most frightening setback” was in India.



Express Web Desk

*George Soros, billionaire and founder of Soros Fund Management LLC, speaks at an event on day three of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020.
(Bloomberg: Simon Dawson)*

Billionaire US philanthropist George Soros Thursday cited India as an example to illustrate the rise of nationalism, which he called the “great enemy” of open society. Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Soros, an advocate for international cooperation, said the “biggest and most frightening setback” was in India.

“The biggest and most frightening setback occurred in India where a democratically elected Narendra Modi is creating a Hindu nationalist state, imposing punitive measures on Kashmir, a semi-autonomous Muslim region, and threatening to deprive millions of Muslims of their citizenship,” he said.

Soros said we live in a “transformational moment” in history, where the twin challenges of open societies and climate change are “threatening the survival of our civilisation”.

He opined that the responses to these challenges by politicians who “exploit” the situation for their own purposes are “unlikely to correspond to people’s expectations”, and therefore, have already caused “widespread disappointment”.

“There are also grounds to hope for the survival of open societies. They have their weaknesses, but so do repressive regimes. The greatest shortcoming of dictatorships is that when they are successful, they don’t know when or how to stop being repressive. They lack the checks and balances that give democracies a degree of stability. As a result, the oppressed revolt. We see this happening today all around the world,” Soros said.

“Taking into account the climate emergency and worldwide unrest, it’s not an exaggeration to say that 2020 and the next few years will determine not only the fate of Xi and Trump, but also the fate of the world”, the Hungarian-American said.

Soros has pledged \$1 billion to set up an international educational network, Open Society University Network (OSUN), for teaching and research. The idea is Soros’ long-term strategy to provide quality education that “reinforces the autonomy of the individual by cultivating critical thinking and emphasizing academic freedom”.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, January 25, 2021 

The Art of Resistance

Arundhati Roy: Our battle for love must be militantly waged – and beautifully won

The text of Arundhati Roy's speech at the Elgar Parishad 2021 on January 30



I thank the organisers of the 2021 Elgar Parishad for inviting me to speak at this forum to mark what would have been Rohit Vemula's 32nd birthday and the 1818 victory of the battle of Bhima Koregaon. Not far from here, Mahar troops fighting in the British Army defeated the Peshwa King Bajirao II under whom Mahars and other Dalit castes were cruelly persecuted and ritually debased in indescribable ways.

From this platform let me join the other speakers to express my solidarity with the farmers protest that is calling for the immediate withdrawal of the three Farm Bills that have been rammed down the throats of millions of farmers and farm workers and brought them onto the streets. We are here to express our sorrow and anger for the many who have died during the course of the protest. The situation on Delhi's borders where the farmers have been peacefully camping for two months is becoming tense and dangerous. Every possible trick and provocation is being used to divide and discredit the movement. Now, more than ever, we must stand by the farmers.

We are also here to demand the release of the dozens of political prisoners – including those who have come to be known as the Bhima

Arundhati Roy

Koregaon 16 – jailed on ludicrous charges under draconian anti-terror laws. Many of them are not just comrades but personal friends of mine with whom I have laughed, walked and broken bread. Nobody, not even their captors probably believe that they have committed the hackneyed crimes they are being accused of – planning the assassination of the prime minister, or plotting murder.

Everybody knows they are in jail for their intellectual clarity and moral courage – both of which are viewed by this regime as a significant threat. To make up for non-existent evidence, the charge-sheets against some of the accused run into tens of thousands of pages. It could take a judge several years to just *read* these, let alone adjudicate upon them.

A risky proposition

It's as hard to defend yourself against trumped up charges as it is to wake up a person who is pretending to sleep. In India we have learned that relying on legal redress is a risky proposition. In any case where and when have courts ever turned back the tide of Fascism? In our country laws are selectively applied depending on your class, caste, ethnicity, religion, gender and political beliefs. So, while poets and priests, students, activists, teachers and lawyers are in prison, mass murderers, serial killers, daylight lynch mobs, disreputable judges and venomous TV anchors are handsomely rewarded and can aspire for high office. The highest, even.

Nobody with even average intelligence can miss the pattern of how the 2018 Bhima

Koregaon rally, the 2020 anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests and now the farmers protests have sought to be discredited and sabotaged by agent provocateurs in exactly the same way. The immunity they enjoy speaks volumes about the support they enjoy with the current regime. I could show you how this pattern has repeated itself over decades to bring these people to power. As state elections approach, we await with dread what lies in store for the people of West Bengal.

Over the last two years the Elgar Parishad as an event and an organisation has been relentlessly defamed and demonised by the corporate media. Elgar Parishad: to many ordinary people those two words conjure up a shady cabal of radicals – terrorists, jihadis, Urban Naxals, Dalit Panthers – plotting to destroy India. In this climate of name-calling, of threat, dread and anxiety, just to have organised this meeting is in itself an act of courage and defiance that deserves to be saluted. It's incumbent on those of us up here on the stage to speak as candidly as we can.

Roughly three weeks ago, on January 6, as we watched an outlandish mob storm through the US Capitol carrying Confederate flags, weapons, gibbets and crucifixes, wearing furs and antlers – the thought that ran through my head was, “My Goodness, in our country we are already *ruled* by the Indian equivalent of these people. They've taken our Capitol Hill. They've won.” Our institutions have been overrun by them. Our Leader appears before us in a different set of furs and antlers every day. Our favoured elixir is cow urine. They are well on their way towards destroying every democratic institution in this country. The US might have managed to claw itself back from the brink to some semblance of imperial “normalcy”. But we in India are being dragged back centuries into a past that we have tried so hard to escape.

It isn't us – it isn't this gathering of the Elgar

Parishad that is radical or extreme. It isn't us who are acting illegally and unconstitutionally. It isn't us who have looked away from, or overtly encouraged pogroms in which Muslims have been killed in their thousands. It isn't us who benignly watch while Dalits are publicly flogged on city streets. It isn't us who are pitting people against one another, ruling through hatred and divisiveness. That is being done by those that we have elected as our government and by their propaganda machine that calls itself the media.

Two hundred years have gone by since the battle of Bhima Koregaon. The British have gone, but a form of colonialism that pre-dates them by centuries, lives on. The Peshwas are gone, but Peshwai – Brahminism *h* – as not. Brahminism, I don't need to clarify to this audience, but I do for others who many not know, is the term the anti-caste movement has historically used for the *jaati-vyavastha*. The caste-system. It does not refer to Brahmins alone. Brahminism has been to the workshop though, and has emerged fitted-out with a modern, democratic sounding vocabulary and a streamlined caste-management manual and programme (not new, but overhauled) that has mounted an existential challenge to the Dalit-Bahujan led political parties that once offered some hope.

Right now, the chosen *vaahan* [vehicle] of 21st century Brahminism is the far-right, Brahmin-controlled Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which, after a century of unceasing labour, has, through its best-known member, Narendra Modi, taken power in Delhi.

The corporate class

Many, including Karl Marx himself, believed that modern capitalism would end or at least override caste in India. Has it? Across the world, capitalism has ensured that wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. In India, the 63 richest people have more money than the 2018-'19 Union Budget for 1.3 billion people. A recent Oxfam study has found that in India during the corona pandemic, while hundreds of

millions lost their jobs during the lockdown – 170,000 people lost their jobs every hour in April 2020 – India’s billionaires increased their wealth by 35%.

One hundred of the richest among them – let’s call them the corporate class – made enough to be able to distribute, if they wanted to, almost 100,000 rupees each to 138 million of India’s poorest people. A mainstream newspaper headlined this news as follows: “Covid deepened inequalities: wealth, education, gender.” The missing word in the report as well as in the newspaper headline, is of course, caste.

The question is, does this tiny corporate class – which owns ports, mines, gas fields, refineries, telecommunication, high-speed data and cell phone networks, universities, petrochemical plants, hotels, hospitals, food distribution outlets and television cable networks – does this class which virtually owns and runs India, also have a caste?

To a great extent, yes. Many of the biggest Indian corporations are family owned. To name a few of the biggest – Reliance Industries Ltd (Mukesh Ambani), Adani Group (Gautam Adani), Arcelor Mittal (Lakshmi Mittal), OP Jindal Group (Savitri Devi Jindal), Birla Group (KM Birla). They all call themselves Vaishyas, the trader caste. They are only doing their divinely ordained duty – making money.

Empirical studies about the ownership of

corporate media and the caste breakdown of their editors, columnists and senior journalists reveal the strangle-hold of the privileged castes, mainly Brahmin and Bania, on designing and disseminating the news – real as well as fake. Dalits, Adivasis and increasingly Muslims are almost absent from this landscape. The situation is no different in the higher and lower judiciary, the upper echelons of the civil services, the foreign service, the world of chartered accountants, or plum jobs in education, health, publishing, or in any sphere of governance. Between them the population of Brahmins and Vaishyas is probably less than 10% of the population. Caste and Capitalism have fused to create a peculiarly lethal, peculiarly Indian alloy.

Prime Minister Modi, so relentless in his attack on the dynastic politics of the Congress party, is entirely dedicated to supporting and enriching these corporate dynasties. The palanquin in which he is showcased, for better or for worse, also rests on the shoulders of mostly Vaishya and Brahmin family-owned corporate media dynasties. To name a few – *The Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *India Today*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Dainik Jagran*. Reliance Industries has a controlling share in 27 channels. I use the verb “showcased” because Modi has never directly addressed the press in his nearly seven years as prime minister. Not once.

While the rest of us are having our personal data mined and our irises scanned, an opaque system has been put in place to allow the corporate world to repay the unflinching loyalty that has been shown to them. In 2018 an electoral bond scheme was introduced which allows anonymous donations to be made to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mukesh Ambani of Reliance. Credit: PTI

political parties. So, we now have an actual, institutionalised, hermetically sealed pipeline that circulates money and power between the corporate and political elite. Small wonder then that the Bharatiya Janata Party is the richest political party in the world.

Smaller wonder then, that while this tiny class-caste elite consolidates its hold on this country in the name of the people, in the name of Hindu Nationalism, it has begun to treat people, including its own voters, as an enemy force, to be managed, manipulated, waylaid, taken by surprise, attacked by stealth and ruled with an iron fist. We have been turned into a nation of ambush announcements and illegal ordinances.

Ambush announcements

Demonetisation broke the back of the economy, overnight.

The Abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir led to seven million people suddenly locked down for months under a military and digital siege – a crime against humanity being committed in our name – and played out for the world to see. A year later, a stubbornly defiant people continue their struggle for freedom even as every bone in Kashmir's collective body is being broken, official fiat by official fiat.

The blatantly anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens led to months of protest led by Muslim women. It ended with an anti-Muslim pogrom in North-East Delhi, fueled by vigilantes and watched over by the police, for which Muslims are being blamed. Hundreds of young Muslim men, students and activists including Umer Khalid, Khalid Saifi, Sharjeel Imam, Meran Haider, Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita are in jail. The protests are portrayed as an Islamist jihadi plot.

The women who led the iconic Shaheen Bagh sit-in, the backbone of the nation-wide uprising, were, we're told, being used for "gender-cover", and the public pledges to the

Constitution that took place at almost every protest site have been dismissed as "secular cover". The inference is that everything to do with Muslims is by default "jihadi" (used incorrectly as a euphemism for terrorism) and anything that is contraindicative is just details.

The policemen who forced grievously wounded Muslim men to sing the National Anthem, even as they lay piled up against each other on the street, have not even been identified, let alone charged. One of injured subsequently died from having a patriotic police lathi pushed down his throat. This month the Home Minister praised the Delhi Police for its handling of the "riots".

And now a year after the massacre, while a battered community is trying to get back on its feet, the Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad are announcing Rath Yatras and motorcycle parades to raise money for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya in those very same colonies where the pogrom took place,

We also had the Lockdown Ambush– 1.3 billion of us locked down with four hours notice. Millions of urban workers forced to walk thousands of kilometres towards home, while being beaten like criminals.

While the pandemic raged, responding to the change of status of the disputed State of Jammu & Kashmir, China occupied swathes of Indian territory in Ladakh. Our hapless government has been forced to pretend that it hasn't happened. Whether there is or isn't a war, a negative growth economy must now hemorrhage money to keep thousands of troops equipped and permanently battle ready. In sub-zero temperatures many soldiers lives will be lost just to the weather.

On top of that list of induced calamities we now have the three Farm Bills that will break the back of Indian agriculture, hand the controls to corporations and blatantly deny farmers legal recourse without even a nod to their Constitutional rights.

It's like watching a vehicle being dismantled, its engine broken, its wheels removed, its upholstery stripped, the vandalised shell left on the highway while other cars, driven by people who aren't wearing antlers and furs, whizz by.

A collective expression of rage

This is why we desperately need this Elgar—this consistent, collective, defiant expression of rage—against Brahmanism, against capitalism, against Islamophobia and against patriarchy. Patriarchy, the underpinning of it all—because if men don't or can't control women, they know they control nothing.

While the pandemic rages, while farmers are on the streets, states ruled by the BJP are rushing through anti-religious conversion ordinances. I will take a moment to talk about these because they are a compendium of insights into this regime's anxieties about caste, about masculinity, about Muslims and Christians, about love, women, demography and history.

The UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance 2020 (popularly known as the Ordinance against Love Jihad) is barely a month old. Already weddings have been disrupted, families have had cases filed against them, and dozens of young Muslim men are in jail. So now, in addition to being lynched for beef they haven't eaten, cows they haven't killed, crimes they haven't committed (although for Muslims being murdered is increasingly being viewed as a criminal act), in addition to being jailed for jokes they haven't made (as the case of the young comedian Munawer Faruqui), Muslims can now be jailed for committing the crime of falling in love and getting married.

In our reading of this ordinance I will leave aside some basic questions, such as how do you define "religion"? Would someone who persuaded a person of faith to become an atheist become liable for prosecution?

The 2020 Uttar Pradesh ordinance provides "for prohibition of unlawful conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force,

undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage..." The definition of allurement includes gifts, gratification, free education in reputed schools, or the promise of a better lifestyle. (Which roughly describes the transactions involved in almost every arranged marriage in India.)

The accused (the person who has caused the conversion to take place) faces a jail sentence of between one and five years. The accusers can be any family member including a distant relative. The burden of proof rests on the accused. The "victim" may be granted a Rs 500,000 compensation by the court payable by the accused. You can imagine the infinite possibilities of extortion and blackmail that this sets up.

Now for the best part: if the converted person is a minor, a woman, or belongs to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, the punishment to the "religion convertor" is doubled—*ie.*: two to ten years. In other words, this ordinance accords women, Dalits and Adivasis the same status as minors. It infantilises us: we are not considered to be adults responsible for our own actions. In the eyes of the Uttar Pradesh government, only the privileged-caste Hindu male has full agency.

It's the same spirit in which the Chief Justice of India asked why women, (who are in more ways than one the backbone of Indian agriculture), were being "kept" at the farmers' protests. And the government of Madhya Pradesh proposed that working women who don't live with their families be registered at police stations and tracked by the police for their own safety.

Caste anxiety

If Mother Teresa were alive, under this ordinance she'd be serving a jail sentence for sure. My guess is ten years and a lifetime of debt given how many people she converted to Christianity. This could become the fate of every Christian priest working among the poor in India.

Also, what about the person who said:

”Because we have the misfortune of calling ourselves Hindus we are treated thus. If we were members of another Faith, none would dare treat us such. Choose any religion which gives you equality of status and treatment. We shall repair our mistake now.”

Those were the words, many of you will know, of Babasaheb Ambedkar. A clear call for mass conversion with the promise of a better lifestyle. Under this ordinance, in which “mass conversion” is defined as when “two or more people convert”, those words would make Ambedkar criminally liable. Mahatma Phule too would likely be indicted for his overt approval of mass conversion when he said:

“The Muslims, destroying the carved stone images of the cunning Arya Bhats, forcibly enslaved them and brought the Shudras and Ati-Shudras in great numbers out of their clutches and made them Muslims, including them in the Muslim religion. Not only this, but they established inter-dining and intermarriage with them and gave them all equal rights...”

A great part of the millions of Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists who make up the population of this subcontinent are testimony to historical change and to mass conversion. The rapid depletion in numbers of the “Hindu

population” is what initially gave rise to privileged caste anxiety about demography and galvanised the politics of what is today called Hindutva.

Today however, with the RSS in power, the tide has turned. The only mass conversions happening at scale are those being conducted by the Vishwa Hindu Prashad – the process known as “ghar wapsi” (returning home) which began with Hindu reformist groups in the late nineteenth century. Ghar wapsi involves forest-dwelling tribes-people being “returned” to Hinduism. But not before undergoing a shuddhi (purification) ceremony to purge the pollution they have incurred by straying from “home”.

How does the Uttar Pradesh ordinance then deal with this inconvenience that ought, by logic, to criminalise this practice? It includes a clause that says: “Provided that, if any person reconverts to his/her immediate previous religion the same shall not be deemed to be a conversion under this ordinance.”

By doing this the ordinance perpetuates and legalises the myth that Hinduism is an ancient autochthonous religion that predates and subsumes the religions of the hundreds of indigenous tribes and Dalit and Dravidian peoples of the Indian subcontinent. Which is untrue and ahistorical.



Mythology as history

In India, these are the ways in which mythology is turned into history and history into mythology. Privileged caste chroniclers see no contradiction whatsoever in simultaneously claiming to be indigenous as well as the descendants of Aryan conquerors, depending on what suits them. At the beginning of his career in South Africa, while campaigning for a separate entrance for Indians in the Durban Post Office so that they would not have to share the same entrance as Black Africans who he often called “kaffirs” and “savages”, Gandhi argued that Indians and the English sprang from “common stock, called the Indo-Aryan”. He made sure to distinguish the privileged-caste “passenger Indians” from oppressed caste indentured laborers. That was in 1893. But the circus hasn’t stopped.

The range of speakers present today shows the Elgar Parishad’s intellectual ability to see the concerted attack that is coming at us from all directions not just one or the other. Nothing makes this regime happier than when we seal ourselves into silos, into little tanks in which we splash around angrily, each for ourselves or our communities – never seeing the big picture, our anger often directed at one another.

It is only when we breach the banks of our designated tanks that we can turn into a river. And flow as an unstoppable current. To do that we have to exceed our brief, we have to dare to dream like Rohit Vemula did. He is here today with us, amongst us, an inspiration to a whole new generation even in death, because he died dreaming. He died insisting on his right to expand into the fullness of his humanity, his ambitions, his intellectual curiosity. He refused to shrink, to contract, to fit the mould that was offered to him. He refused the labels the real

world wanted to pin on him. He knew that he was made up of nothing less than stardust. He has become stardust.

Beyond our identities


We have to be watchful of the traps that limit and essentialise us. None of us are just the sum of our identities. We are that too, but much much more. While we square off against our foes, we must be able to recognise our friends. We must look for allies because none of us can fight this battle alone. The audacious anti CAA protests last year and the grand farmers protest that surrounds us now has shown that. The many farmers unions that have come together represent people with different ideological beliefs, different histories. There are deep contradictions between big and small farmers, between landlords and landless agricultural workers, between Jat Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs, between the Left Unions and the Centrists.

There are caste contradictions too and horrifying caste violence, as Bant Singh who had both his arms and a leg hacked off in 2006, has told you today. Those differences are not buried. They are spoken about – as Randeep Maddoke who was meant to be here today has, his brave documentary film *Landless*. And yet, they have come together to confront this state to fight what we know is an existential battle.

Perhaps here in this city where Ambedkar was literally blackmailed into signing the Poona Pact, and where Jotiba and Savitribai Phule did their revolutionary work we can give our struggle a name. Perhaps it should be the Satya Shodhak Resistance – SSR to the RSS.

The battle of Love against Hate. A battle *for* Love. It must be militantly waged and beautifully won.

Thank you.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 11 February 2021. 

“Information is the currency that every citizen requires to participate in the life and governance of society.”

Justice A. P. Shah, former Chief Justice, Delhi and Madras High Courts, (2010)

Sibnarayan Ray: A Radical Intellectual in the Humanist Tradition

I'm an atheist, a naturalist and humanist

Sibnarayan Ray, born on January 20, 1921 was a radical intellectual who preferred to swim against the current all his life and court hostility and neglect. Sib Ray was keenly conscious of the position as an intellectual as someone who is not just an interpreter of ideas but one who interrogates and speaks to power. In one of his insightful essays he says intellectuals are broadly of two types - those who only affirm the ideas of the ruling elite and enjoy patronage and power best represented by Yagyavalka of the Upanishads and those who would dare to question and prepared to pay the price like Socrates. Indian intellectuals, by and large, are the followers of Yagnavalkya who drift with the current, endlessly repeat and live a comfortable life. In Bengal where till the other day Marxists of different hues dominated the entire cultural space, it was not easy to critique Marxism and condemn communism, not as a conservative but as a radical. On the other hand, he was a very severe critic of religious orthodoxy and nationalism. He defended the rights of Muslim minorities but stood by Taslima Naseen when our 'progressives' had deserted her. Ray lived an unusual life of unending quest with a humanist's passion for sweetness and light and a radical's dream of a better world.

Ray's father Pandit Upendranath Vidyabhusan Sastri was Sanskrit scholar who nevertheless was a theater enthusiast. He infused in his son a deep love of learning which would possess him for the rest of his life. He had an astonishing range of interest - literature, history, philosophy, politics, education,

aesthetics and art history. From his mother he inherited a passion for poetry and the password to the world of wonder and beauty. He grew up in the Inter War years which saw much



Prof. Sibnarayan Ray

unrest, growing communal tension and the Great Depression. As a young man in search of his soul, he discovered Marx and Freud - one opening up new vistas of human history characterized by class struggle and the other, the dark, little understood world of the mind. Though he became a Marxist, he never joined any Marxist party. The turning point of his life came when he met MN Roy, the revolutionary thinker who

had founded Indian Communist Party in exile but who came to look beyond communism. He rejected strict historical determinism and any special agency for the proletariat. Roy now put forth an alternative vision of social transformation based on freedom and cooperation. But for this to happen we need a cultural revolution or a renaissance in which intellectuals have a vital role to play. In this he was not much different from Gramsci but while the latter's 'organic intellectual' functions as a party activist, Roy would like to see the intellectual working independently critiquing all forms of domination and creating new values to sustain a radical democracy. Sib Ray found this philosophy liberating and he would cooperate with Roy during the last eight years of his life (1946-54) formulating Radical Humanism not as a subordinate but as a young friend, more often disagreeing than complying.

For the most part of his life Sib Ray worked as an academic in different universities such

as Bombay and Melbourne but he was feverishly engaged in intellectual activities - editing journals and writing on literature, culture and politics, promoting humanist point of view as opposed to both communism and nationalism. He was a bilingual intellectual who wrote in elegant English but more remarkably in Bengali which is deficient in discursive prose. His Bengali prose was original, sinuous yet supple, capable of clearly expressing new ideas with subtle nuances of style. He coined about a hundred or so new expressive words in Bengali. His first book 'Pariprekshita' is a collection of literary essays on modernist poets written from a Marxist point of view. It was followed by *Radicalism* (1946) where he succinctly presents the philosophy of Radical Humanism and *In Man's Own Image* (1948), written in collaboration with Ellen Roy, further develops it. He altogether authored 55 books and edited another 37. However the last thirty years of his life, spent mostly in Bengal, were his most creative years. After returning from Melbourne, he started *Jignhasa* (The Quest), a journal dedicated to critical enquiry. Most of the Bengali liberal and radical intellectuals contributed to it. I wonder if there was another journal in any Indian language that came near it in quality and richness of content. He also edited four volumes of the *Selected Works of MN Roy* published by OUP and wrote "In Freedom's Quest", a definitive biography of Roy in five volumes. This involved most exacting research in India and in foreign archives. It was a daunting task for a man of advanced years but he retained a reserve of youthfulness which stood him in good stead. In the first two volumes of the Roy biography he presented the formative years of Indian communist movement in the international perspective with an objectivity and balance which is rare in Indian historiography.

Ray was first to introduce authors like Mary Wollstonecraft, Karl Popper, Pannekoek,

Sartre, Camus, Raymond Aron and others to Indian readers. As a thinker he was deeply rooted in the Bengali liberal intellectual tradition that began with Rammohun Roy and Henry Divian Louis Derozio for both of whom he had great admiration. Of Derozio he wrote, "There is no precedence, before or since, in intellectual history of a young man having changed the course of discourse so decisively in such a short period." He engaged passionately and critically with the unmatched creativity of Rabindranath Tagore whom he favorably compared with Leonardo and Goethe. As a literary critic he introduced post colonial criticism in "Apartheid in Shakespeare" and feminism in his essays on Rokeya Begum and Sailabala Ghosh who, early in 1920s dealt with a love story between a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl, which, as we know, still evokes such an outrage. His criticism is marked by a trained sensitivity, catholicity of taste and critical acumen.

As a thinker Ray was influenced among others by Marx, Bertrand Russell, Tagore, MN Roy, Ambedkar, Karl Popper, Erich Fromm, Simone Beauvoir and Herbert Marcuse. Though he was receptive to new ideas, Post Modernism disappointed and disgusted him. Like other humanists he relied on reason and science to solve human problems, but was aware of its limitations. He was aware of the need of love and its potentials but also of the negative human passions such as hatred, lust of power and destructiveness. Ray was all for social change that will enable human beings to become free agents and cooperate meaningfully with others to come into their own and enrich society. He was alive to the enormous human cost of the revolutions and the fact it was not commensurate with the gains. So he believed in piecemeal changes through democratic and, chiefly peaceful means which ultimately would make a vast difference. He was sceptical of political parties

as they, at every turn, make compromises, concentrate power and discourage independent thinking and initiative. There is a vast area outside procedural politics that provides scope for individual or group initiatives for cultural politics and building new institutions. Jurgen Habermas, the foremost Enlightenment thinker of our age calls it 'the sphere of communicative action' based on human ability of reasoning and use of language. One of the ways of deepening democracy is a new kind of education which consists not on mechanical cramming for a career and power, but which makes the learner sensitive and teaches her to think critically and independently. In a democratic society learning continues throughout the entire span of life which, in turn, will require new institutions. In the cultural sphere the hegemony of the ruling classes,

race, patriarchy or castes have to dismantle through critical learning and the creation of new artistic forms that liberate imagination from old habits. In Indian context he stressed on the fight against patriarchy, caste and religious revivalism. In his last years he came to realise the enormity of the environmental crisis. He observed, "Renaissance humanism is not quite adequate to deal with this threat of a global catastrophe." It calls for an immediate reformulation of humanism in which the value of all living forms are recognized and human life is viewed as a part of the great picture of Life. Ray never entertained the illusion of an afterlife. He found comfort in returning to Nature when molecules that made up his body will be dancing in a bird or butterfly and his ideas might stimulate some other brains.

- **Bhaskar Sur** 

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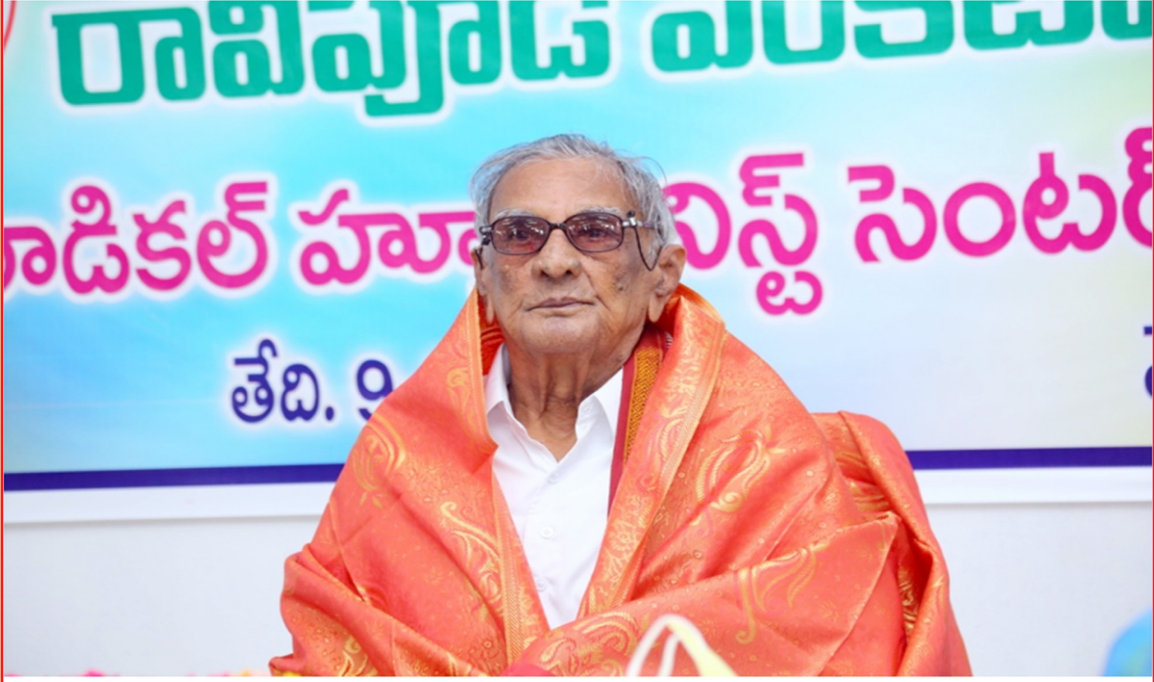
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Photos of celebratory function honouring Ravipudi Venkatadri



Photos of celebratory function honouring Ravipudi Venkatadri



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