

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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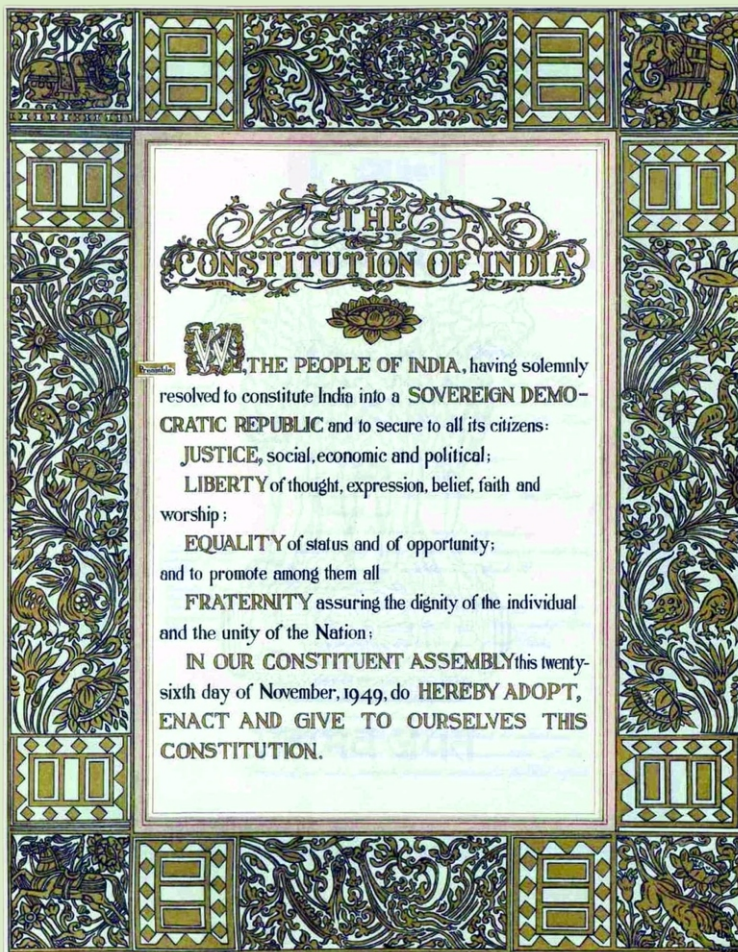
Founder

M.N. ROY

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Sh. Ramesh Korde is no more



We regret to inform our readers that Sh. Ramesh Korde, an old Radical Humanist, is no more. He was 93 years old. He often used to contribute to The Radical Humanist. We shall miss his benign smiling face in future. His death is a great loss to the Radical Humanist community. On behalf of the Radical Humanist community I pay our respectful tributes to him and send our heartfelt condolences to Sudhesh Korde and other members of his family.

Mahi Pal Singh

Message from Sudhesh Korde about the loss of his father, an old Radical Humanist

My father, **Ramesh Korde**, breathed his last on Saturday morning dated 27th November 2021.

He had been with the Radical Humanist movement since 1950, the movement initiated by late M N Roy. He was an avid reader. His penchant for philosophical and scientific writings was reflected in life too. His personality was always philosophical and scientific outlook of humanism. Throughout his life he lived with scientific outlook and wanted that the traditional outdated ideologies must be combated. He firmly believed that all human beings should have freedom in all aspects of life and should not be slave of any religion, class, race, political parties, nationality etc. He believed in freedom as it works as an incentive to constant search for knowledge and truth. Therefore the freedom in respect of all humanity should never be suppressed. He believed that science never claims finality. It is a continuous process and it is infinite. Therefore, scientific outlook is the only means available to humanity to find out the truth that can lead to freedom.

His three books are, 'Towards 21st Century Renaissance', 'Let us be Royal to Human Species' and 'For Human Freedom'.

He was loved by all. His approach was always humanistic. He was generous by nature & would love to help anyone who came for any help. He lived with dignity & died also with dignity. He died peacefully and did not give trouble to anyone till the death came knocking at him.

I would be missing him a lot.

Love you Papa.
Sudhesh Korde



Ramesh Korde's grandson Shobhan, Jayanti Patel, Shobhan's wife and Ramesh Korde

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CONTENTS :

Page No.

Editorial:

- Mr. Modi, forgive us, We the People of India,
for voting you to power twice** 04
Mahi Pal Singh

Articles and Features:

- An argument to repeal AFSPA** 06
Amrith

- I served in Nagaland during the peak of
insurgency and without AFSPA** 08
M.G. Devasahayam

- Mayhen of Human Rights in Post-Colonial India** 10
Bhaskar Sur

- REPEAL UAPA, SEDITION LAW & AFSPA** 12

- End the impunity: On Nagaland killing** 14
Editorial, The Hindu

- Bracing for probable poll violence in BJP ruled
states** 15
Faraz Ahmad

- Farmers Win on Many Fronts, Media Fails on All** 17
P. Sainath

- 2024 polls are BJP's worry, not 2022 UP** 20
Gilles Verniers

- Lakhimpur Kheri case: Screws tighten on MoS
Son, SIT says killing of farmers was planned** 21
Manish Sahu

- Ajay Mishra Teni's position is untenable** 23
Barkha Dutt

- Lawyer-Activist Sudha Bharadwaj Released After
3 Years In Jail** 24
Akhil Kumar

- How RSS denigrated the Constitution** 26
Shamsul Islam

- Attacks on Christians in Karnataka: Police
colluded with Hindutva groups, finds report** 29
Scroll Staff

- Don Quixotes Of Hinduism** 31
P.A.S. Prasad

- Menace of Saffronisation of Education** 33
Bimal Kumar Chatterjee

- Science and Philosophy by M.N. Roy:
Chapter 3: New Physics** 36
Vinod Jain

- Electoral Bonds Are a Threat to Indian Democracy** 39
Dharanidharan Sivangnanaselvam

Obituaries:

- Prof. Venigalla Komala is no more** 43
Sh. Ramesh Korde is no more 02

Editorial :

Mr. Modi, forgive us, We the People of India, for voting you to power twice

Mahi Pal Singh

It is said that people get the government they deserve, at least in a democracy where the people themselves elect their representatives and the government. So, 'We, the People of India', cannot blame anybody else but ourselves for the kind of government we have because we ourselves voted the National Democratic Alliance government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and headed by Narendra Modi not only in 2014 but also again in 2019. Of course, we were befooled by slogans like '*Bahut hui mahangai ki mar, abki bar Modi sarkar*', ('the price rise has beaten us enough, let us now have Modi government'), and the utterly false promise of 'Rs. 15 lakhs in everybody's account', which Amit Shah, now the Union Home Minister, later admitted as a mere election '*jumla*' after winning the election in 2014. Then came the dictatorial and sudden order of the Prime Minister to demonetize the big currency which resulted in great difficulties to the public and closure of lakhs of factories and businesses resulting in unemployment to crores of people in 2016, soon to be followed by the ill-planned and shoddily implemented GST further increasing the woes of the people and small businessmen. People were lynched publically by the Hindutva groups in the name of cow protection and cases were filed not against the perpetrators of the crime but against the victims and the cows thus saved have been let free to destroy the crops of farmers, mostly in Uttar Pradesh, without cow shelters and cow homes, where Yogi Adityanath, the self-acclaimed biggest savior of cows, runs the government.

Throughout the first tenure of the Modi government we saw a rise of the communal agenda of the Hindutva groups and the polarisation of the population on communal basis, which continues with a greater vengeance till date in the name of Ram Mandir and Kashi Vishwanath corridor inaugurated just a few days ago by him. Getting the benefit of the majoritarian Hindutva votes, the same government got elected again in 2019. Things got worse with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and the sudden lockdown imposed by the Prime Minister, which again resulted in sudden closure of factories and offices and resultant unemployment to crores of people. The poor daily wagers were on the verge of hunger and death and mass exodus of the miserable population towards their villages hundreds of kilometers away on foot started, hundreds of them dying on the way of hunger and disease as well as of road accidents. The lockdown further aggravated the employment situation and crores of people further lost their jobs and means of survival.

During the pandemic health services were in deplorable condition everywhere but more so in Uttar Pradesh in which case the High Court went to the extent of saying that the health services there were at the mercy of God. Hundreds of dead bodies were seen floating in the Ganges and buried along its banks in spite of big claims of the efficiency of the 'double engine sarkar' of Modi and Yogi.

The farmers were agitating on the Delhi borders for more than one year for repealing the three farm laws enacted by the parliament without any discussion and considered as anti-

farmers by the farmers themselves. During the agitation more than 704 farmers have died. But Modiji has had no time or inclination to listen to them or to utter a single word of sympathy for those who died. Ultimately under the fear of losing the forthcoming assembly elections in five states, particularly in U.P. whose election results will play a crucial role in the parliamentary elections due in 2024 and which can be detrimental for Mr. Modi's strong desire to be the Prime Minister for the third time, he withdrew the three controversial farm laws and broadly accepted the demands of the agitating farmers to wind up the agitation after more than a year of the beginning of the agitation. He knew well that the farmers are capable of strongly influencing the results at least in 120 constituencies in U.P. alone. The farmers will carefully watch the government's action on its assurances as its track record in the past has been dismal.

The Yogi Adityanath government in U.P. is not far behind. When four of the farmers protesting against the three controversial laws, were murdered in a cold-blooded manner on 3rd October 2021, by crushing them under the tyres of speeding vehicles, at least one of them belonging to Ashish Mishra, the prime accused and the son of the Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra 'Teni', the UP police took a week to arrest him after a lot of discussion and protests in the media. The Supreme Court came down heavily on the UP government saying that the investigation was favouring the accused. On November 18 the SC appointed Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain, a retired judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, to oversee on day-to-day basis the Uttar Pradesh SIT's probe into the killing of eight people in Lakhimpur Kheri including four farmers. However, still no action has been taken against Ajay Mishra although he is alleged to be the main conspirator in the case, and also named in the FIR as such, as he had threatened the

farmers on 25th September of serious consequences, about a week before the main incident, telling them in no unclear words that they should remember his previous record (as a criminal, of course). In spite of the fact that as the Union Minister of State for Home he is in a position to influence the investigation, he has not been sacked from the Union Cabinet by Mr. Modi. These days it is difficult to expect any morality from political parties and their leaders, but to expect it from the BJP and its leader is a far cry.

As per the revised charge sheet filed in the court by the Supreme Court monitored Special Investigating Team (SIT) against the 12 accused, including Ashish Mishra, the prime accused and the son of the Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra 'Teni', under various IPC sections, including 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) as it was found out that the act of killing of the farmers was a well thought out and planned conspiracy. But even after that, the Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra 'Teni' has neither resigned from the central cabinet nor has the Prime Minister cared to sack him, which all the opposition parties are demanding in Parliament and the farmers have started agitating everywhere. How long the Prime Minister can shield him remains to be seen.

However, what is crystal clear is that the people everywhere in the country are fed up with this government, and the 'double engine government' in U.P. because of very steep price rise in edible oils, petrol, diesel, LPG, vegetables, lentils, for which the government is directly responsible. There is very high unemployment. U.P. tops in crime, particularly against women and also in malnutrition and child death. It is third in poverty in the country. Education is in bad shape. Add to it the farmers' woes whose income remains at a low

of Rs. 27/- per day and their standing crops are eaten up by stray cows loitering everywhere around their agricultural farms. The people are blaming themselves for having elected the Modi government at the centre twice and the Yogi government in 2017 with a big mandate. Now they realize that the inauguration spree launched by the Prime Minister just ahead of the assembly elections in the beginning of 2022 and Kashi Vishwanath corridor and Ram Mandir cannot feed them and the free ration supply to the poor is also going to end in March 2022, just after the declaration of the results of the assembly polls. Further price rise in petrol, diesel and LPG is also just on hold till the election results are declared, as in the case of West Bengal

assembly elections in 2021. From the past record of the top leadership of the BJP they know that the attractive promises being made before the elections will be declared as '*poll jumlas*' as they were declared after the 2014 parliamentary elections. Enough is enough. There is the 'double engine' anti-incumbency against the Modi and Yogi governments. Now 'We the People of India', including those of U.P., have made up our minds to teach our liar rulers a lesson. Although the suffering poor, including minorities, are not speaking up for fear of reprisals from the musclemen of the rulers, they will show their strength when time comes. The people have stood up and the game of the BJP is soon going to be over – first in 2022 and then 2024. 🌈

Articles and Features :

An argument to repeal AFSPA

Amrith

The **death of 14 civilians** in a botched Army operation on December 4 in Nagaland's Mon district sent shock waves across the nation. This newspaper in an editorial (**Tragedy and trust, December 6**) wrote that "a free and fair investigation should be held to get to the bottom of the matter and identify where and how the operation wrong". In subsequent days, this newspaper published three articles that looked at the incident and its impact from different perspectives. All three articles, not surprisingly, looked closely at **the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)**.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta **calls the Act** "a constitutional abomination that should have been repealed a long time ago". The Act, Mehta says, "grants extraordinarily sweeping powers to the Armed Forces of search, seizure, arrest, the right to shoot to kill and

conduct operations in ways that make a mockery of individual rights and dignity". AFSPA creates a state of exception in the areas where it is imposed, which in practice results in the suspension of the many rights the Constitution bestows on citizens. The Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission had called for a repeal of the Act. **Mehta argues that** "laws such as AFSPA signify the suicide of the Constitution". The AFSPA, he argues, has "been counterproductive for the Army". Mehta makes a powerful pitch for the Act to be repealed.

In her detailed analysis of politics in Nagaland, **Patricia Mukhim asks:** "Why are the northeastern states of India and Jammu and Kashmir singled out for imposition of AFSPA? Aren't there internal rebellions in the rest of India too, such as "left-wing extremism?" Why are those areas not termed

“disturbed areas” followed by the invocation of AFSPA?” Her conclusion is: “The reality is that the Northeast is not only less understood by distant Delhi but is also still considered ‘alien’ to the nation because of racial and cultural dissimilarities.” Mukhim recounts the violent history of AFSPA in the Northeast and the civil society’s multiple attempts to get the Act repealed. Irom Sharmila’s extraordinary Gandhian protest against the Act could not achieve its end. A legal battle in the Supreme Court also failed. In 2016, the Supreme Court sought details of the 1,528 cases of alleged extra-judicial killings between May 1979 and May 2012 by the Manipur Police and the armed forces and asked the CBI to probe a few of those cases. In its report filed in March this year, it (CBI) said it had no conclusive evidence and, therefore, closed the cases, Mukhim writes.

Mukhim **acknowledges the complicated political history of Nagaland**, but argues that the media has “focussed exclusively on the NSCN (IM) and ignored other Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs), who have been brought on board because they are Nagaland-based and speak exclusively for Nagaland”. She writes, “The NSCN (IM) is led by a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur and the majority of its cadres are also Nagas from Manipur. The NNPGs and the Gaonbura Association of Nagaland doubt NSCN (IM)’s ability to bring lasting peace in Nagaland. They know that the NSCN (IM) is not an organisation with whom dialogue is possible or which is in the habit of examining its conscience and regretting its actions. It exists to recruit resentment and to direct that resentment against the usual target – Delhi or India.”

Mukhim is critical of the NSCN (IM) and calls attention to the political position taken by the Nagaland Gaon Bura Association, the

apex body of Nagas which includes all the 16 recognised tribes and the NNPGs barring the NSCN (IM). “These representatives of the Naga people do not demand a separate flag or Constitution because they understand these are tenuous demands. It is a settled issue that there will be no territorial rearrangement and the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam will not be reorganised for that would unleash a Frankenstein. These groups have also never raised the sovereignty issue. The working committee of the seven Naga National Political Groups, roped in to join the peace talks, are also opposed to the idea of changing interlocutors as and when the NSCN (IM) decides,” she writes. Mukhim concludes that “the people of Nagaland are being held hostage by governments both at the state and the Centre”. She argues that the Centre is seen as “pandering to the political leadership of Nagaland, which is alienated from the people instead of responding to the aspirations of the Naga people.”

Prakash Singh (**‘Probe before criticising’, December 11**), describes the Mon incident as “terrible” and “a tragedy”, but wants the readers to remember that “the security forces are performing an extremely difficult and complicated task in the midst of multiple insurgencies in the Northeast.” On the repeal of AFSPA, his view is: “The matter could be examined again in consultation with all the stakeholders and a well-considered decision taken, keeping in view the requirements of national security.”

The AFSPA is an admission of the failure of politics. The brutal simplicity of the Act, which enables enforcement of the law using fear and violence, is in sharp contrast to nuance, negotiation and perseverance that define political action.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 14 December, 2021. 

I served in Nagaland during the peak of insurgency and without AFSPA

Despite the Nagaland Peace Accord signed in the presence of PM Narendra Modi, AFSPA continues to exist. And we call ourselves mother of all democracies.

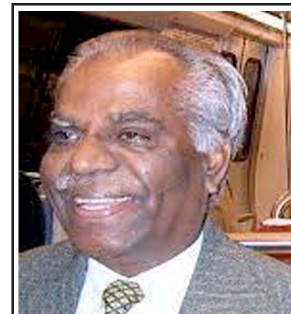
Home minister Amit Shah said that his government regretted the death of 14 civilians in Nagaland after an operation by the security forces went wrong and the subsequent violence. However, the government would do well to re-think the law that is the trigger behind such incidents in India's insurgency-hit areas. The Nagaland violence has brought focus back on the unchecked powers that security forces wield under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, or AFSPA.

I share my experience of serving in the Indian Army and participating in counter-insurgency operations at a time when AFSPA was not in force in Nagaland.

When Nagaland had no AFSPA

While in the Army for a brief spell in the 1960s, I had the opportunity to participate in counter-insurgency operations in the districts of Phek in Nagaland and Ukhrul in Manipur, both bordering Myanmar. The period was late 1967 to mid-1968 — when insurgency was at its peak. Underground Naga rebels, armed with weapons from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were moving to China via Myanmar to get trained and return with superior weapons and ammunition to take on the Indian Army. AFSPA was in force in Manipur, but not in Nagaland. During the counter-insurgency operations, we came face-to-face with these well-trained and armed 'underground hostiles.' Our orders were to capture hostiles and weapons and not to kill. And we did conduct several operations successfully, without feeling any necessity for the draconian AFSPA.

There was a time when the Army did not want to kill even the armed insurgents. Now, unarmed civilians are becoming victims. Is this what AFSPA has achieved in its six decades in Manipur



M.G. Devasahayam

and five decades in Nagaland? The Indian Army has a doctrine that defines its primary role as preserving national interests and safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of India against any external threats by deterrence or by waging war. Its secondary role is to assist government agencies to cope with 'proxy war' and other internal threats, and provide aid to civil authority when requisitioned for the purpose. The doctrine is clear. The secondary role comes only during internal threats in different forms — short intervention during severe riots and breakdown of law and order and medium-term role in counter-insurgency operations against terrorists or secessionists. By its very definition, the role cannot be long term.

These deaths in Nagaland's Mon district have put an end to the festive mood of the Hornbill Festival that was underway. Kisama Heritage Village, the venue of the festival, which would have otherwise been brimming with joyous hosts and tourists, was full of posters that read "Remove bloodthirsty Indian Armed Forces from Nagaland", "We condemn the

killing of innocent civilians by security forces” and “we demand justice.” Not satisfied with empty promises, people of Nagaland have almost unanimously demanded the repeal of AFSPA, which they feel is the root cause for such violence.

The Nagaland police has called the incident “intentional murder.” This is what the FIR says: “At around 1530 hours, coal mine labourers of Oting village were returning to their native village from Tiru in a vehicle Bolero pick up. On reaching at Longkhao between Upper Tiru and Oting village, security forces blankly opened fire at the vehicle without any provocation resulting to the killing of many Oting villagers and seriously injuring many others...It is to be noted that at the time of incident there was no police guide nor security forces did make requisition to police station to provide police guide for their operation. Hence it is obvious that the intention of security forces is to murder and injure civilians.”

AFSPA and its background

To understand the cry for repeal of AFSPA, we need to go back in history.

AFSPA is based on a 1942 British ordinance intended to contain the Indian Independence movement during the Second World War. The Government of India adopted this law in September 1958 through an enactment in Parliament. Initially, AFSPA applied only to the Northeast territories of Assam and Manipur and was aimed at containing an armed rebellion by Naga militants. In 1972, the Act was extended to other Northeastern states of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Similar laws were also applied to counter-militancy in Punjab from 1985 to 1994. A version of AFSPA has been active in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990.

Powers under AFSPA extend to the armed forces once an area is declared “disturbed” under Section 3 of the Act. This declaration is not subject to judicial review. Section 4(a) of the AFSPA grants the armed forces power to

shoot to kill in law enforcement situations thereby violating “Right to Life” contained in Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The right to liberty and security of a person is violated by section 4(c) of AFSPA, which fails to protect against arbitrary arrest by allowing soldiers to arrest anyone merely on suspicion that a “cognisable offence” has already taken place or is likely to take place in the future.

The right to remedy is violated by Section 6 of the Act, which provides officers who abuse their powers under AFSPA with immunity from legal accountability. This section of the Act prohibits even state governments from initiating legal proceedings against the armed forces on behalf of their population without central government’s approval. Since AFSPA provides powers to arrest without warrant and then detain arrested persons for unspecified period of time, numerous incidents of torture during interrogation have been reported.

While exercising such draconian powers, there is bound to be misuse.

In a July 2016 verdict, the Supreme Court ripped open the cloak of immunity and secrecy provided by AFSPA to security forces for deaths caused during encounters in ‘disturbed areas.’ In July 2017, the court directed a CBI probe into alleged extra-judicial killings by the Army, Assam Rifles and police in the insurgency-hit state of Manipur. It had asked the CBI Director to appoint a Special Investigating Team (SIT) to probe into the alleged killings. The order had come on a PIL seeking probe and compensation in the alleged 1,528 extra-judicial killings by security forces in Manipur between 2000 and 2012. The outcome of this is not known.

Sensing the dangers of the Act in 2005 itself, a high-level Committee headed by Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy of the Supreme Court, tasked with reviewing the AFSPA unambiguously, recommended its repeal. This is what the Committee said in its 147-page report:

(To be Contd....on Page - 11)

Mayhem of Human Rights in Post-Colonial India

Bhaskar Sur

India takes pride in being the largest democracy on earth but what is not much known is India's horrible human rights record. Western journalists conveniently speak of human rights violations in China, North Korea or Iran but maintain a rare innocence and silence over the condition of human rights in India. After all, India is the largest buyer of Western arms which, is like buying modern indulgences to get reprieve for any sins - torture, extrajudicial killings, rapes, systematic destruction of the environmental base of indigenous people and subversion of the judicial process. Since the Independence in 1947, the Indian state must have killed, at a conservative estimate, more than 500000 people in judicial custody, extrajudicial killing or waging war on its own people. Kashmir Valley alone accounts for more than 120000 such deaths. The paradise on earth has turned into a Valley of Death littered with thousands of unmarked graves. This compares rather unfavourably with all the deaths in the anti colonial struggle put together - only 36000.

A few days ago the Indian army killed 15 innocent citizens in Nagaland in North East India. The army enjoys special power under AFSPA to detain, search and even kill with impunity in many strife torn states. In dealing with resistance and insurgency in North Eastern states and Kashmir, Indian authorities have been more repressive and destructive than the British. It reminds one of Indonesia's record in Eastern Timor or Turkey's in Kurdish region. Gandhi launched his movement in a big way by opposing the Rowlatt Bill which was meant exclusively to deal with terrorism which was taking a heavy toll. Indian Nationalists saw in it the possibility of the infringement of rights guaranteed by the British law.

Apparently, they were fighting for human

rights in which, alas, they did not believe in. As Hindus and Muslims they were not supposed to. Hinduism is structured around the caste hierarchy in which the upper castes have all rights and the majority has only slavish duties. Most of the Indian Congress leaders were from the upper castes and, as Hindu revivalists, had unshakeable faith in the Divine law embodied in the caste hierarchy. As a Varnashrami Hindu, Gandhi did not want the children of the scavengers to move to any other occupation as it would violate the sacredness of the divine dispensation. He would not even allow them to convert and escape the consequences of their karma. Muslims, on the other hand, believe in equality of males within the religious community but not for others. A non Muslim can never expect legal or social equality with Muslims, not to speak of security. No wonder, after the Independence Hindus and other minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh would suffer relentless persecution, often forcing them to emigrate to India or, with luck, to the West.

Once they would assume power Indian nationalists like Patel and Nehru showed their true colours. In Operation Polo undertaken in 1948 to bring the unwilling Hyderabad into the Indian union, more than 40000 mostly Muslim civilians, were killed. The Nehru government instituted an enquiry commission to investigate army atrocities but the report was never tabled. In 1950 Preventive Detention Act, the first piece of undemocratic legislations to follow was passed and then in 1958 the abominable APSPA. This was done by the post war poster boy of liberal democracy- the inimitable Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. He even ordered rebellious Naga villages to be bombed. In this respect at least, his measures were no different from that of Suharto or

Saddam Hussain. His successors continued with the tradition coming up with more innovative and stringent laws such as NSA POTA or UAPA. Unsurprisingly, most of prisoners- about 65%- languishing in smelly and overcrowded Indian jails are under trials. Like the Blacks in the USA, they are disproportionately from the minority communities, Dalits and tribals living on the margins.

Things have certainly changed for the worse with the rise of the ultra rightist Hindutva politics. They frankly dismiss human rights as dispensable Western luxuries (they borrowed most of rhetoric from post colonials) and waged a war against human rights activists putting them in jails in framed up charges. They also know the art of killing with kindness to perfection. Stan Swamy, a Catholic priest who worked for tribal rights was arrested along with many eminent Left intellectuals linking them with Dalit

militancy. The 84 year old priest was denied basic things in the prison and he knew he was dying. His bail plea was repeatedly rejected until he died. Such incidents are reminiscent of hated dictatorships such as Franco or Trujillo. But this has become a norm in India where the pliant media take care to foster insensitivity, callousness and inaction. More than that, the state has created an atmosphere of fear where law is unable to protect the citizens so systematically they have been bent and broken. Human rights are grounded in humanism and universal values which apparently of Western origin but they embody the best traditions of mankind. It would be a chimera to expect a humane society with guaranteed human rights without a humanist culture based on secularism, freedom and reason.

Taken from a Facebook post dated 11 December, 2021. 🌈

Contd. from page - (9)

I served in Nagaland during the peak...

“The Act is too sketchy, too bald and quite inadequate in several particulars... the Act, for whatever reason, has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and high-handedness.”

Rejecting the principal submission made by the armed forces in favour of continuation of AFSPA, the Committee pointed out that protection from legal proceedings against soldiers acting in good faith already exists in Section 49 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The Committee also suggested amendments to this Act to incorporate measures that would regulate the already permissible conduct of armed forces personnel in areas where they are deployed to fight terrorist activities and provide protection to ordinary citizens against possible abuse.

Are we the mother of all democracies?

By applying AFSPA for a very long period, large areas in our border states are being militarised. Over the years, the effort of politicians has been to make the Army an instrument of an increasingly autocratic State. And it looks as if some in the Army top brass, with a false sense of ‘military patriotism’, are playing second fiddle to these. That is why, despite the Nagaland Peace Accord of 2015 signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the draconian law continues to exist. And we call ourselves “Mother of all Democracies!”

M.G. Devasahayam is a retired IAS officer and chairman of People-First. He also served in the Indian Army. Views are personal.

(Edited by Anurag Chaubey)

Courtesy **The Print**, 7 December 2021. 🌈

**STATEMENT/RESOLUTION MOVED IN THE PUBLIC MEETING
ORGANIZED BY PUCL Delhi, JANHASTAKSHEP-A Campaign Against
Fascist Designs, LAWYERS FOR DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENS FOR
DEMOCRACY TO COMMEMORATE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY HELD ON
11TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT PRESS CLUB OF INDIA:**

“REPEAL UAPA, SEDITION LAW & AFSPA”

Our country has a long history of gross abuse of power and deprivation of human rights in the context of the laws relating to sedition, Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. In order to provide legal sanctity to their repressive measures, successive governments in India have armed themselves with various so called ‘anti-terrorism’ laws, each being more draconian than the previous one.

These laws also stand out for the remarkable consensual support they enjoy from various ruling parties, albeit with pretence of differences depending on who is ruling where and who is in opposition where. This is best illustrated by the manner in which a grand show was made of repealing POTA by the UPA government in 2004, while incorporating all of its draconian provisions in UAPA, including ‘conspiracy’ and ‘act preparatory to the commission of a terrorist act.’ While different political parties mouth opposition to various acts of state repression depending on their political convenience, none have sought to mobilize their support base for the abrogation of these laws, for they rely on the same to secure themselves as and when and where ever they are in power. Rather, these acts have been become tools tried and tested by successive governments to suppress dissent and crush peaceful democratic movements. The recent death of Father Stan Swamy, as an under-trial prisoner in the Bhima Goregaon case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is illustrative of the gross misuse of power.

Thousands of undertrials, who are entitled to bail under the ordinary criminal trials, are denied bail and made to suffer prosecution in false cases.

The sedition laws owe its existence to our colonial masters who in order to perpetuate their colonial rule, resorted to the draconian laws of sedition. Great freedom fighters like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi suffered trial and imprisonment under the sedition laws in their fight against the British Rule. Unfortunately when they themselves were in power they also failed to repeal the ‘Sedition Law’. Instead the first constitutional amendment to India’s constitution was carried out to introduce the words ‘public purpose’ in the Sedition Law and hence grant respectability to colonial era tools of subjugating the people. Independent India had no justifiable reasons to continue the law of sedition. However, our rulers continued with the laws of sedition to stifle dissent. Recent history shows widespread misuse of the draconian laws to suppress legitimate political expressions and protests.

It is little surprise then that today we have reached a situation where students, journalists, writers, human rights activists, and members of the minority communities are by default included in the definition of a terrorist. This change in understanding of who is a terrorist and what constitutes terrorism is best exemplified the recent statement of the National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval who while addressing the new IPS recruits said that


a next front of war needs to be opened against the 'civil society.'

There is little doubt that the RSS led Modi government has ascended this mendacity to newer heights of repression. A new database launched by the online portal, *Article 14*, recently showed that 96% of the sedition cases filed against 405 Indians for criticising political leaders and governments over the last decade were registered after the Narendra Modi government first came to power in 2014. Holding posters, shouting slogans-even against CAA, social media posts and even personal communication were among the expressions considered to be seditious by the current government. The recent killing of 17 innocent miners in Nagaland is only one of the many horrendous instances in the disturbed areas, whether it is North-East or Kashmir.

The people of India however have resisted these black laws through the history by putting up valiant struggles for fulfillment of their democratic aspirations while defying all attempts by the rulers to muzzle their voices. All the aforesaid three laws UAPA, Sedition and AFSPA are the most draconian measures which

should have no place in a civilized society. As responsible citizens of India we feel that we have right to criticise the executive, the judiciary, the bureaucracy or the Armed Forces. The shoulders of those in power who govern should be broad enough to accept criticism.

During the rule of the present regime the demands for repeal of these black laws have been raised with a new vigour. It is high time that these laws are now abolished. Ordinary laws are more than sufficient to deal with the problems confronting the nation.

THEREFORE this meeting organized on behalf of PUCL Delhi, JANHASTAKSHEP, LAWYERS FOR DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY TO COMMEMORATE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY RESOLVE AND URGE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY TO FORTHWITH TAKE URGENT STEPS FOR THE REPEAL OF THE THREE BLACK LAWS I.E. 'UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT (UAPA)', 'LAW OF SEDITION UNDER SECTION 124-A IPC' AND 'ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT' (AFSPA). 

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End the impunity: On Nagaland killing

The botched Army operation in Nagaland is yet another reason why AFSPA should go

Notwithstanding the rationale provided by the Union Government and the armed forces for the horrific killing of six coal miners and the deaths of nine civilians and a soldier in the aftermath of the incident in Mon district, the residents of Nagaland, and indeed many in North-east India, will only read this incident as an outcome of impunity accorded by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or AFSPA. It is no wonder that two Chief Ministers — Conrad Sangma of Meghalaya and Neiphiu Rio of Nagaland — have immediately demanded its repeal; the Act remains in place in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, three districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and areas falling within the jurisdiction of eight police stations of the State bordering Assam, with the authority to use force or open fire to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”. The firing on the vehicle carrying the coal miners in Oting village, home to the Konyak Naga community, was carried out by soldiers of the ‘21 Para Commando Unit’, and attributed to a case of mistaken identity. This action should be problematic even within the purview of AFSPA, as soldiers who open fire can do so only after warning the person found in contravention of the law. The Army’s and later Union Minister of Home Amit Shah’s contention that the vehicle was shot at only after the miners refused to “cooperate” when asked to stop seems incongruous as this was not an action at the Myanmar border seeking to take on armed

infiltrators but an operation well within the country’s boundaries. That an ambush was purportedly laid on insurgents of the NSCN (Khaplang-Yung Aung) faction following an intelligence input and yet a civilian vehicle which offered no hostility was fired upon, suggests that the armed forces were too trigger-happy and showed barely any intent in securing order, which is the purpose of their presence in the region.

The Government has promised an inquiry by a Special Investigation Team. It is clear that the continued reliance on AFSPA as a way to impose public order must be brought to a halt and the long-pending demand for its repeal acceded to. Unfortunately, the incident could put a spanner in the Naga peace talks between the Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) and seven Naga National Political Groups for a solution that has been in the works. The secretive nature of the talks, largely due to the Government’s smoke and mirrors approach to the Peace Accord, has not helped matters either. An approach that shows genuine remorse for the actions, brings the culprits to book and seeks rapprochement with the Konyak Nagas through compensation for the violence, besides a renewed purpose to conclude the peace talks with the Naga groups, is now the only imperative.

Courtesy **Editorial, The Hindu**, December 07, 2021 

The Radical Humanist on Website

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

– Mahi Pal Singh

Bracing for probable poll violence in BJP ruled states

Faraz Ahmad

The way the first ever BJP government of Tripura flaunted its muscle, physically beating down its political opponents blatantly, unmindful of the exposes, and looted the local bodies through sheer violence preventing other political candidates to even file their nominations for the local bodies elections in the state under the leadership of its Bangladeshi migrant chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb, has touched a new low in mobocracy.

The Supreme Court taking note of the complaints of large-scale rigging ordered despatch of additional central forces to maintain law and order. But it seems to make little difference to Biplab Deb's BJP government, as videos went viral of the capture of polling booths even in the capital city of Agartala, making a mockery of democracy and elections. For instance, in one video a woman voter was seen going to the EVM to vote but before she can press the button a man standing next to the polling officer walks up, presses the button in full view of the polling officer and walks back smiling to the officer, while the poor woman agape walks away. Has any action been taken by either the BJP government or the Election Commission or the apex court which has been approached? Not yet. Nor would it ever be. That's the so-called democracy we are to experience in Modi times.

After all when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the gumption to stonewall any discussion on the repeal of the farm laws, in Parliament lest the Opposition shows him the mirror, If the Rajya Sabha Questions department strikes away, after admitting a question on the unannounced martial law against Indians living abroad coming to help

the agitating farmers, to cover the sly action of Modi's government, why would the chief ministers of BJP states, not be encouraged to shelve the rule of law too.

Back to Tripura, in the run up to the local bodies' polls, the first thing the BJP government did was to prevent candidates from CPI-M and now emerging Trinamul Congress (TMC) from filing their nominations. Thirty-six candidates, including 15 candidates of the opposition CPI-M, four of Trinamool Congress (TMC), eight of Congress, two of the AIFB, and seven Independent candidates "withdrew" their nominations, election official claimed. Ambassa Municipal Council, Jirania Nagar Panchayat, Mohanpur Municipal Council, Ranirbazar Municipal Council, Bishalgarh Municipal Council, Udaipur Municipal Council and Santirbazar Municipal Council had no opposition candidates. One report said of some 300 odd seats, BJP candidates returned uncontested on 136 seats and another put the figure at 112. No surprise then that the BJP won all but a handful of seats,

Mind you this is the UP model, repeated in Tripura. Earlier similar steam rolling was evident in Assam as well. The BJP successfully finessed it first in Uttar Pradesh where the Yogi Adityanath led BJP assaulted and even recorded instances of molesting women candidates of Samajwadi Party in the local bodies' elections. Thus, even after losing the first phase of local bodies' elections, they managed to foist their *sarpanches* and municipal chairmen of their choice through sheer flexing of muscles.

It is now obvious that Modi decided, much against his wishes, on the eve of elections to

Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab, to repeal the three controversial farm laws, not out of any compassion for the suffering farmers but from sheer expediency of retaining power in the four states it is ruling, only to save BJP's electoral prospects in the above three states. Otherwise, he remained unmoved for a year by the farmers' plight as they were kept at bay on the Delhi borders while they observed peaceful dharna opposing Modi push to corporatize agriculture. To date there is no feeling of regret or remorse for putting India's bread giver the untold hardship in bitter cold winter, sweltering summer heat, pouring monsoon and police atrocities, including putting spikes on highways to create as many and as unsurmountable obstacles in the path of these farmers, as can be.

As for Punjab, for all his effort, BJP may even score a Duck because it does not have a government in Punjab. The past results from Bihar first, then Assam then local elections in Uttar Pradesh and now in Tripura show that it needs to be in government in a state to indulge in arson, violence and all such activities strictly forbidden in poll bound states, to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere. Note for instance how the state of Jammu and Kashmir was slaughtered and turned into two union territories because on its own the BJP could never come to power there.


West Bengal, where Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress is ruling, has proved this even more conclusively. Since the BJP did not have a collaborating state machinery to back it nor the muscle power to beat down its political opponents, it faced a complete rout.

The BJP has a government in all the four states, going to polls next round. But return of power in Uttar Pradesh crucial for retaining power at the Centre in 2024, as none else than Union Home Minister Amit Shah said in a public meeting recently, it will want to win at any cost. Analysts mentioning insiders report

that the anti-incumbency factor against Yogi and now even for Modi on account of his sheer arrogance during the CAA agitation, then the farmers' dharna and even the large scale pandemic deaths has become such a political liability for the BJP that in the normal course the non or anti-BJP parties could in all, win as much as 300 plus seats, according to an inside assessment of the RSS/BJP. But the official machinery is under Yogi's command and he demonstrated in the local bodies' polls his muscle power as well. After this to expect a normal peaceful poll in the BJP-ruled states in 2022 will be living in a fool's paradise. Particularly since the Opposition has neither the bureaucracy with it nor money and muscle power.

All this is worth mentioning because it is now imperative on the part of the Opposition to stand together and fight unitedly the BJP's trend of "looting" polls through sheer violence while the institutions meant to ensure fair polls in the interest of democracy stand and watch silently this orgy of violence.

So how does the Opposition contend with this or is it willing to give a walk over to the BJP despite the political situation on the ground? The only way to counter the BJP strategy is to take a leaf from the farmers' unity, combine the Opposition strength; counter the Modi-Yogi-Amit Shah strategy with peaceful mass movement on the streets till the results of these elections are announced. It's not easy and considering that none of the main contending opposition parties, namely Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the reinvigorated Congress under Priyanka Gandhi are all fighting against each other. But on this one issue of jointly facing BJP's violence with combined peaceful *dharnas* and sit ins in every district, every town in UP maybe they can all agree if they intend to counter the BJP strategy to "loot" the polls.

Courtesy **Wordpress.com**, November 30, 2021. 

Farmers Win on Many Fronts, Media Fails on All

The repeal of the three farm laws came about not because the PM failed to 'persuade' some farmers, but because many farmers stood resolute, even as a craven media devalued their struggle and strength.

P. Sainath

What the media can never openly admit is that the largest, peaceful democratic protest the world has seen in years – certainly the greatest organised at the height of the pandemic – has won a mighty victory.

A victory that carries forward a legacy

Farmers of all kinds, men and women – including from Adivasi and Dalit communities – played a crucial role in this country's struggle for freedom. And in the 75th year of our Independence, the farmers at Delhi's gates reiterated the spirit of that great struggle.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced he is backing off and repealing the farm laws in the upcoming winter session of Parliament starting on November 29. He says he is doing so after failing to persuade 'a section of farmers despite best efforts'. Just a section, mind you, that he could not convince to accept that the three discredited farm laws were really good for them. Not a word on, or for, the over 600 farmers who have died in the course of this historic struggle. His failure, he makes it clear, is only in his skills of persuasion, in not getting that 'section of farmers' to see the light. No failure attaches to the laws themselves or to how his government rammed them through right in the middle of a pandemic.

Well, the Khalistanis, anti-nationals, bogus activists masquerading as farmers, have graduated to being 'a section of farmers' who declined to be persuaded by Modi's chilling charms. Refused to be persuaded? What was the manner and method of persuasion?

By denying them entry to the capital city to explain their grievances? By blocking them with

trenches and barbed wire? By hitting them with water cannons? By converting their camps into little gulags? By having crony media vilify the farmers every day? By running them over with vehicles – allegedly owned by a Union minister or his son? That's this government's idea of persuasion? If those were its 'best efforts' we'd hate to see its worst ones.

The Prime Minister made at least seven visits overseas this year alone (like the latest one for CoP26). But never once found the time to just drive down a few kilometres from his residence to visit tens of thousands of farmers at Delhi's gates, whose agony touched so many people, everywhere in the country.

Would that not have been a genuine effort at persuasion?



A farmer at the Singhu border on November 19, 2021. Photo: PTI

From the first month of the present protests, I was barraged with questions from media and others about *how long could they possibly hold out?* The farmers have answered that question. But they also know that this fantastic victory of theirs is a first step. That the repeal means getting the corporate foot off the cultivator's neck for now – but a raft of other problems from Minimum

Support Price and procurement, to much larger issues of economic policies, still demand resolution.

The anchors on television tell us – as if it is a stunning revelation – that this backing off by the government must have something to do with the upcoming assembly elections in five states next February.

The same media failed to tell you anything about the significance of the bypoll results in 29 assembly and 3 parliamentary constituencies announced on November 3. Read the editorials around that time – see what passed for analysis on television. They spoke of ruling parties usually winning bypolls, of some anger locally – and not just with the BJP and more such blah. Few editorials had a word to say about two factors influencing those poll results – the farmers’ protests and COVID-19 mismanagement.

Modi’s announcement yesterday shows that he at least, and at last, has wisely understood the importance of both those factors. He knows that some huge defeats have taken place in states where the farmers’ agitation is intense. States like Rajasthan and Himachal – but which a media, parroting to its audiences that it was all Punjab and Haryana, could not factor into their analyses.

When last did we see the BJP or any *sangh parivar* formation come third and fourth in two constituencies in Rajasthan? Or take the pasting they got in Himachal where they lost all three assembly and one parliament seat?

In Haryana, as the protestors put it, “the entire government from CM to DM” was there campaigning for the BJP; where the Congress foolishly put up a candidate against Abhay Chautala, who had resigned on the farmers’ issue; where Union ministers pitched in with great strength – the BJP still lost. The Congress candidate lost his deposit but managed to shave

a bit off Chautala’s margin – he still won by over 6,000 votes.

All three states felt the impact of the farmers’ protests – and unlike the corpo-crawlers, the Prime Minister has understood that. With the impact of those protests in western Uttar Pradesh, to which was added the self-inflicted damage of the appalling murders at Lakhimpur Kheri, and with elections to come in that state in perhaps 90 days from now, he saw the light.

In three months’ time, the BJP government will have to answer the question – if the opposition has the sense to raise it – of whatever happened to the doubling of farmers’ incomes by 2022? The 77th round of the NSS (National Sample Survey, 2018-19) shows a fall in the share of income from crop cultivation for farmers – forget a doubling of farmer incomes overall. It also shows an *absolute decline in real income* from crop cultivation.



Representative image of a farmer spraying fertilizer.

Photo: IFPRI/Flickr CC BY NC ND 2.0

The farmers have actually done much more than achieve that resolute demand for the repeal of the laws. Their struggle has profoundly impacted the politics of this country. As it did in 2004.

This is not at all the end of the agrarian crisis. It is the beginning of a new phase of the battle on the larger issues of that crisis. Farmer protests have been on for a long time now. And particularly strongly since 2018, when the Adivasi farmers of Maharashtra electrified the nation with their astonishing 182-km march on foot from Nashik

to Mumbai. Then too, it began with their being dismissed as ‘urban naxals’, as not real farmers, and the rest of the blah. Their march routed their vilifiers. There are many victories here today. Not the least of which is the one the farmers have scored over corporate media. On the farm issue (as on so many others), that media functioned as extra power AAA batteries (Amplifying Ambani Adani +).

Between December and next April, we will mark 200 years of the launch of two great journals (both by Raja Rammohan Roy) that could be said to have been the beginning of a truly Indian (owned and felt) press. One of which – *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* – brilliantly exposed the *angrezi* administration over the killing of Pratap Narayan Das from a whipping ordered by a judge in Comilla (now in Chittagong, Bangladesh). Roy’s powerful editorial resulted in the judge being hauled up and tried by the highest court of the time.

The Governor General reacted to this by terrorising the press. Promulgating a draconian new Press Ordinance, he sought to bring them to heel. Refusing to submit to this, Roy announced he was shutting down *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* rather than submit to what he called degrading and humiliating laws and circumstances. (And went on to take his battle to and through other journals!)

That was journalism of courage. Not the journalism of crony courage and capitulation we’ve seen on the farm issue. Pursued with a veneer of ‘concern’ for the farmers in unsigned editorials while slamming them on the op-ed pages as wealthy farmers ‘seeking socialism for the rich.’

The *Indian Express*, the *Times of India*, almost the whole spectrum of newspapers – would say, essentially, that these were rural yokels who only needed to be spoken to sweetly. The edits invariably ended on the appeal: but do not withdraw these laws, they’re really good. Ditto for much of the rest of the media.

Did any of these publications once tell their

readers – on the standoff between farmers and corporates – that Mukesh Ambani’s personal wealth of 84.5 billion dollars (*Forbes* 2021) was closing in very fast on the GSDP of the state of Punjab (about 85.5 billion)? Did they once tell you that the wealth of Ambani and Adani (who clocked \$50.5 billion) together was greater than the GSDP of either Punjab or Haryana?


Well, there are extenuating circumstances. Ambani is the biggest owner of media in India. And in those media that he does not own, probably the greatest advertiser. The wealth of these two corporate barons can be and is often written about – generally in a celebratory tone. This is the journalism of corpo-crawl.

Already there is bleating about how this cunning strategy – the backing off – will have significant impact in the Punjab Assembly polls. That Amarinder Singh has projected this as a victory he engineered by resigning from the Congress and negotiating with Modi. That this will alter the poll picture there.

But the hundreds of thousands of people in that state who have participated in that struggle know whose victory it is. The hearts of the people of Punjab are with those in the protest camps who have endured one of Delhi’s worst winters in decades, a scorching summer, rains thereafter, and miserable treatment from Mr. Modi and his captive media.

And perhaps the most important thing the protestors have achieved is this: to inspire resistance in other spheres as well, to a government that simply throws its detractors into prison or otherwise hounds and harasses them. That freely arrests citizens, including journalists, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and cracks down on independent media for ‘economic offences’.

This isn’t just a win for the farmers. It’s a win for the battle for civil liberties and human rights. A win for Indian democracy.

P. Sainath is founder and editor of the *People’s Archive of Rural India*. 

2024 polls are BJP's worry, not 2022 UP

Gilles Verniers

Why did GoI really repeal farm laws, how do we assess farmer leaders and is protest politics going to cost India?

The repeal of contentious farm laws is a significant moment and a major political defeat for the Prime Minister and his government, the government's turnaround is all the more spectacular as it is unusual for the PM to backtrack from major policy decisions, even for instrumental political reasons.

Even if the timing gives clues about the intent behind this announcement, it is not clear how BJP will convert a major policy loss into short-term electoral gains. True, it makes sense for BJP to be rid of the protest issue ahead of these polls, BJP can now hope to re-centre its campaign on more favoured themes such as nationalism, communalism, caste, welfare schemes and law and order.

But that may be a simplistic answer. In UP, as argued in a previous TOI column (bit.ly/3FEJ3U9) farm protests had become an irritant to BJP's campaign but not a major source of worry. Western UP accounts for only 44 out of 403 seats, and a divided opposition will still help the incumbent chief minister secure a second term. But in this state, BJP may be looking beyond 2022 polls. Considering that its majority in Parliament requires them to keep sweeping the Hindi belt (they won 178 seats out of the 199 they contested in 2019, and 191 out of 202 in 2014), it cannot afford to let the political space get shaped by lines of division that do not fit in its political playbook.

For instance, BJP is wary of broad class-based mobilizations that cut across caste and religious lines and speak of India's economic woes. It would rather address voters as individual recipients of state generosity or as members of groups that can be mobilized through other tropes than economic performance, such as caste, religion, or national pride.

Also the repeal does not remove the farmers' concerns about their future. The sector needs attention and farmers have made it clear that they expect the state to step up. Farmers will use their newly gained capital to keep mobilizing and make demands. In other words, the laws may be repealed for now, but the issues that mobilized farmers, including the minimum support price, remain salient.

Besides, farmers rightfully see this moment as their victory, and not as a benevolent gesture from the PM. During the movement, protesting farmers sustained all manner of hardship.

They have also endured attacks and vilification from the party in power and its ecosystem. They have been labeled as separatists, Khalistanis, terrorists, fake farmers, "andolanjeevi". They have been subjected to police brutality and state repression.

Conceding to farmers' demands after more than a year of their struggle, will not translate into much political goodwill for BJP, particularly in Punjab, where it does not have much of a presence to begin with.

Beyond electoral calculations, other factors may have informed the decision to repeal the farm laws. Farmers' protests – and their subsequent treatment by the state – became, over time, an expression of India's democratic decline. Farmers initially protested against the content of these laws as well as the reprehensible way they were bulldozed through Parliament. Much like the anti-CAA protesters that preceded them, the farmers stood for something larger than themselves. Their movement became more than the assertion of specific demands. They turned it into a larger appeal to the government to respect democratic procedures, norms and values.

(To be Contd....on Page - 22)

Lakhimpur Kheri case: Screws tighten on MoS son, SIT says killing of farmers was planned

“During the hearing, the defence counsel raised objections over including section 34 of IPC against the accused. They cited that conspiracy charge was already mentioned in the FIR,” S P Yadav, senior prosecuting officer, Lakhimpur Kheri said.

Manish Sahu



The accused have been arrested in connection with FIR number 219 which pertains to the death of the four farmers and a local journalist in Tikunia. (Express photo by Vishal Srivastav)

Firming up the case against Union MoS Ajay Mishra's son **Ashish Mishra and the 12 other** accused in the **Lakhimpur Kheri incident**, a local court Tuesday accepted several new charges raised by the revamped Special Investigation Team, including attempt to murder, even as the SIT submitted that the killing of four farmers and a journalist on October 3 was a “planned conspiracy”.

The court, however, rejected the SIT's plea to invoke the charge of “common intention” behind the incident following objections from the defence counsel.

On Monday, the SIT submitted in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court that the killings “**did not happen due to negligence or callousness**” and that actions of the accused were “deliberate with an intention to kill”.

It sought to invoke fresh charges under IPC

sections 307 (attempt to murder), 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt) and 34 (common intention) against the accused, and the Arms Act.

These charges were not part of the FIR lodged at the Tikunia police station on October 4 in connection with the killing of the farmers who were hit by a convoy of three cars, including one owned by Union MoS Ajay Mishra. The family of the journalist had said that he, too, died in the incident.

The SIT retained other charges from the FIR under IPC sections 302 (murder), 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting with lethal weapon), 149 (unlawful assembly) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).

But it dropped three relatively lesser charges under IPC sections 279 (rash driving), 338 (causing grievous hurt by acts endangering life or personal safety of others) and 304 A (death

by negligence).

The new charges come at a crucial time for Ashish Mishra whose bail application is pending with the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court. The matter has been listed for January.

All the 13 accused were on Tuesday brought to the court from Lakhimpur jail, where they are lodged, for the hearing.

“On the SIT’s request, Chief Judicial Magistrate Chinta Ram allowed IPC sections 307 and 326 to be invoked against the accused along with sections 3, 25, 30 and 35 of the Arms Act. During the hearing (Tuesday), the defence counsel raised objections over including section 34 of IPC against the accused. They cited that conspiracy charge was already mentioned in the FIR. After hearing both sides, the court allowed the objection,” said S P Yadav, senior prosecuting officer, Lakhimpur Kheri.

“The SIT said it found during investigation that the crime did not happen due to negligence but there was a deliberate and planned conspiracy with intention to kill,” he said.

On November 17, the Supreme Court

upgraded the SIT by incorporating three IPS officers — S B Shiradkar, Padmaja Chauhan and Preetinder Singh — “to preserve the faith and trust of people in the criminal administration of the justice system”. It also appointed retired Punjab and Haryana High Court judge, Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain, to monitor the probe.

The FIR on the killing of farmers was lodged by Bahraich resident Jagjeet Singh against Ashish Mishra and 15-20 unidentified persons on various charges, including murder, rioting, murder and criminal conspiracy.

The second FIR was lodged by a local resident, Sumit Jaiswal, against unidentified miscreants who allegedly beat to death the three others killed that day, including two BJP leaders and a driver of one of the vehicles.

Four persons have been arrested in the case registered under various IPC sections, including 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others).

Courtesy **Indian Express**, December 15, 2021.

2024 polls are BJP's worry, not...

Contd. from page - (20)

The form of protests themselves – the creation of a public democratic egalitarian space shared by both men and women – and the state reaction became emblematic of the resilience of popular democratic aspirations in the face of institutional democratic backsliding. Much of the international media coverage of the protests interpreted it thus and affected the PM’s image abroad.

The questions raised by farmers about democratic norms and procedures were not addressed in the Friday speech. By making a surprise announcement on a day of special religious significance, the PM stuck to the unilateralism that characterizes his style of governance. The intervention also fell short of a proper apology, referring instead to the government’s inability to make a small minority of farmers understand the purity of its intention.

The decision to repeal the farm laws stems from an array of reasons rather than simple electoral calculations. But the fact that the Prime Minister chose to let his image of a strong leader take a hit instead of standing firmly by a decision – as he usually does – indicates that the protesters struck sensitive chords that made the party in power anxious about its future.

This moment shows that civic engagements can be effective against the government’s will and could encourage other movements to emerge along similar lines.

The writer is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Ashoka University. Views are personal.

Courtesy **The Times of India**, 22 November 2021. 

Ajay Mishra Teni's position is untenable

Teni's statements about the incident, the SC's intervention, his remarks on protesting farmers, and the language he has used, all point to the need for him to step down

It speaks of the essential fickleness of our newsrooms and the shortlived length of public outrage that the most damning developments in the Lakhimpur Kheri case have barely attracted our nation attention.

But if you follow what's happening in the Supreme Court (SC), in the pursuit of justice for the farmers crushed under a car owned by the son of minister of state for home, Ajay Mishra Teni – and in the pursuit of justice for the three Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers subsequently killed by a irate mob – the incontrovertible conclusion is that the minister must be sacked.

To start with, the minister, who holds a constitutional post and a portfolio related to the most sensitive issues of national security and law and order, seems to have lied on record to the Indian people.

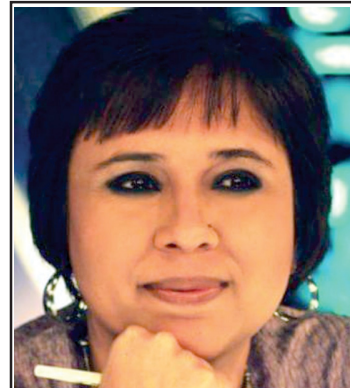
On October 5, Teni asserted that his son Ashish Mishra (now in custody), was not even present at the spot in Uttar Pradesh (UP) where the ghastly tragedy unfolded. In fact, he went on to argue that had his son been present in their car (the ownership was never disputed), he would never have survived the mob attack that followed.

BJP spokespersons took their cue from these statements and began echoing the line in public.

By the admissions that have been made in court and reported widely, the UP government's probe has now established that there is "clinching evidence" of Ashish Mishra's presence at the site in Lakhimpur Kheri. Investigators have spoken of how there is an entire hour that day that Mishra junior is unable to account for.

Several witnesses have gone on record to

talk of how Mishra junior escaped into the sugarcane fields right after the Thar vehicle mowed down the farmers walking on the narrow, dusty pathway ahead.



Barkha Dutt

You could argue that the minister did not willfully lie and claim that he was misled by his son. Even so, the fact that his statements repeated multiple times, have been found to be falsehoods, casts a shadow over both his credibility and authority. Worse, in a clear contravention of his position as the Union minister of state for home, he publicly criticized the UP police, blaming them both for allowing a pathway to the protesting farmers and for the death of Shyam Sundar, one of the BJP workers who was killed.

I have always argued that Teni should have been asked to go right at the beginning, if the BJP wants to do right by its men who were beaten to death by an angry mob after the minister's son's car ran their comrades over.

But now even the lawyer for Sundar, Arun Bhardwaj, has expressed a lack of faith in the probe being run by the special investigations team in UP, demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry instead.

(To be Contd....on Page - 25)

Lawyer-Activist Sudha Bharadwaj Released After 3 Years In Jail

The case is yet to go to trial, and Ms Bharadwaj was released from the Byculla women's prison after the NIA court set bail conditions yesterday.

Akhil Kumar

Mumbai: Lawyer-activist Sudha Bharadwaj, one of the 16 people arrested in the Elgar Parishad case, was released this morning after spending over three years in jail. The Supreme Court had two days ago rejected the National Investigation Agency's plea to stay the default bail granted to her by the Bombay High Court on December 1. "We see no reason to interfere with the High Court order. Plea dismissed," a bench of Justices UU Lalit, SR Bhat, and Bela M Trivedi had said, clearing her release.

Ms Bharadwaj was released from the Byculla women's prison after the NIA court set bail conditions yesterday. She is the first to be granted default bail in the case.

The case was earlier handled by the Pune Police and was later taken over by the NIA. She was initially lodged at Pune's Yerwada prison when the state police were investigating the case and was moved to the Byculla women's prison after the NIA took over. The case is yet to go to trial.

As part of her bail conditions, a special NIA court had said that the 60-year-old activist will have to submit her passport and stay in Mumbai. She has to seek permission from the court to leave city limits.

Ms Bharadwaj can't interact with the media on the case, the special court had said. Advocate Yug Mohit Chaudhry, appearing for her, had opposed the condition stating that this is an infringement of her freedom of speech. She was released on a provisional cash bail of Rs. 50,000 and has been directed to visit the nearest police station - physically or through a video

call - every fortnight.

She has also been directed to not establish any kind of contact with her co-accused in the case, and not make any international calls.

Ms Bharadwaj was arrested on August 28, 2018, and was later placed under house arrest. She was then taken into custody on October 27, 2018.

The case was filed over alleged inflammatory speeches delivered at the Elgar Parishad conclave on December 31, 2017.

The speeches, police had claimed, triggered violence near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial located on the city's outskirts the next day. The police had also alleged that the conclave was backed by Maoists.

The Bombay High Court had granted bail to Ms Bharadwaj after she had pointed out that Pune additional sessions judge K.D. Vadane, who had taken cognisance of the police charge sheet in the case filed in 2019, was not authorised to do so as his court was not notified as a 'special court' under Section 22 of the NIA Act.

The Bombay High Court had dismissed her plea for interim bail on medical grounds in August last year where she had stated that she suffered from co-morbidities, such as diabetes and hypertension, which put her at higher risk of contracting Covid while at the prison where an inmate had tested positive at that time.

Priest-activist Stan Swamy, 84, also arrested under the anti-terror law UAPA in the Elgar Parishad case last year, died in July in the midst of the fight for bail on

health grounds.

Another accused in the case, political activist and poet Varavara Rao, was granted bail on medical grounds earlier this year.

Along with Ms Bharadwaj, eight other accused - Sudhir Dawale, Varavara Rao, Rona Wilson, Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Vernon Gonsalves, and Arun Ferreira - had applied for bail on similar grounds but the High Court had rejected their applications stating that the applications were not filed on time and hence could be considered.

54 Comments Rights group People's Union for Civil Liberties welcomed the default bail granted to Sudha Bharadwaj and said that it sees it "as a vindication of the

long campaign against the UAPA by the PUCL and other allied groups. It indicates a shift in the larger public mood and judicial mindset towards acknowledging the UAPA as an unjust and undemocratic tool to stifle any viewpoint which the government considers problematic." Dr. V. Suresh, General Secretary of PUCL, said that the organisation's "ultimate objective" is the repeal of the controversial anti-terror law UAPA and ensure the release of all who have been "unjustly imprisoned" under it. The civil rights organisation is also campaigning for the withdrawal of prosecution against all 16 accused in the Bhima Koregaon case.

Courtesy NDTV, December 09, 2021 

Ajay Mishra Teni's position is...

Contd. from page - (23)

The other claim made in the immediate days after the incident – that journalist Raman Kashyap was killed by the farmers who turned violent – has also been outed in court as a lie. Kashyap's father had said from the first day that his son's body bore the bruises of having been dragged under the same vehicle responsible for the murder of the four farmers.

And three are now reports that the forensics study shows that the weapons of three of the accused were discharged, although the time at which they were used is not clear. But this too overturns the claims that no firearms were discharged.

The court has been scathing in its observations, pointing to the confusion created by filing two different but overlapping First Information Reports (FIRs). The bench, headed by the chief justice, has remarked that the way the evidence is being collected seems designed to protect the "main accused". The court is leaning towards deploying judges from outside the state to monitor the probe.

We forget now about the minister's own speech warning the protesting farmers – who had put up posters against him – that he could "discipline them in two minutes". It was an address made roughly a week before the vehicles mowed through the farmers. In it, Teni can be heard saying that if he wished, he could ensure that the farmers would have to leave "not only Palia, but Lakhimpur itself".

Even then, the language used by the minister was unconscionable. But with the SC's criticism and the hollowness of his claims have been shown up by a judicial process. Ajay Mishra Teni cannot – and must now – continue as minister of state for home.

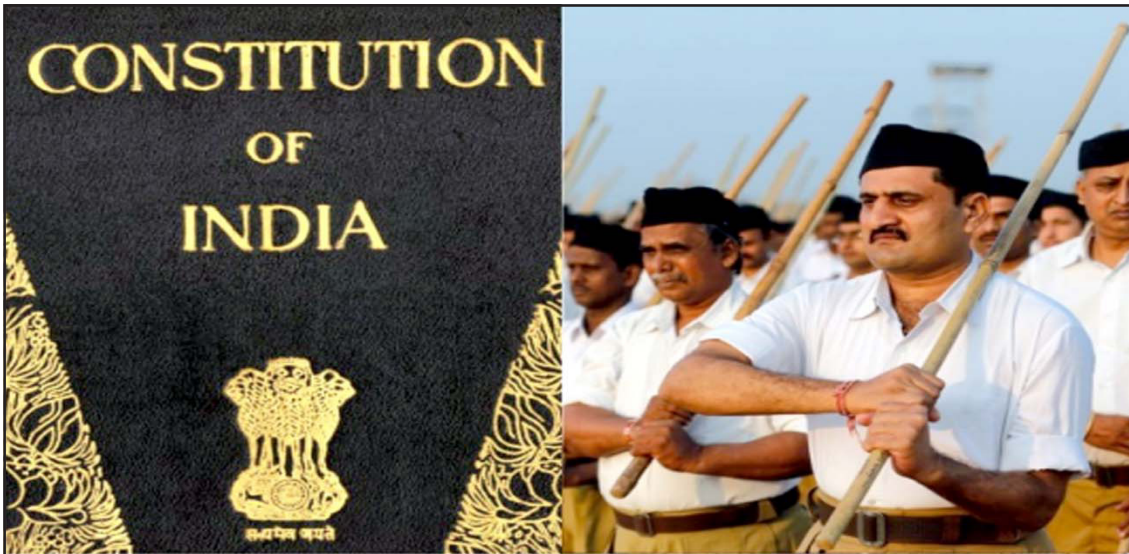
Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.

Courtesy Hindustan Times, November 13, 2021. 

How RSS denigrated the Constitution

A peep into its archives on Constitution Day

Shamsul Islam



The Constituent Assembly (CA) of India finalised the Constitution of India on November 26, 1949, a date which is celebrated now every year as Constitution Day. This Constitution promised a new-born Indian Republic a polity based on democracy, justice, egalitarianism and rule of law. However, RSS was greatly annoyed. Four days after the historic event of approval of it, the RSS English mouth-piece, *Organiser* in an editorial on November 30, 1949, complained:

“But in our Constitution, there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu’s Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.”

Thus, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) wanted this Constitution to be replaced

by Manusmriti or Manu Code which is known for its derogatory and inhuman references to Sudras, Untouchables and women. By demanding promulgation of the laws of Manu in independent India RSS was simply following its mentor, philosopher and guide VD Savarkar. According to him,

“Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worship-able after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manusmriti. Today Manusmriti is Hindu Law.”

RSS continued to hate the Indian Constitution despite it being regarded as one of the finest documents upholding principles of equality and justice, globally. The most prominent ideologue of RSS, MS Golwalkar declared it to be anti-

Hindu. The collection of his writings Bunch of Thoughts which is a Bible for the RSS cadres carries the following statement against the Constitution.

“Our Constitution too is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of Western countries. It has absolutely nothing which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is?”

What kind of civilization the RSS and Hindutva camp want to build by enforcing the laws of Manu, can be known by having a glimpse of the laws prescribed by Manu for the lower castes/Untouchables and women. Some of these dehumanising and degenerate laws, which are presented here, are self-explanatory.

Laws of Manu concerning Dalits/Untouchables

[This selection of Manu’s Codes is from F. Max Muller, Laws of Manu (Delhi: LP Publications, 1996; first published in 1886). The bracket after each code incorporates the number of chapter/number of code according to the above edition.]

1. For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds (the divine one) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thighs and his feet. (I/31)
2. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (I/91)
3. Once-born man (a Sudra), who insults a twice-born man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out; for he is of low origin. (VIII/270)
4. If he mentions the names and castes (jati) of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be

thrust red-hot into his mouth. (VIII/271)

5. If he arrogantly teaches Brahmanas their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. (VIII/272)
6. With whatever limb a man of a low caste does hurt to (a man of the three) highest (castes), even that limb shall be cut off; that is the teaching of Manu. (VIII/279)
7. He who raises his hand or a stick, shall have his hand cut off; he who in anger kicks with his foot, shall have his foot cut off. (VIII/280)
8. A low-caste man who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of a high caste, shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or (the king) shall cause his buttock to be gashed. (VIII/281)

As per the Manu Code if Sudras are to be given the most stringent punishments for even petty violations/actions, the same Code of Manu is very lenient towards Brahmins. Shloka 380 in Chapter VIII bestowing profound love on Brahmins decrees:

“Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt.”

Laws of Manu concerning women

1. Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one’s control. (IX/2)
2. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (IX/3)
3. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling

- (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. (IX/5)
4. Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives. (IX/6)
 5. No man can completely guard women by force; but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:
 6. Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.
 7. Women, confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants, are not (well) guarded; but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves, are well guarded. (IX/12)
 8. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), '(It is enough that) he is a man,' they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. (IX/14)
 9. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). (IX/15)
 10. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (IX/17)
 11. For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule. (IX/18)

Reproduced parts of Manu Code above need no further elaboration and commentary. They are too glaringly venomous, fascist and degenerated against Untouchables who are referred to as Sudras by Manu.

It is a hugely sad time for democratic-secular Republic of India that RSS-BJP rulers who worship Manusmriti and want to undo the present Indian polity would be putting up a farcical show of celebrating the Constitution Day. The nation must be at guard to defend the Constitution from wolves in the attire of sheep!

**Views expressed are the author's own.*

Courtesy **Sabrang**, 26 Nov 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, 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

Attacks on Christians in Karnataka: Police colluded with Hindutva groups, finds report

Human rights organisation People's Union for Civil Liberties has documented 39 incidents of violence against the community.



File photo: Christians stage a protest against attacks on churches in Delhi in 2015. | Sajjad Hussain/AFP

Scroll Staff

Karnataka's Mandya city this January, a group of Christians were attacked near their home, allegedly by members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a pastor, named Harish, said in his testimony. He claimed that, instead of the attackers, the police detained some of the Christians.

The pastor said that after the incident, he went to the police station with some other people. "The mob was also present there, and they continued to verbally abuse and threaten some women who were trying to stand up for themselves," the pastor said.

Pastor Harish said he tried to file a complaint against the attackers but was not allowed to do so. Instead, the police seized a laptop belonging to a Christian woman and threatened to plant evidence on it, the pastor alleged.

"Even if there is no evidence, we know how to make the case against you very strong so the Christians will never come out of jail," the pastor quoted a police inspector as saying.

In another incident that took place in Udupi in September, the police refused to give the complainants an acknowledgement that they had registered a complaint against a mob that had attacked them during a prayer meet.

Pastor Vinay, who conducted the prayer meeting, said that within 15 minutes of the ceremony starting, a group of about 30 men barged into the venue and started beating worshippers.

"Many of our believers sustained bruises and injuries from this violence. Two people's clothes were torn including a woman's

The police in Karnataka colluded with Hindutva groups that attacked Christian worshippers in the state, said a report released by the People's Union for Civil Liberties on Tuesday.

In the report, the People's Union for Civil Liberties' Karnataka unit documented 39 incidents of violence against Christians in the state this from January to November. It includes the testimonies of pastors who conducted prayers that were disrupted by Hindutva mobs.

The document added that many instances of violence against Christians go unreported.

The report said that Karnataka has seen a sharp increase in violent attacks led by Hindutva groups on Christians during prayer meetings.

"While these attacks on the face of it appear to be geographically spread out, in reality, they arise out of a far sinister concerted political project of reducing Christians to second-class citizens who must not be allowed to exercise their constitutionally provided fundamental right of religion," the report said.

In one such incident, which took place in

blouse,” the pastor said.

Soon after that, the police entered the prayer hall and asked Christian worshippers why they were praying on Ganesh Chaturthi. “I tried to explain that our prayer hall, which we used for 10 years, was suddenly unavailable, and there is a weekend curfew that will not allow us to have our prayer on Sunday,” the pastor was quoted as saying in the report.

The pastor said that when he went to the police station to file a complaint against the attackers, he learnt that a first information report had been filed against him instead.

The police also told the worshippers that they could not protect them. “There will be a law-and-order problem, so it is better if we don’t do prayer meetings at all,” the pastor quoted the police as saying. He added that two weeks after the incident, prayers were completely stopped.

How mobs operate

After studying incidents of violence against Christians in Karnataka, the People’s Union for Civil Liberties came up with a pattern of how mobs function.

First, the leaders of Hindutva groups organise a mob and identify places in their locality where Sunday prayers take place. Then, the mob informs the local police station of the attack that they will carry out, the report said.

The human rights groups added that 25 to 30 people from the mob force their way into the place of worship, accuse pastors of converting Hindus to Christianity. They hurl casteist abuses and beat people with rods and sticks, the report found. Women are attacked “physically, verbally and sexually”, the report said.

Soon after, the police enter, use abusive language with worshippers and “violently demand identity documents”, the People’s Union for Civil Liberties said.

The group, citing victims of attacks, said

that in most cases, the police enter prayer halls just minutes after mobs. “This led many Christians to believe that the police knew that the attack would happen, and were supporting them [mobs] in their crusade against Christianity,” the report said.

The People’s Union for Civil Liberties found in its study that instead of arresting the attackers, they arrest pastors and worshippers, charging them under sections such as 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the Indian Penal Code.

Casteist abuses

The People’s Union for Civil Liberties’ report found a common pattern in incidents where Christian prayers were disrupted – the use of casteist slurs.

“These casteist slurs must be seen in the context that Christians in rural India largely comprise of daily wage workers, agricultural labourers and people from Dalit communities,” the report said.

The group also pointed out that when mobs attack churches, the first thing they do is ask worshippers the caste into which they were born and their family names.

“The situation soon escalates, as they abuse the pastor and believers by using derogatory words and phrases that insult people based on their castes and casteist stereotypes,” it said.

The report by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties highlighted that Christians in rural and semi-rural areas of Karnataka are from poor and lower caste communities. “Prayer meetings held on Sunday mornings are important spaces that provide support and a sense of belongingness,” the report added.

The People’s Union for Civil Liberties said Hindutva groups threatening to shut down these prayer meetings rob an entire community of its right to dignity and the right to life.

(To be Contd....on Page - 32)

Don Quixotes Of Hinduism

P.A.S. Prasad

Apart from the lumpen hooligans operating with state patronage vandalising and terrorising venues and groups of people for their actions utterances and opinions which they claim go against views of Hindutva according to their lights, we are seeing on face book a few westerners like Francois Gautier Gaya Spiga, and others and some Indians too on the same band wagon who lament on the stark decay of Hinduism through the centuries of Indian history due to wanton destruction at the hands esp. of Muslim invaders. It is really not understood why they have undertaken this task of enlightening the people of this country about the deplorable state of the glory that was Hinduism, reminding us the immortal all time classic of Cervantes, Don Quixote.

Right from Alaxander down the centuries hordes of invaders arrived in India, massacred, destroyed, enslaved and carried away loots of enormous wealth and subjected people to horrendous misery. But the magic and miracle of Hinduism survived, the continuity of ancient civilisation, ancient time cities like Varanasi survived to this day where as other civilisations and cultures perished and obliterated leaving ruins and structures as a reminder and historical evidence of a vanished civilisation. It is hoped that the foreign and Indian Don Quixote's bear this in mind before espousing the cause of Hinduism.

The ingrained core values of Hinduism have sustained all the onslaughts. The inclusive mindset of the population is evident even today, in spite of brainwashing and fear mongering of vested political interests. The core values can be summed up as enshrined in the ancient texts as under:

1. Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam from the Maha Upanishad meaning the world is one family. This is also inscribed on the entrance to

the Parliament House.

2. Akasath Patitam Toyam Yadhagachithi Saagaram

Sarva deva namaskaram Kesavam pratigachhati (from Mantra Pushpam of Itireya Brahmana, Yajurveda, meaning just as the water falling from the sky joins the sea in its course, the prayers to all gods reach Kesava, God almighty.

Hence the Hindu does not make any distinction between one God or the other, he sees God in many forms, worships stones, trees, rivers oceans, mountains and any object with reverence as his prayers ultimately reach the feet of the lord. Even if a Hindu prays at a Dargah, Church or a Synagoge or a tribal goddess shaped in stone in a forest, it is the same reaching Kesava .. apart from the all encompassing view taken in core Hindu philosophy the all inclusiveness is amply crystal clear if looked at the nine systems of Hinduism. Out of nine sutras, six have no concept of God. One system Mimasa is partly atheist and partly theist. Only the yoga and Vedanta systems propound God and reincarnation. The totally materialistic Charvaka principles enunciated by Brihaspati is also one of the nine. So Hinduism accepts atheism in as much as six clear systems. We learn from Ramayana that in king Dasaratha's Court.

Atheist Jabali flourished. Hindu dharma accepts all points of views without conflict.

Hence historically India sheltered many foreigners with warm hospitality. Scholars from far off lands like China came to learn through discourse. Persecuted Parsis and Iranis who sought shelter in India were later on integrated fully and identified with India.

Those who point out the atrocities of Muslim invaders should also take into consideration the signal contribution of Muslims in India in all

walks of life. Even Aurangzeb had a Hindu commander-in-chief and Shivaji had many Muslims in his army. The chief ministers of Hyder Ali and Tipu were Hindu brahmins. The Golconda fort of the Muslim rulers could not be conquered by Aurangzeb due to the brahmin chief ministers of the Golconda nawab, Akkanna and Madanna as long as they were alive.

Their contribution to arts, music and dance continues till today, esp. some Muslim Ustaads had a great reverence for goddess Saraswati as she was the embodiment of music. When the Bijapur sultan in the Deccan penned a treatise on Indian music the first page was named Ganesh Vandana, i.e., invocation to lord Ganesh followed similarly in the next page to goddess Saraswati. In modern times music director Naushad in a press meet stated that his success was due to *maa* Saraswati ki Kripa. When queried why Ustaad Bismillah Khan did not accept lucrative offers from the USA, he said that his primary duty was to render the early morning wake up call on his shehanai to Viswa baba, i.e. Kashi Viswanath. His family had been devoted for generations in the temple duty. He was a devout Muslim offering prayers five times a day. So also was our ex-president much respected Abdul Kalam whose family was attending to the Rameswaram temple.

Many Hindus visit Muslim *dargahs* and offer *chaddars* in reverence. The list is endless. There are many Muslim scholars highly well versed in Hindu scriptures and mythology starting from Dara Shikoh. Even today the Omar Alisha Pittham foundation in Kakinada Andhra Pradesh has been actively engaged in research of Hindu scriptures for a few generations. I know many Muslim boys and girls learning Sanskrit as second language in schools. But we do not find such deep interest on the part of Hindus evincing such keen interest in Muslim and Christian religious texts.

Summing up, stating from Max Mueller and Romain Rolland to our own Vivekananda, and S. Radhakrishnan and other authorities Hinduism, the good and bad in it have been fully and exhaustively explained.

There is no further need for the modern day Don Quixote's to rescue Hinduism which has never been in distress nor will it ever be. It has an invincible built in armour making it timeless. 🌈

Contd. from page - (30)

Attacks on Christians in Karnataka...

Disproving claims of mass conversion

The report highlighted the small share of Christian population in India to deflate the claim of forced mass conversion.

It said that according to the 1971 Census, Christians comprised 2.60% of the population of India. "In 1981 they [Christians] were 2.44%, in 1991 2.33%, in 2001 2.18% and at present, they are 2.30%," the report said.

The document added that as per the 2011 Census, Christians accounted for 1.87% of the population. "Thus, the statistics do nothing to suggest that the Christian population is increasing," the report said.

The report pointed out that Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has publicly spoken about his plan to table an anti-conversion Bill in the Assembly.

The People's Union for Civil Liberties added in its report: "Evidently, without an increased population there is nothing to substantiate the claim of forced mass conversions. At the very outset these numbers are proof that forced mass conversion is a myth, a bogey that is being used to criminalise the practice of faith by Christians."

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Dec 14, 2021. 🌈

Menace of Saffronisation of Education

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee

On 4th November 1948 Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a great teacher by all parameters, was appointed Chairman of University Education Commission. He then drew (i) an outline of the aim of education and (ii) contours of the role of state in education in a democracy which deserves to be remembered by us all as our guideline and I quote:

“Freedom of individual development is the basis of democracy. Exclusive control of education by the State has been an important factor in facilitating the maintenance of totalitarian tyrannies. In such States institutions of higher learning controlled and managed by governmental agencies act like mercenaries, promote the political purposes of the State, make them acceptable to an increasing number of their population and supply them with the weapons they need. We must resist, in the interests of our own democracy, the trend towards the governmental domination of the educational process.”

“Higher education is, undoubtedly, an obligation of the State but State aid is not to be confused with State control over academic policies and practices. Intellectual progress demands the maintenance of the spirit of free inquiry. The pursuit and practice of truth regardless of consequences has been the ambition of universities. Their prayer is that of the dying Goethe: ‘More light’, or that of Ajax in the mist ‘Light, though I perish in the light.’”

“The respect in which the universities of Great Britain are held is due to the freedom from governmental interference which they enjoy constitutionally and actually. Our universities should be released from the control of politics.”

“All education is expected to be liberal. It should free us from the shackles of ignorance, prejudice and unfounded belief. If we are incapable of achieving the good life, it is due to faults in our inward being, to the darkness in us. The process of education is the slow conquering

of this darkness. To lead us from darkness to light, to free us from every kind of domination except that of reason, is the aim of education.”

Dr. Radhakrishnan was only reaffirming in his own way what Rabindranath Tagore had said in 1920 while conceptualising Viswa Bharati University before its establishment at Shantiniketan on 23rd December, 1921. Tagore favoured inviting educationists from all over the world to teach and enrich our store of global knowledge there as he was always opposed to narrow parochial and nationalistic education and thus Viswa Bharati ultimately became a centre of open ended international cooperation in education and culture. Viswa Bharati was then acclaimed as a novel educational institution emulated all over the world. Much later in 2002 an 11 Judge bench of Supreme Court of India with respect quoted Dr. Radhakrishnan’s those words in TMA Pai Foundation vs State of Karnataka reported in (2002) 8 Supreme Court Cases 481.

What was said by Dr. Radhakrishnan in the context of University education is also true and applicable to all levels of education and any deviation therefrom deserves to be deprecated, discouraged and effectively resisted.

Freedom of and freedom in education are inalienable natural human rights in a true democracy for nurturing and enhancing knowledge and intellect of human resources in converting other material resources to human use to facilitate more convenient and quality living and betterment of human lives. In India right to education has been made both a legal and a constitutional fundamental right. Intellectual ability need chiselling to sharpen and enhance its power and consequential usefulness. Education does that chiselling and to achieve that object education must be (a) open, (b) independent and (c) secular. “Open” means and should mean that all doors and windows must be kept open to facilitate

unhindered entry and uninhibited reception of the light of knowledge and wisdom from each and all sources. “Independent” must mean that all institutions imparting education must be free from all kinds of political or government shackles and interference. “Secular” means that there should be no religionisation or politicisation of education. Peace and tranquillity must also prevail and be ensured in all campuses of all educational institutions and each and all disruptive activity thereat should be prevented and discouraged by all stakeholders at all costs. There cannot be any denying of the fact that any nation truly believing in and practising “democracy” must ensure that the state enjoying sovereign power faithfully performs its duty to keep education “open”, “independent” and “secular”. Any dereliction of that duty on the part of the State would be subversive of and anti-democracy. Institution imparting education becoming subservient in any manner to any political regime can hardly be expected to be able to impart open or secular education.

Secularism has been declared to be a basic feature of Indian constitution i.e., it is not amenable to any alteration by any legislative means. Combined reading of Articles 28 and 30 of our constitution unambiguously indicate that the state cannot be reduced directly or indirectly to be a vehicle and home ground of any religious activity or propagation. The state also does not owe any loyalty to any particular religion although the state is not irreligious or anti-religion. Article 246 read with 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution had made India a federal state with a tilt in favour of Parliament as against the State Legislative Assembly but the Constituent Assembly never thought of incremental “shrinking federalism” as India has for some time now been experiencing since 2014 onwards not only in the field of education but also in other areas of state activity. Introduction of the word “secular” in the preamble to the Constitution by means of 42nd amendment may anytime face a Parliamentary

surgery to suit the object of the reigning political regime at the centre. I feel quite distraught in making adverse remarks against the present government at the centre who only after commanding huge majority came to power but unfortunately for us this huge majority instead of being used to unite the people more and to make people more secular is being used as a divisive power to promote religionisation and politicisation to the detriment of our future and age long worldwide reputation of being one of the most tolerant democracies.

Neither in the British regime, nor in the post independence period of ruling Congress Party, Indians had hardly any occasion to express apprehension about any governmental invasion to politicise or religionise control and/or administration of educational institutions including in the matter of determining syllabus and contents of text books. Freedom of competent and expert educationists in the field was with due respect and honour preserved. There was hardly any noticeable or regrettable interference in openness, independence and secular education by the state. It is rather unfortunate that the said position is no longer true. During National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-I regime Murli Manohar Joshi being in charge of Ministry of Human Resources first sought to saffronise the syllabus of various levels of education. He also introduced subjects based on only faith lacking in any scientific support at various levels of education. Mr. Joshi’s agenda remained unfulfilled because of timely resistance from concerned stakeholders. Then NDA did not have a single party majority which they have garnered now. The things are taking a turn to incremental implementation of their major agenda of saffronisation in education. The government at the centre has obviously taken a vow to dislodge our faith and belief in open, independent and secular education by introducing a new discipline and curricula of their own choice. Interference in syllabus and text books has now been more pronounced. Pieces to nurture and cultivate

openness and secularism are being replaced by pieces of politically, religiously and culturally of toxic Hindu nature. Students are being sought to be pushed to become frogs in the well on the pretext of so-called heritage and narrow nationalism and patriotism.

The undesirable governmental interference started showing its ugly face slowly but steadily. Initial innocuous baby steps later turned into sinister large steps intended to almost derail the long established wide open system. These ugly steps are also both governmental and non-governmental. It is rather unfortunate that it is now genuinely apprehended that the educational institutions at all levels and particularly at the college and university levels are going to slowly lose their independence in the matters of their control and administration. It is also apprehended that education at all levels will lose its secular character as all possible steps are being experimented to facilitate religionisation and such steps are quite visible in the educational institutions. Currently the educationists of good worldwide repute are of the view that: (a) where the government has a formal role the same is being converted into where the government will have substantive role, and, (b) academic-governance in India remains so deeply vulnerable to the opinions of the ruling government. There are indeed instances of the present central government indulging in directly or indirectly removal of the heads of the educational institutions to replace them with people known to be close to the ruling party. The process began with appointment of one Mr. Chauhan, a less known TV serial actor at the top of Pune Film Institute and exit of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen from Nalanda University. Very recently political theorist and journalist Pratap Bhanu Mehta had to say good bye to Ashoka University. These are only few random instances. Next area of planned invasion and interference has been syllabus and text books at all levels of education with a view to baptise the tender and younger minds in ruling

party's beliefs and disbeliefs. Reference may be made to paragraph 4.28 of National Education Policy, 2020 which proposes to introduce national text books after providing scheme for regulation and governance in its paragraph 06. NEP 2020 also talks about (i) one country one syllabus system, and (ii) a single regulator in its paragraph 20.4 for higher education. NEP 2020 provides for Indian Philosophy in paragraph 6.13 which is bound to be narrow and parochial. All these indicate absolute centralisation glued to a particular agenda ignoring the fact that education as a subject for legislation appears in the Concurrent list and not in Central list of our constitution. Recently most heinous political onslaught has been on syllabus by excluding secular pieces and replacing them with highly toxic non secular pieces. History for the students is also being rewritten on the basis of beliefs and faiths of a particular political party to christen the students in their philosophy to serve their political future. They are rewriting school text books to accord Veer Savarkar a larger role in Indian freedom struggle than Mahatma Gandhi. In pursuit of virile and strong Hindu nation they are asking that 19th century Arya Samaj ideologue Dayanand Saraswati be anointed "Father of Nation" in place of M.K. Gandhi. Very recently it is reported that Indian institute of Management-A and Veer Narmad South Gujarat University (VNSGU) at Surat are poised to introduce curriculum based on Hindutva studies. Beginning on 13 November, 2021 at IIM-A course on Bhagwat Gita would be exclusively for corporate leaders to enable them to apply Lord Krishna's values and ethics. VNSGU would introduce a two year post-graduate course on Hindu studies from the next academic session 2022-23. Simultaneously it is also being observed that the rather peaceful campus atmosphere of the Universities and colleges are being spoiled by the invasive activities of political agencies of a particular political party.

(To be Contd....on Page - 42)

New Physics

Summarized by:
Vinod Jain

Classical physics pictured the world as follows: There are indivisible particles of matter, each having a constant mass. The particles persist through all time, each occupying a definite point in space, at each instant of time. Each particle exerts force upon other particles, the effect of which is to produce acceleration, that is, deviation of the particles from their respective rectilinear paths. Acceleration is inversely proportional to the mass of material bodies. All physical systems — stars, planets, stones, trees, animals, men — are more or less complicated combinations of indivisible material particles, having continuity in space and time, exercising mutual influence, according to strictly deterministic laws.

The world of new physics is built of protons and electrons. They are constituents of the material particle — atom — of classical physics. As its constituents, protons and electrons must be also material entities. But they, particularly the electron, which may turn out to be the more basic unit, are not like the material particles of classical physics, because they do not seem to have continuity in space and time; and in the absence of continuity, it is not possible to assert that their mutual interactions are governed by any strictly deterministic law.

On the face of it, the difference appears to be considerable, even fundamental. Ponderable matter is gone. The world of new physics is made of an attenuated (weaker) stuff which hovers on the boundary line between matter and energy. The tangible (definite or real) units of this elusive stuff, having no simple location in space and continuity in time, appear to defy determinism. If determinism goes, the mechanistic conception of the Universe must also go. On the top of all this the concepts of space and time have undergone a veritably revolutionary change. Absolute space

and the uniform flow of time are gone. Spacial and temporal separation between two objects are not constant for all observers. The further we go, the picture becomes even more perplexing. Space is curved. Time has no independent existence. It is mixed up with space. Indeed, space, time, matter — all three are merged into a four-dimensional continuum, in which events take place.

Ether has been thrown out of the new world of physics; and the same disgrace has befallen an older member of the cosmos, namely, Newton's "Force of Gravitation". Most disconcerting of all, however, is the discovery that energy does not flow continuously; it has an atomic structure. The quantum phenomena have until now defied all efforts for the coordination of the entire body of modern physical knowledge into a logical system, having a relation of continuity with the theories of classical physics. Not only are the quantum phenomena irreconcilable with old physical ideas; they even contradict the Theory of Relativity. While the Theory of Relativity brings out the fact of continuity underlying the cosmic mechanism, and running through all cosmic events, the quantum phenomena indicate discontinuity.

These puzzling facts can be easily woven into a highly mystifying world picture in support of the contention that new physics has completely outmoded the naive notions of the past, repudiated the crude, mechanistic, determinist, materialist doctrines, and cleared the ground for a mystic view of the world — for the resurrection of religion on a scientific basis.

There is, however, nothing so very new in new physics. If we look at the world of new physics closely, we find old friends in new guise. Of course, the new physical theories represent a tremendous advance upon the theories of classical

physics. In that sense, they are certainly new. Our knowledge of the world, macrocosmically as well as microcosmically, has grown amazingly in consequence of the discoveries made during the last half century of physical research. But new theories are only a continuation of old theories; they are constructed on the basis of the latter. They are not mutually exclusive. Old theories are not discarded as wrong. In the light of new data, accumulated in course of the investigation carried on in accordance with the old theories, they have been amended, modified, refined, elaborated.

The Theory of Relativity and the Quantum Theory constitute new physics. Generally speaking, the former covers microscopic entities, events and relations. Of the two, definite philosophical inferences can be at present made only from the Theory of Relativity, which is practically rounded up as a logically self-contained system. The Quantum Theory is still in a state of flux. Facts covered by it are not yet fully systematised in such a way as would offer a reliable ground for philosophical deductions which could have more than a tentative value. The “revolutionary” features of new physics belong to the sphere of the Quantum Theory. They are features of the sub-atomic world. Having pushed its investigation into regions, unknown previously, physics has discovered new and strange facts, facts that do not readily fit into the old theoretical structure. On the basis of the newly discovered facts, as soon as they are established as ontological facts, and are completely systematised, new theories will have to be developed. But they will not replace the old theories; they will only supplement the latter. Both together will compose the entire body of physical knowledge.

Laws of science are never absolute. Their objective validity lies in their approximation to the laws of nature. The laws formulated by new physics do not prove that the laws of classical physics were false. These are true as far as they

go. The new laws go farther. They represent a closer approximation to the laws of nature.

Scientifically, the fundamental achievement of the Theory of Relativity is the reconciliation between gravitation and electromagnetism. The reconciliation represents a grand synthesis of the vast body of knowledge about nature, acquired step by step, through observation and experiments, during three hundred years, ever since the days of Galileo.

The discord between Newtonian dynamics and the electro-magnetic propagation of energy, as stated in Maxwell’s equations, is removed by discarding some of the hypothetical categories of classical physics. Newtonian mechanics and electromagnetism together explained practically all observed phenomena, largely due to their respective hypotheses, namely, gravitational force and ether. The one implies action at a distance, while the other postulates a continuous medium.

Consequently, the entire body of physical theories has been coordinated into a harmonious whole, representing a higher level of knowledge, a closer approximation to the objective truths of nature.

As regards the hypothesis of the gravitational force, the way to its final rejection by Einstein was prepared by the theoretical works of Kirchhoff and Mach. Kirchhoff was a classical physicist. Mach, by virtue of his purely negative criticism of Newtonian dynamics, stood on the border line between the old and new physics. The two together developed a theory of mechanics which dispensed with the category of force as conceived by Newton. Their theory was elaborated and perfected by Hertz, also a classicist, in a way which directly led to the result that there is only one law of motion, which strikingly approximates, Einstein’s Kinematics, according to which every physical system moves in a geodesics.

It has been pointed out by Bertrand Russell that “although the whole of this development involved no essential departure from Newton, it

paved the way for the Relativity Dynamics.” In other words, there is a continuity between classical physics and the Theory of Relativity.

Russell writes: “And now that the theory is fairly complete, one can see that, theoretically, it ought to have been discovered by Galileo, or at any rate as soon as the velocity of light became known. It represents a technique, a better philosophy than that of Newton, indeed, one of its most remarkable feature is the adaptation of the technique to philosophy.” (“The Analysis of Matter”).

The Theory of Relativity, thus, is the logical outcome of classical physics; the whole store of experimental data and theoretical knowledge, acquired since the days of Galileo, has gone into its making. Philosophically, it represents an improvement of the mechanistic cosmology of Newton, not a repudiation. Bertrand Russell maintains that materialist philosophy has received a severe blow from the Theory of Relativity. (To this contention of Russell, M N Roy’s reply is as follows :) If, philosophically, it is simply “better” than Newton’s philosophy of nature, as Russell himself correctly states in the passage quoted above, the difference is only quantitative, not qualitative. Philosophically, the Theory of Relativity does not repudiate materialist natural philosophy in favour of idealism or any other school of philosophy antagonistic to materialism. It frees materialism of some vulnerable features, and establishes materialist philosophy upon a firmer foundation of empirically acquired physical knowledge. That is the obvious meaning of Russell’s statement, and it contradicts the fashionable thesis that the philosophical implication of new physics is the rejection of materialism.

The rejection of the hypothesis of a continuous medium (ether) and the revolution in the concept of space and time were inherent in the negative result of Michelson - Morley experiments to measure absolute velocity through space. That famous experiment was made already in the

eighties of the last (19th) century. Efforts made to explain the negative result of that experiment, particularly those of Fitzgerald, Larmor and Lorentz, directly led up to the birth of the Theory of Relativity. All those fore-runners of this theory were classicists.

The revolution is essentially philosophical. It deals the final blow to classical idealism, by liquidating the absolutist conceptions of space, time, matter, motion and force. The Theory of Relativity frees mechanistic philosophy of nature from its flaws and fallacies, which were, and still are, seized upon for setting up all sorts of veiled idealism. It makes a great contribution to the victory of materialism. The philosophical outcome of the Theory of Relativity is bound to be positive, because, as a system of physical theories, it is not antithetical to, but stands in relation of continuity with classical physical ideas.

For ages, philosophy speculated vainly about the nature of time and space. Examining the traditional metaphysical concepts in the light of experience and experimental data, the Theory of Relativity discovers their ontological (ontology: philosophy concerned with the nature of being) context. It shows that space and time are not metaphysical categories; that they do not precede matter; that, on the contrary, the concepts of space and time result from our experience of the being and becoming of matter. According to speculative philosophy, space is the receptacle of matter. Newton took over this metaphysical concept of space, and introduced it into classical physics. Einstein has shown that empty space is a meaningless, inconceivable concept; that space exists because material objects exist — as the distance between any two of them. Similarly, there is no absolute time which flows in a metaphysical void. The concept of time results from the physical fact of becoming. It is the interval between two events, that is, changes in any given object.

(To be Contd....on Page - 42)

Electoral Bonds Are a Threat to Indian Democracy

The electoral bonds system allows corporates to anonymously donate theoretically infinite amounts of money to political parties, triggering concerns that the ruling party will return the favour through corporate-friendly public policy.

Dharanidharan Sivangnanaselvam

“We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both,” American Supreme Court judge Justice Louis Brandeis wrote once. The growth of economic inequality fuels the growth of political inequalities and vice versa, resulting in a dangerous vicious cycle.

Democracy across the world is being undermined by money, most worryingly so in India. With the introduction of electoral bonds, India is currently the most unregulated country with regards to electoral funding in comparison with other similar democracies. The greater the inequality of political funding, the greater the chances that public policy is tilted towards the interest of the super rich, ignoring the interests of the majority, particularly the poor and the vulnerable.

Why electoral regulation is a must

As elections become more expensive, politicians become more dependent on electoral donations. This dependence of the political class on the rich for political funding has skewed elections in favour of the top 0.1% of the population.

According to Robert Dahl, the fundamental characteristic of democracy is “the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals.” However, growing inequality and dependence on the super rich for political funding make their votes much more powerful than those of the rest of the population; democracy is no longer ‘one person one vote’ but rather ‘one dollar

one vote’.

There is a clear relationship between a country’s policy on electoral donations and the public policy decisions made. For example, Germany remains the only country in the EU that has not banned outdoor smoking advertisements by cigarette companies. Why? Because it’s the only country where all political parties receive a good amount of funding from cigarette companies.

Another example can be found in the United States: The share of the super rich (0.01% of the American population) in electoral contributions increased from 15% in the 1980s to 40% in 2016. The same period saw a significant decrease in the annual incomes of the bottom 50% of the American population as well as a significant reduction in corporate taxes.

Similarly, Loukas Karabarbounis of the University of Chicago, in his paper ‘One dollar, one vote’, compared Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for differences in the Gini index (which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of wealth) and found a correlation between countries’ unrestrained electoral funding and high inequality.

If you think this is bad, wait for the data on India

Recently, Yasmine Bekkouche and Julia Cagé (2018), based on extensive research on electoral funding, concluded that there is a direct correlation between electoral spending and electoral success. The same paper also identified that the cost of one vote in France in the parliamentary

and municipality elections stood at six Euros and 36 Euros respectively

European countries such as France and Belgium have curtailed private spending on elections through a series of legislations since the 1990s, thereby successfully negating the influence of the super rich in elections. In fact, France banned all forms of corporate funding in 1995 and capped individual donations at 6,000 Euros.

Brazil and Chile also recently banned corporate donations after a series of corruption scandals related to corporate funding – particularly Petrobras – and introduced the public financing of elections.



*Illicit funds from the Petrobras corruption scandal were often paid back to politicians through anonymous political donations.
Photo: Reuters/ Sergio Moraes.*

What are electoral bonds?

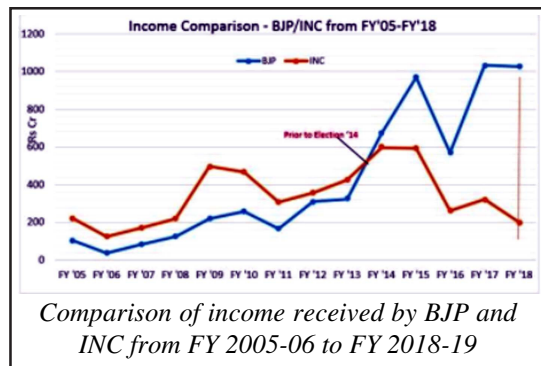
While more and more OECD countries are bringing about strong electoral funding regulations and bans on corporate funding, India under Modi is going decades backwards.

Electoral bonds were introduced through the Union budget in 2017 and allowed corporates, in India or abroad, to anonymously donate a theoretically infinite amount of money to political parties (the fact that the only party that has gained from this system is Modi's BJP is another matter.)

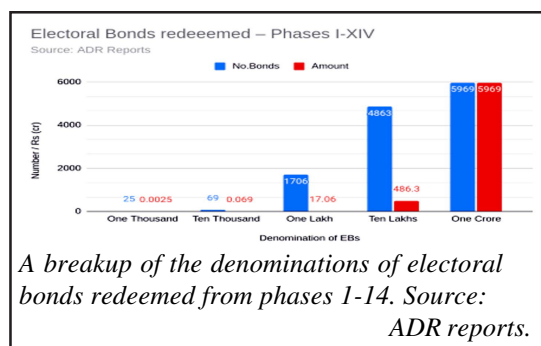
Electoral bonds lead to information asymmetry; only the ruling government has information on who lends and to whom, leading to issues of moral hazard and adverse selection. Before electoral bonds were introduced, it was

mandatory for political parties to make public all donations above Rs 20,000 and no corporate company was allowed to make donations amounting to more than 10% of their total revenue. The introduction of electoral bonds not only increased the number of anonymous donors, but also the number of shell companies donating to political parties.

In the year 2019-2020 alone, out of the Rs 3,429 crore received by political parties, the BJP received Rs 2,606 crore or 76% of the total electoral bonds encashed, followed by the Congress which received a mere 9%.



Another worrying fact about electoral bonds is that 92% of the money encashed is from Rs 1 crore bonds, with the same organisation donating in multiple tranches of 1 crore bonds. Assuming the average donation made by an organisation via electoral bonds is Rs 3 crore, then that organisation would have a profit of at least Rs 30 crore and a revenue of Rs 600 crore (net profit of a company is assumed to be 5% of the total revenue).

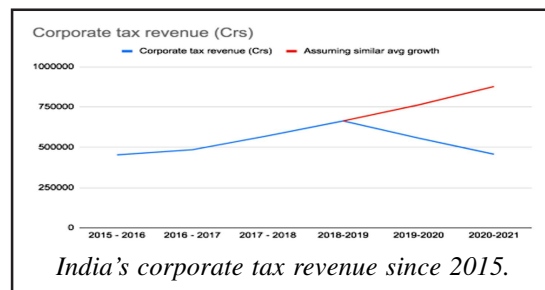


There are only 7,500 companies with a turnover of more than Rs 500 crore. If 92% of bonds cashed are multiples of one crore bonds, one can easily infer that it's just a few thousand corporates that are funding the majority of the BJP's donations.

When the BJP receives most of its electoral donations from several thousand corporates, will its focus be on doing broader public good or on taking care of the interests of the super rich corporates?

As we have seen above, political parties, like individuals, respond to incentives. So the BJP's main policy motive would be to take care of the interests of the super rich and interests of these businesses are usually at odds with the general interests of the masses.

The most profound example of the same would be the reduction of corporate taxes since 2017 and the simultaneous, gradual increase of fuel taxes. Indians, along with Pakistanis spent, on average, 17% of their total income on fuel before the recently reduced fuel tax; the highest in the world by far. At the same time, corporate tax revenue, since 2017, has been reduced from 35% to 23%; among the lowest in the developing world.



Also read: Explained: Here's Why Modi Govt's High Taxes on Fuel Don't Just Affect 5% of India

Assuming a similar growth of corporate tax revenue as previous years (~15%), the Union government, by reducing corporate taxes, has missed out on a potential revenue of Rs 6.27 lakh crore in the last two fiscal years (2019-20, 2020-

21). This reduction in corporate taxes over the years raises concerns of a potential case of 'returning the favour' to the corporates for their anonymous donations to the ruling party; the entire process enabled by electoral bonds (Bethanavel Kuppasamy).

This not only calls attention to a weakening democracy but also highlights the dire situation of the Indian economy, which affects the common people more than the affluent sections. Other examples of corporate influence would be the monetisation of public assets – where extremely lucrative Indian assets are given away at a throw away price, at a loss to the exchequer – or the passing of the widely criticised farm bills.

Proposed policy solutions to reinvent Indian democracy

The danger with the Indian system is that, as the rich use their political power more and more to cement their interests, we become more and more likely to move away from democracy and towards plutocracy. This is because the interests of the super rich are directly in conflict with the interests of the poor. As the poor are increasingly left out of the electoral process, they become disillusioned and slowly move away from it entirely.

The equality of all citizens in the funding of elections is the first step to save India's democracy. The Union government should, therefore, immediately ban all forms of corporate donations, including electoral bonds. French political scientist Cagé in her book *The Price of Inequality* proposed "democratic equality vouchers" whereby each citizen can anonymously donate a fixed amount, let's say Rs 1,000, yearly to the political party of their choice. This Rs 1,000 should be reimbursed to citizens.


The second step would be to introduce the public funding of elections whereby each candidate who receives more than 5% of the votes is partly reimbursed for their electoral expenditure. Currently, the rich corporates who contribute to electoral funding are reimbursed via

income tax rebates, thereby making the common public pay for the electoral preferences of the super rich. This lost tax revenue could partly make up for the democratic equality vouchers and the public funding of elections.

The third and arguably foremost measure would be to control individual spending in elections. Though the Election Commission of India (ECI) has set a limit of Rs 75 lakh per

candidate, such limits are often exceeded. Therefore, the ECI should reinvent itself and make sure that such limits are respected by contesting candidates.

Unless India reinvents its political funding and spending regulations, she is not a true democracy. For India to be true democracy, the dictum of 'one person one vote' must be reinstated in favour of the current 'one Rupee one vote' regime.


Dharanidharan Sivagnanaselvam is an *alumnus of the University of Oxford and the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po, Paris). He is an executive coordinator at Dravidian Professionals Forum and co-founder of the Oxford Policy Advisory Group.* 

Contd. from page - (35)

Menace of Saffronisation of...

The ministers are indulging in bold assertion that as the State has been financing the education, so it should necessarily have a say and a big say in the matters of control and administration of the educational institutions at all levels. After a large scale protests against the aforesaid onslaughts, instead of brazen steps more and more subtle ways and means are being devised and adopted to restrict and resist the expression of any free opinion either by the teachers or by the taught in the educational institutions by raising the jigir of petty and narrow nationalism and patriotism. Both teachers and taughts are being selectively victimised to terrorise others. At all costs all the aforesaid and possible onslaughts on education and educational institutions must be resisted and resisted successfully to provide open, independent and secular education to our posterity at all levels, otherwise our future will be at stake to make it more bleak.

In our multicultural and multi religious country what we need is colourful education and not coloured education and all our efforts must be projected to achieve that goal.

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee is Barrister-at-law, Sr. Advocate & Former Advocate General of State of West Bengal 

Contd. from page - (38)


New Physics...

All mystery about space and time disappeared in consequence of the discovery that they enter into our experience only as relative entities. Their absoluteness is indeed an empty concept. Mysticism results from the attempt to define the absolute. Because, the absolute, if it is really absolute, must be indefinable. Any definition of the indefinable is bound to be clouded in mystery. We can define only what we know.

Modern physical research is leading us to the realisation of the fact that external world is a misnomer. We are integral parts of the world of our experience. We do not watch the world as outsiders.

If mind was essentially different from matter, there could be no possible contact between the two, and knowledge would be impossible.

To be continued in the February 2022 issue.....

Mr. Vinod Jain is a senior radical humanist and a life trustee of the Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI) 

Prof. Venigalla Komala, wife of Dr. Narisetti Innaiah, a senior Radical Humanist and Advisor to The Radical Humanist, died on 6 December of heart attack. On behalf of the Radical Humanist community we express of sorrow and convey our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Narisetti Innaiah and his family members.

Mahi Pal Singh



Prof. Venigalla Komala with Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

So sorry to hear this. Sincere condolences.

– **Dr. Ramesh Awasthi**

Oh! So sorry. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

– **Ved Prakash Arya**

It is very sad.

Our condolences to Dr. N. Innaiah and his family members. She wrote books on problems of women.

She translated M.N. Roy's book "The memoirs of a Cat" into Telugu. She wrote essays in our Telugu monthly Magazine "Hetuvadi" on the issues of women.

– **Meduri Satyanarayana**

Sad. Very sad.

I don't know much about her, but I understood she was a cooperating life partner of Innaiah ji.

It is not easy to bear this pain at this age for Innaiah ji. Wish mental strength for him and their daughter and son.

– **Anjali Chakraborty**

Yes. We came to know today forenoon. Great loss to humanist movement. My condolences to her family members.

– **Veeranna Gumma**

My deepest condolence to Dr. Innaiah.

– **Debabrata Pal**

Heartfelt condolences.

– **Apoorba Dasgupta**

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**Our great humanist friend died
early on 30th November, 2021.**



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