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great humanist writer, rationalist and scientific thinker,
on completion of 100 years of age on 9th February 2022**



**Felicitation to R V by his family members at
Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, Andhra Pradesh**



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Articles and Features :

Communalism has overtaken the Constitution!

Dr. Prem Singh

Most spheres of Indian politics have been tainted by communalism. Looking at the current political scene of the country, it seems that just as there is a consensus on neoliberalism among the political and intellectual elite of India, similarly a consensus has been made on communal politics or political communalism. Political parties, which are called secular, resort to communalism in competition to communal BJP, so it is rightly said that they cannot defeat BJP on the pitch of communalism. However, while saying this, no concern is expressed about the fact that the entire politics of the country is becoming communal due to the use of communalism by the very parties claiming to be secular. The second point in this case is that secular leaders and scholars are referring to Hindu religion as different from Hindutva of RSS/BJP. As if politics in the name of Hindu religion is not a communal practice!

Communalism has a simple definition from the perspective of the Constitution. The use of religion to grab political power is called communalism. The political use of religion done in the name of Hindutva or in the name of soft Hindutva or in the name of Hindu religion or to get votes of minorities, comes under the category of communal politics. The politics by minority leaders in the name of their religions also falls under the category of communal politics. The politics of parties/leaders such as Shiromani Akali Dal, Indian Union Muslim League, Shiv Sena, All India Majlis e Ittehadul Muslimeen etc. could be straightaway seen as communal politics. Saying that the minority communalism is less dangerous than the majoritarian communalism does not negate the truth of the spread of communal politics.

In Mandal vs. Kamandal debate, casteist

politics was considered as an answer of the communal politics. It should be understood by now that the politics of casteism is ultimately related to religion itself. That is, the caste politics is also a form of the communal politics. Describing the elephant as Ganesh, Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh, waving Parashurama's 'Farsa' and Krishna's 'Sudarshan Chakra' during the political campaign are direct examples of this fact. When Rahul Gandhi demonstrates his 'Janeu' to reveal his caste/clan, or Priyanka Gandhi puts sandalwood on her forehead to gain political mileage, then, on the chessboard of communal politics, the forward-backward distinction becomes meaningless. It is the obvious result of the consensus on communal politics that there is an easy acceptance of backward caste Prime Minister and Dalit President as the heroes of 'Hindu-Rashtra'. In view of this very fact, would it be safe to state that communalism has overtaken the Constitution!

It needs to be noted that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), founded and nurtured by the progressive and secular intellectuals of India, is trying to make communal politics deeper and stronger than the RSS/BJP. Some of AAP's innovations can be seen along with other popular strategies it has employed on the path of communal politics. For example, holding of 'Havan' with chants after election victory and in party offices; The party's participation in religious discourses; Delhi government's decision to organize 'Sunder Kand' programs in localities; Facilities of pilgrimage to senior citizens at government expenses; Organizing religious programs like Ramlila even in the Assembly; Making a replica of the grand Ram Temple to be built in Ayodhya a part of various

programs/campaigns of the government so on and so forth are illustration of this practice.

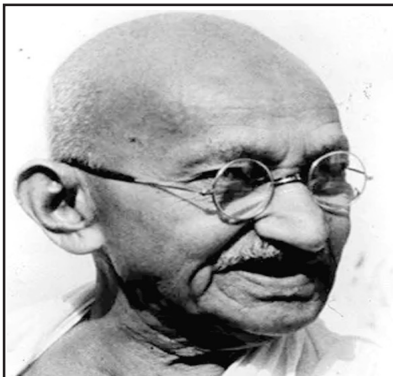
All the parties, including the BJP, involved in the game of power, claim one or the other ideology as right to be adhered to. AAP is a party which has openly declared its denial of ideology in politics. Other parties have gradually abandoned the ideology of the Constitution under the influence of neoliberalism. Since AAP has been born directly from the womb of neoliberalism, it has a non-confirming attitude towards the ideology of the Constitution from the very beginning. The anti-constitutional stand of AAP was initially criticized by scholars like Prabhat Patnaik and SP Shukla. But that trend did not go further. The AAP supremo has been kept above from criticism by the secular and progressive scholars, especially the communists. He can mingle with radical elements in Punjab, while skilfully managing majoritarian communalism. He can hold the country's largest minority in his fist. He can make and break ties with RSS/BJP and with any other party whenever he wishes so.

The rapid erosion of the Congress continues, thanks to the stubborn family leadership. AAP is following a well-planned strategy to replace Congress in near future. If this happens the central politics of the country will become right wing versus right wing; And the neoliberal policies will get uninterrupted momentum. This phenomenon will be strengthened by the right-wing rising the world over. In this way a 'New

India' will eventually be made out of a mixture of corporate India and Hindu-Rashtra. Those who scoff at RSS/BJP day and night are not ready to accept the fact that neoliberalism and communal fascism grow on each other's germs.

The spread of communal politics has many obvious effects on our national life: one, communal politics rides on the chariot of democracy. It is understandable that the face of Indian democracy has been badly disfigured by the weapon of communalism. Two, constitutional bodies like the Election Commission, the Supreme Court, the Executive, etc. cannot really take effective steps against communal politics. That is, to expect the resolution of issues from the constitutional institutions after a consensus on communal politics is to deceive oneself. Three, the various forms of hate campaigns – mob lynching, hate speeches, Sulli Deals-Bulli Bai apps, Hindu TRAD etc. – are primarily the result of unabated communal politics in the country. Four, under the influence of communal politics, leaders have become the incarnations and protectors of God and demigods/goddesses together. Five, religion in its best form has always been an inexhaustible source of philosophy, art, compassion and social gaiety. Communal politics is destroying that form of religion in a brazen manner.

(The author is a former Delhi University teacher and a former Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla) 🌈



Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words. Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions. Consider and judge your actions, for they have become your habits. Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they shall become your values. Understand and embrace your values, for they become your destiny.

— Mahatma Gandhi —

Return penalty, assets seized after anti-CAA protests, Supreme Court tells U.P.

Krishnadas Rajagopal

The cases would now be referred to a claims tribunal set up under the newly enacted Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act of 2020 for fresh adjudication.

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the Uttar Pradesh government to refund damages recovered from the persons accused of “destroying public property” during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The assets recovered by the State, according to the government’s own oral assertion in court, are worth “some crores”.

The blow came shortly after the State, on the backfoot days after being accused by the apex court of being the “complainant, adjudicator and prosecutor”, informed a Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant that it had withdrawn show-cause notices issued by Additional District Magistrates since December 2019 in 274 cases of “alleged destruction of public properties” and subsequent proceedings.

Some of these people were well over 90 years of age and included women, students and activists. They were accused of vandalising public property while participating in protests held nationwide against an amendment based on religion in the citizenship law.

Claims tribunal

The Uttar Pradesh Additional Advocate General, senior advocate Garima Prashad, said the cases would now be referred to a claims tribunal set up under the newly enacted Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act of 2020 for fresh adjudication.

“The basis for ordering refund is the withdrawal of show-cause notices... As of now,

all the plain consequences of the withdrawal of the notices should follow. You can move under the new Act... We have to follow yardsticks of our own constitutional jurisprudence,” Justice Chandrachud explained the refund order to the U.P. side.

The court highlighted in its order that since the show-cause notices had been withdrawn, “there shall be a refund of any recoveries which have been made in the meantime. This will however be without prejudice to action that may be warranted in terms of proceedings before and the decision of claims tribunal at a subsequent stage”.

Plea for status quo

The State urged the court to invoke its extraordinary powers to order status quo, saying the properties could remain as “security” before the tribunal till a final decision was taken on their owners’ culpability.

“Otherwise a wrong message will go out to the public that the damages were refunded as the entire process [under the show cause notices] was illegal and no such recoveries could have been made by the state... Have some faith in the state... The State will have to release control over these properties!” Ms. Prashad pleaded.

But the court remained firm. “When citizens’ properties have been attached, and the government orders pursuant to which the attachment has been levied have been withdrawn, can we say the attachment must still continue notwithstanding the withdrawal of the orders? Once you have taken the

fair stand to recall your orders, we cannot say the attachment will continue,” Justice Chandrachud told Ms. Prashad.

The Bench said this was not a case of “unjust enrichment” in which the court denied refund even though the State had wrongly attached properties.

Advocate Nilofar Khan, for petitioner Parwaiz Arif Titu, said even “rickshaw pullers, vegetable sellers and chicken shop owners were victimised and charged penalty... They had to sell their carts to pay the damages to the State”.

Model Code of Conduct

When the court did not budge, the State, which is in the middle of crucial Assembly elections, changed tack to argue that the Model Code of Conduct was in place and there would be “difficulties” to implement the refund.

“What difficulties? The Model Code of Conduct does not prevent you from enforcing the law. The Model Code of Conduct does not prevent you from implementing a judgment of the Supreme Court,” Justice Chandrachud replied.

Ms. Prashad said there had not been a single incident of destruction of property in the past two years.

“Ms. Prashad, there is a very important constitutional principle here... All deterrence against evasion of law has to be provided within the four corners of law. There can’t be any deterrence which lies outside the fold of

law. It is as simple as that,” Justice Chandrachud reacted.

Justice Kant said the court was not stopping the State from seeking relief in the claims tribunal. “We have no doubts about the power of the State, ability of the State, the competence of the State. As soon as the claims tribunal holds anyone responsible for damages, we are quite sure you will issue the lawful process and recover damages... Tomorrow, the tribunal could even increase or decrease the damages,” he observed.

Ms. Prashad pleaded that the State had come with “clean hands” before the court. It had withdrawn the show-cause notices. The issue of refund ought to be left to the tribunal now.

‘Follow due process of law’

“We have not stopped you from asking the tribunal. We are only telling you to follow the due process of law. If you establish your case in the tribunal, you can pursue the remedies in accordance with law,” Justice Chandrachud reiterated.

The State said the apex court order for refund would “frustrate” the 2020 Act.

Justice Kant responded, “No, the law is not frustrated. You have brought a new law under which you will appoint competent people to the claims tribunal which will decide the case immediately”.

The court disposed of the case.

Courtesy **The Hindu**, February 18, 2022. 🌈



*THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF A MAN
IS NOT WHERE HE STANDS IN
MOMENTS OF COMFORT &
CONVENIENCE BUT WHERE HE
STANDS AT TIMES OF CHALLENGE
& CONTROVERSY.
Martin Luther king Jr.*

The State is duty bound to ensure that no child is deprived of or denied her right to education under any circumstances.

Hijab is a patriarchal norm in religious garb for women and girls to cover their body.

What to wear should be a personal choice that every person should be free to make in the socio-cultural environment around. Religion has nothing to do with the dress a woman or a man should wear; it is basically cultural imposition in the garb of religion.

Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, Chairperson, Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)

PUCL- Karnataka: Press release: 4.02.2022

Condemn the Karnataka Government for abdicating its Constitutional responsibility to protect the right to education of Muslim girls

PUCL is shocked at the continuing inaction on the part of the Karnataka Government and as well as the State Education Department failing to step in and put an end to the needless controversy at PU College in Kundapura around the right of Muslim women to attend college wearing the hijab. By their continued inaction, the Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues who have taken an oath to, 'preserve protect and defend' the Constitution have abdicated their constitutional responsibility. It bears restating that their constitutional oath is to ensure a secular administration and ensure that their administration does not discriminate against any person on grounds of religion. It behoves the government of Karnataka to act in accordance with constitutional morality and not discriminate

against a particularly vulnerable minority, namely young Muslim girls. What is seared on our collective conscience is the image of brave Muslim women asserting their right to dignity in education and the equally shocking image of a school teacher shutting the gates of the college to its own students. The government must take responsibility and act to salvage its tattered image, which in the eyes of the world is that of a schoolyard bully, which stands by and denies girls the right to education rather than protecting and defending their constitutional rights.

The PUCL had in an earlier statement regarding a similar ban action by a Government PU College in Udupi, criticised the arbitrary action by the college authorities as violating fundamental constitutional rights, including the

Right to Freedom of Religion (Art 25), the Right to Education (Art 21-A), Right to non-discrimination (Art 15 and Art 29(2)) and the right to dignity. (Article 21)

Even in this case, the same constitutional rights stand violated. The specific action of the PU College management stopping the girl students from entering the classrooms and college violates the right of Muslim girls to access learning without discrimination. Article 15(1) prohibits non-discrimination on the grounds of religion and sex. Article 29(2) specifically prohibits discrimination in state aided educational institutions on grounds of religion. The preventing of women in hijab from accessing education is at heart a discrimination based on religion. As interpreted by the Supreme Court, Article 21 guarantees the right to live with dignity. The prohibition of the use of the hijab violates the right to dignity of the Muslim women students as the dress is an intrinsic part of the expression of their identity as Muslim women. Article 21-A guarantees the right to education, and this prohibition of Muslim women from attending classes violates the right to education. Most importantly, Article 25 gives the freedom to practice, propagate and profess religion, and it is pertinent to note that the hijab is an essential aspect of the Islamic faith. The prohibition of wearing the hijab hits the constitutional guarantee under Article 25.

The other dimension that the women students themselves have exposed is the arbitrary nature of the action by college authorities. The students are reported to say, “We are students, we have been wearing the hijab to college for so long, but it has become an issue only now.” The fact that the hijab has suddenly become an issue only hints at the malafide and unconstitutional nature of the action, obviously undertaken under political pressures the school management was subjected to. The students have a legitimate expectation that they will be

allowed to access education without discrimination and not be suddenly and arbitrarily prevented from attending classes that too just two months before the examination. This expectation has been belied.

The PUCL strongly condemns the college authorities’ cruel, heartless, arbitrary and unconstitutional action.

The PUCL demands that:

- The Chief Minister must act quickly and decisively to rescind the decision of the two colleges and allow the students to attend classes as they were doing before a highly improper and unconstitutional action of preventing girl students from accessing education was undertaken.
- An inquiry be undertaken into why the principals of the said colleges took such a sudden, arbitrary and unconstitutional action. Until the investigation is concluded, they must be placed under suspension.
- The Karnataka Government must take adequate measures to strengthen a secular and non discriminatory learning environment within colleges, allowing students to express their faith and identity fully and ensure that such shocking violations do not recur.
- The Human Rights Commission and Minority commission register suo moto complaints against the principal and management of the college for violating fundamental rights of the concerned students.
- The Legal Services Authority must intervene in this matter and provide all legal assistance to the students to protect their constitutional rights

Adv.
Arvind Narrain
President

Adv.
Robin Christopher J
General secretary

PUCL- Karnataka 

There is a discourse shift in Uttar Pradesh

Economic Hardship, Chronic Unemployment And Farm Distress Appear To Be At The Centre Of Public Discussion

Zoya Hasan

The Uttar Pradesh elections of 2022 are the most important Assembly elections in living memory. The poll outcome in India's weightiest State will be a crucial metric of public sentiment ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Uttar Pradesh invites attention not merely because of its size but right now because of its centrality to the Hindutva project, and equally importantly, the Opposition taking shape against it. One question repeatedly asked in this election is: will caste trump religion or will Hindutva triumph again over Mandal? The poll results would provide an indication of whether the aggressive Hindutva line pushed by the ruling party over the last five years was successful.

A challenge on its hands

A quick survey of political economy, identity politics, alliances, resources and campaign strategies leaves one with one clear impression: the winds of change are sweeping the State but how they will affect voting patterns is not clear. But even so, one trend is clear — the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faces a tough fight in Uttar Pradesh as communal polarisation loses its edge. Economic hardship, chronic unemployment, and farm distress are at the centre of public discussion. As politics returns to normality at the State and local levels, it is quite conceivable that BJP dominance in Uttar Pradesh will be challenged.

The landslide victory of the BJP in the 2017 Assembly elections created the conditions for the establishment of a communal-authoritarian regime in Uttar Pradesh. The new political dominance was reflected in the increasing mainstreaming of Hindutva in Uttar Pradesh's public arena. The huge legislative majority enabled the BJP to advance its political agenda virtually unopposed. Most Opposition parties during this period were not visible on the streets against the BJP government

(with the exception of the Congress which led several public protests). They barely existed on the ground. The Opposition parties came to life only in the last few months with the farmers' movement and the Lakhimpur Kheri incident proving to be the springboard for launching their respective campaigns.

Cracks in identity politics

Identity politics has been at the centre of Uttar Pradesh politics for the last three decades. After 2014, Hindu communalism gained momentum at the expense of caste politics which was weakened by the BJP's campaign of uniting voters across caste lines by building a wide-ranging Hindu coalition. This was made possible because the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) intervened to garner the support of non-Yadav Other Backward Classes and non-Jatav Dalit communities by assuring them that they would no longer be neglected as they had been under the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) governments. But the tables have turned as those very groups that helped the BJP to gain power in Uttar Pradesh are now disgruntled that they have not got their share of power. The exodus of some OBC MLAs and cabinet Ministers from the BJP to the SP is a sign of that. As early as 2019, more than 100 BJP MLAs, mostly belonging to backward castes, had staged a dharna inside the Vidhan Sabha and shouted slogans against their own government. It was only after the senior party leadership intervened and gave them assurances that they could be pacified.

Brewing discontent

The disgruntlement of the OBCs underlines the privileging of caste over communal politics driven by a tension between the political and social domains. Since the BJP has privileged the former over the latter, the 'social' was left out as all attention

was centred on the ‘political’, i.e., Hindutva. The exit of influential OBC leaders and Jat anger in western Uttar Pradesh against the BJP following the year-long farmers’ agitation indicate the difficulties of seeing groups as permanent majorities and minorities. In democratic politics, categories of majority and minority are not fixed — there is no pre-existing Hindu majority that will always vote en bloc against an imagined enemy — the Muslim minority. Shifting electoral majorities do not coincide with persistent social cleavages. Indeed, democratic politics offers the possibility of redefining who belongs to a majority and whom to a minority across multiple arenas.

The substantive shift in political discourse in this election has been encouraged by a surge of protests in the last two years. The anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests, the farmers’ movement, the student agitation despite the brutal police crackdown and the thousands of people regularly taking to the streets demanding jobs have pushed this shift. What is striking about these protests is that they were not organised by political parties and that people are willing to take to the streets despite concerted efforts to stop them, but also, above all, they are concerned with the everyday issues of life. The discontent brewing and growing across the State is propelling the shift towards the material conditions of life. This has shaped opposition against the BJP especially with regard to the crucial issue of jobs as the State has failed to provide employment.

The Union Home Minister’s decision to start the campaign from Kairana is a clear attempt to neutralise the discursive shift by driving a wedge between communities through communal polarisation — the BJP’s master strategy for fighting elections. The party’s brazen communal appeal to Jat farmers, for instance, to think as Hindus, is not making much headway, though. The OBC revolt, demands of caste census and the farmers’ agitation are important barriers to polarisation in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh. No communal consolidation has built up so far

despite the concerted efforts of the ruling party and its principal campaigners. This reveals the challenges in creating a stable political model centred on identity.

But this also reveals the limits of caste-driven identity politics which too cannot solve the dilemma of representation or inequality or unemployment. Caste alliances can win elections, but they will do so by merely displacing religion with caste as the central organising principle of politics. This will, in the process, further empower the Hindu community as it promotes caste-based political mobilisation and power sharing between caste groups. Caste is the exclusive identity around which the politics of social justice, equality, and discrimination is organised in Uttar Pradesh today to the exclusion of other communities even when they are persecuted by the regime.

As political counterweight

However, popular anger is shifting the political discourse to social and economic issues which have become more salient, buttressed by voter fatigue against hate politics. This development would probably bring the lived reality of everyday life back to the fore and could serve as a counterweight to Hindu majoritarianism. More to the point, voters do not seem to be terribly excited about their experience of living under a Hindu Rashtra in Uttar Pradesh. But still, what is not clear is to what extent the popular discontent will impact elections and translate into votes against the ruling dispensation. People have paid the economic price for the Government’s neglect of their basic needs. Will the ruling party pay the political price for the discontent of millions of poor workers who had to trek back home after the pandemic and lockdown, the appalling shortage of public health facilities, and massive unemployment in one of the most crucial States of the Union?

Zoya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Courtesy **Southasianmonitor.net**, 4 February, 2022. 

Is 'Hindutva' a Threat to National Security?

M.G. Devasahayam

At Haridwar in poll-bound Uttarakhand, there was a Hindutva jamboree called the 'Dharma Sansad' or 'Religious Parliament'. The theme of the event- '*Islamic Bharat mein Sanatan ka Bhavishya: Samasya va Samadhan*' ('The Future of the Sanatan Dharma in Islamic India: Problem and Solutions') suggested that India is fast becoming Islamic. This sent out a strong message that Hinduism is in existential danger and needed to be defended by wiping out Islam.

How is it to be done?

Speakers competed with each other in giving out their formula. Prabodhanand Giri, president of the Hindu Raksha Sena, based out of Uttarakhand wanted the police, the politicians, the army and every Hindu to pick up weapons and conduct this cleanliness drive (safai abhiyan).

Sadhvi Annapurna aka Pooja Shakun Pandey, general secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha gave out this call: "Nothing is possible without weapons. If you want to eliminate their population then kill them. Be ready to kill and be ready to go to jail. Even if 100 of us are ready to kill 20 lakhs of them (Muslims), then we will be victorious, and go to jail... Like [Nathuram] Godse, I am ready to be maligned, but I will pick up arms to defend my Hindutva from every demon who is a threat to my religion."

Some speakers called it Dharmadesh (religious edict) that has to be accepted by governments or otherwise a war more horrible than that of 1857 will be fought to make them obey!

Yati Narsinghanand, chief priest at Ghaziabad's Dasna Devi temple and the brain behind the 'Dharma Sansad' backed up these rants and made this brutal announcement: "...If any youth worker is prepared to become the

Hindu Prabhakaran, then before anyone else, I will give him Rs 1 crore... and if he continues for one year, I will raise at least Rs 100 crore to give."

The priest was referring to Velupillai Prabhakaran, the founder and leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an armed organisation, banned in India, that sought an independent state for Sri Lankan Tamils.

This is a clear case of weaponising the Hindu religion in the garb of 'Hindutva' and setting it at war with India. This has outraged the nation.

Senior veterans reacted quickly. Admiral (Retd) Arun Prakash, former navy chief, wrote: "Why is this not being stopped? With our jawans facing enemies on 2 fronts, do we want a communal bloodbath, domestic turmoil and international disgrace? Is it difficult to understand that anything which damages national cohesion & unity endangers India's national security?"

General (Retd) VP Malik, former army chief responded: "Agreed. Such speeches disturb public harmony and affect national security. Action required by Civil Administration."

This was endorsed by former Admirals, Lieutenant Generals, Major Generals, Brigadiers and Colonels.

But the civil administration represented by Uttarakhand DGP Ashok Kumar did not even lift a small finger. To him what happened was normal since it did not lead to any killing or violence. Also, the tridents and swords brandished at the event were 'traditional things.'

The DGP ignored the fact that what happened at Haridwar were all cognizable and non-bailable offences under Section 153A, Section 295A, Section 298, and Section 505(2) of the Indian Penal Code. It also attracted the

National Security Act and UAPA. But it seems as if against the Brahmastra of Hindutva, the Indian state is impotent!

By the way, what is this demon called 'Hindutva' that in the garb of saving Hinduism has become a threat to national security.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the RSS icon had differentiated between the two as early as 1923: "Hinduism is but a fraction and small part of the larger Hindutva ideology which goes beyond religion. Hindutva, according to him, comprised rashtra (nation), jati (common race), and sanskriti (common culture)."

This is a Nazi concept, pure and simple. It is in this context that some time ago Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made a fine distinction between Hindu and Hindutvadi saying that while the former is tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and the pursuer of satya [truth], the latter are those who weaponised Hinduism to instil hatred, intolerance and violence in the pursuit of satta [power].

In this mad pursuit of power by a political party, Hindus are being deliberately radicalised. In a country where 80% of the population is Hindu, and just 14% Muslim and 2.3% Christian, BJP has achieved the astonishing feat of creating a deep sense of Hindu victimhood, stoking the othering of Muslims and Christians via disinformation, hate speech, opening old religious wounds, manipulating a servile media, silencing progressive voices, and empowering Hindu supremacist vigilante groups. "*Hindu khatre mein hain*" (Hindus are in danger) is a right-wing refrain that resonates deeply today, particularly among the upper castes.

While Muslims are facing frontal attacks, Christians are being assaulted through a storm of misinformation about imagined 'forcible' conversions that has culminated in the passage of the draconian anti-conversion bill by the BJP government in the Karnataka assembly.

Many other states have similar laws. Christian Community leaders say that 2021 has

seen the worst attacks of the decade against Christians and their places of worship across the country and not just in Karnataka.

There are many scholarly dissertations on Hinduism and Hindutva. But I would prefer the earthly definition by Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) hailed as the "The Second Mahatma" for his leading the fight against Emergency and securing India's second freedom. To him "The Hindu religion is a strange mixture of good and bad, the sublime and low, the most emancipated thought and the most bigoted obscurantism."

And Hindutvavadis are detracting from the greatness of India and the glory of Indian history and civilization. Such persons according to JP "are in reality the enemies of Hinduism itself and the Hindus. Not only do they degrade the noble religion and destroy its catholicity and spirit of tolerance and harmony, but they also weaken and sunder the fabric of the nation, of which Hindus form such a vast majority."

There cannot be a harsher condemnation of Hindutva. Yet it is succeeding in poisoning Hinduism by severely distorting and damaging the very ethos of the religion. Hinduism survived and prospered for millennia—without a designated holy book like the Bible or the Koran and with no Mecca, Vatican or Jerusalem to guide.

In fact, it is this absence of a 'central command' and a non-uniform format that actually accounted for the intrinsically tolerant and federal structure of Hinduism, that historically brought together, without any force, different people scattered across this widely-varying subcontinent.

Sanghis have reversed all these by establishing a 'central command' for Hinduism at Nagpur to dictate and direct the supremacist agenda. The recent grandeur of Kashi Vishwanath, presided over by Prime Minister Modi himself, is the manifestation of such 'centralisation' of Hinduism.

This 'central command culture' is nourishing and propagating the 'bad, low and the most bigoted obscurantism' of Hinduism instead of its sublime and serene aspects. Unabated hate and intolerance towards minorities has become their obsessive agenda. Hindus are being persuaded to believe that India's biggest problem is its Muslims and Christians. Before 2014, they thought their chief concerns were poverty, bad governance, economic distress and corruption. BJP came to power on the promise to fix all that.

But nothing has been fixed and things have gone from bad to worse. India now has the most pathetic human development indices, the highest inflation in decades with employment and Labour Participation Rates plunging to record low levels. With 230 million more people falling below the national minimum wage poverty line, India is back to a "country of mass poverty."

It has become the second worst country in the world in income inequality. Quality of life and living are at the lowest ebb with 189.2 million people undernourished; 51.4% of women anemic; 34.7% of the children aged under five stunted with 20% suffering from wasting. With the closure of more than 400,000 SMEs and 12000 farmers committing suicide every year India has become a country of deep distress and heading towards disastrous stagflation. And facing financial bankruptcy due to colossal crony-capitalism, corruption, incompetence and mismanagement, government is hurriedly selling off strategic and lucrative public assets built with the sweat and toil of its people to select and favourite


Oligarchs.

BJP's toxic obsession with the politics of Hindutva is pushing the country to the brink of destruction in every sense of the term. For, the BJP's model of governance cannot be separated from its idea of Hindutva. You cannot challenge one and not the other.

But, with all the distress listed above BJP has increasingly fallen back on supremacist politics to deflect attention and evade responsibility. To win elections, it needs to keep polarizing Hindu voters against Muslims and Christians, and spin ever more outrageous campaigns to demonize these two religious faiths. This is the essence of what happened in Haridwar.

All these have brought the security of India as a nation into sharp focus. Contrary to popular perceptions and 'patriotic' propaganda, national security is not just soldiers on the borders and military boots in Kashmir and North East. It has more to do with economic prosperity and stability, social cohesion, communal harmony and internal peace. All these are being severely disturbed by bigots, fundamentalists and zealots by weaponizing and militarising the sublime and serene religion of Hinduism and setting it against fellow citizens adhering to the same as well as other faiths. In the event, 'Hindutva' has unabashedly become a serious threat to National Security.

M.G. Devasahayam is a former Army and IAS officer.

Courtesy **The Citizen**, 26 DECEMBER, 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

***[BJP government's attack on press is deplorable.
– Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, Chairperson, Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)]***

Editor arrested in Kashmir as press crackdown escalates

Journalist Fahad Shah detained on Friday under terrorism and sedition laws in disputed Indian region. A prominent journalist has been arrested under terrorism and sedition laws, as a crackdown on the press in Indian-administered Kashmir continues to escalate.

Fahad Shah, the founder and editor of the widely read local news website The Kashmir Walla, was arrested on Friday evening when he was summoned to a police station in the southern district of Pulwama.

Shah, 33, who has reported about Kashmir for several international publications including the Guardian, had built his blog into a formidable news website. Despite mounting pressure and threats, he and his team of reporters had continued to cover alleged human rights abuses carried out by the military in the region.

Kashmir's police chief, Insp Gen Vijay Kumar, told reporters that Shah "has been arrested on the basis of one of the three FIRs [first information reports] lodged against him for frequently glorifying terrorism, spreading fake news, and instigating people, for the past three to four years".

Police detained Shah under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), an anti-terrorism law which authorities are frequently accused of misusing, and under the archaic sedition law, in connection with his website's report of a gunfight between the military and alleged militants in Pulwama. The report had included allegations by the family that the "militant" slain by the Indian military was an innocent civilian.

He has been placed in 10-day police custody, according to a statement issued by his website.

Under the UAPA, police have the right to detain Shah for up to six months without charges and it is notoriously difficult to get bail under the law. "If convicted, he faces life imprisonment," the Kashmir Walla statement said.

Shah's lawyer, Umair Ronga, who filed a bail application on his behalf, called the arrest under terrorism laws "shocking" and "the end of the rule of law" in Kashmir.

"He is a decorated journalist and a firm believer of the majesty of the law. His arrest is unwarranted," said Ronga on Twitter.

Shah's arrest comes in the wake of an aggressive crackdown on independent journalists in Kashmir, which is disputed between India and Pakistan and home to a long-running violent militant insurgency.

Last month, Sajad Gul, a journalist who had contributed to The Kashmir Walla, was detained under the Public Safety Act, another anti-terror law, and still remains in jail. Other journalists have faced raids and interrogations for their reporting and social media posts or been placed on no-fly lists.

The Kashmir Press Club, which had been a home for independent journalists in the region for decades, was also unilaterally shut down last month after a "coup" by reportedly pro-government journalists, escorted by armed police. Speaking to the Guardian in the aftermath of the closure, before his arrest, Shah said that "journalism is being choked in the region."

Shah's arrest was said to mark a new low in press freedom in Kashmir, which has been subjected to a withering crackdown on civil rights in the last three years, after prime minister Narendra Modi's government took away

Kashmir's autonomy and brought it fully under central government control.

The Editors Guild of India called for the "immediate release" of Shah and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) issued a strongly worded statement.

"The arrest of Fahad Shah shows Jammu and Kashmir authorities' utter disregard for press freedom and the fundamental right of journalists to report freely and safely," said Steven Butler, the CPJ's Asia coordinator in Washington.

As 2022 begins, and you're joining us from India, there's a new year resolution we'd like you to consider. Tens of millions have placed their trust in the Guardian's fearless journalism since we started publishing 200 years ago, turning to us in moments of crisis, uncertainty, solidarity and hope. We'd like to invite you to join more than 1.5 million supporters, from 180 countries, who now power us financially – keeping us open to all, and fiercely independent.

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If there were ever a time to join us, it is now. Every contribution, however big or small, powers our journalism and sustains our future.

Courtesy **The Guardian**, 6 February, 2022. 

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A political storm over Pegasus

An investigation by *The New York Times*, which said that the Indian government had purchased the Israeli NSO Group's Pegasus software in July 2017 to carry out targeted surveillance on citizens, led to a political storm on Saturday. The story on Pegasus was first published last year, when an international group of publications reported that a spyware known as Pegasus was being used to snoop on politicians, journalists, activists and those holding constitutional positions, primarily in 10 countries including India. The government then published a blanket denial of these claims and responded that the reports had "no factual basis" and were intended to "malign Indian democracy and its institutions". The Supreme Court later intervened, instituting an independent probe into the possible use of Pegasus. The court said the issue was of "Orwellian concern". The panel's report is awaited.

The NYT in its recent report claimed that the meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last year were part of a larger backroom deal. Pegasus, it claimed, was one

of the central pieces of an agreement for the sale of a package of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear worth about \$2 billion between India and Israel. Apart from India, Pegasus was sold to countries such as UAE, Hungary, Poland and Mexico, the report said. It further claimed that the sale of Pegasus strengthened the ties of all these countries with the Netanyahu government and led them to shift their position on Palestine. India's Ambassador to the UN, Syed Akbaruddin, denied the claim that India voted in support of Israel at the UN because of this.

While the government did not respond to the allegations this time, the Opposition seized the opportunity to attack the government. The Congress said that the "targeting" of certain individuals was an "act of treason", the CPI(M) called it a "serious subversion of democracy" and the Trinamool Congress called it "proof of state-sponsored surveillance" that "blatantly abused the rights of Indians". As these allegations refuse to die down and the use of Pegasus involves a possible violation of citizens' rights, as this *The Hindu* editorial pointed out, this is the top story of the day. 🌈

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

India Bought Pegasus As Part Of Defence Deal With Israel In 2017: Report

Pegasus Spyware Deal: The NYT report also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017 - to become the first Indian prime minister to visit the country.

New York:

The Israeli spyware Pegasus and a missile system were the “centerpieces” of a roughly USD 2 billion deal of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear between India and Israel in 2017, according to a report in The New York Times.

A massive controversy erupted last year when the NSO Group hit the headlines with the alleged use of its Pegasus software by some governments to spy on journalists, human rights defenders, politicians and others in a number of countries, including India, triggered concerns over issues relating to privacy.

The NYT, in a report titled ‘The Battle for the World’s Most Powerful Cyberweapon’, said that the Israeli firm NSO Group had for nearly a decade been “selling its surveillance software on a subscription basis to law-enforcement and intelligence agencies around the world, promising that it could do what no one else — not a private company, not even a state intelligence service — could do: consistently and reliably crack the encrypted communications of any iPhone or Android smartphone.” The report also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Israel in July 2017 - to become the first Indian prime minister to visit the country.

“For decades, India had maintained a policy of what it called “commitment to the Palestinian cause,” and relations with Israel were frosty. The Modi visit, however, was notably cordial, complete with a carefully staged moment of him and (then Israeli) Prime Minister (Benjamin

Netanyahu walking together barefoot on a local beach,” it said.

“They had reason for the warm feelings. Their countries had agreed on the sale of a package of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear worth roughly USD 2 billion — with Pegasus and a missile system as the centerpieces.

“Months later, Netanyahu made a rare state visit to India. And in June 2019, India voted in support of Israel at the UN’s Economic and Social Council to deny observer status to a Palestinian human rights organisation, a first for the nation,” the report said.

PTI has reached out to the government for a reaction to the NYT report but there was no immediate response.

Last year, a row erupted over Israeli spyware Pegasus allegedly being used for targeted surveillance in India.

The government, however, dismissed allegations of any kind of surveillance on its part on specific people, saying it “has no concrete basis or truth associated with it whatsoever”.

In October last year, the Supreme Court set up a 3-member independent expert panel to probe the alleged use of Israeli spyware Pegasus for targeted surveillance in India, observing the state cannot get a “free pass” every time the spectre of national security is raised and that its mere invocation cannot render the judiciary a “mute spectator” and be the bugbear it shies away from.

The NYT report said that the FBI too had bought a version of Pegasus, “NSO’s premier

spying tool.” It was around last summer that the FBI “decided not to deploy the NSO weapons. It was around this time that a consortium of news organisations called Forbidden Stories brought forward new revelations about NSO cyberweapons and their use against journalists and political dissidents. The Pegasus system currently lies dormant at the facility in New Jersey.”

An international investigative consortium had claimed that many Indian ministers, politicians, activists, businessmen and journalists were potentially targeted by the NSO Group’s phone hacking software.

The report said that since 2011 when NSO “introduced” Pegasus to the global market, it had “helped Mexican authorities capture Joaquín Guzmán Loera, the drug lord known as El Chapo”.

European investigators have quietly used Pegasus to thwart terrorist plots, fight organised crime and, in one case, take down a global child-abuse ring, identifying dozens of suspects in more than 40 countries, it said.

“In a broader sense, NSO’s products seemed to solve one of the biggest problems facing law-enforcement and intelligence agencies in the 21st century: that criminals and terrorists had better technology for encrypting their communications than investigators had to decrypt them. The criminal world had gone dark even as it was increasingly going global,” according to the report.

However, over the years, “the many abuses of Pegasus had also been well documented”.

“Mexico deployed the software not just against gangsters but also against journalists and political dissidents. The United Arab Emirates used the software to hack the phone of a civil rights activist whom the government threw in jail.

“Saudi Arabia used it against women’s rights activists and, according to a lawsuit filed by a Saudi dissident, to spy on communications with

Jamal Khashoggi, a columnist for The Washington Post, whom Saudi operatives killed and dismembered in Istanbul in 2018,” the NYT report said.

The report said that its yearlong investigation, which included interviews with government officials, leaders of intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, cyberweapons experts, business executives and privacy activists in a dozen countries, “shows how Israel’s ability to approve or deny access to NSO’s cyberweapons has become entangled with its diplomacy”.

“Countries like Mexico and Panama have shifted their positions toward Israel in key votes at the United Nations after winning access to Pegasus,” the report added.

Amidst a raging controversy worldwide, Israel established a committee in July to review the allegations of misuse of the NSO group’s surveillance software and hinted at a possible “review of the whole matter of giving licences”.

NSO’s then chief executive, Shalev Hulio, had then welcomed the move saying would be “very pleased if there were an investigation so that we’d be able to clear our name”.

Hulio also claimed that there was an effort “to smear the whole Israeli cyber industry”.

Israel, in November last year, distanced itself from the controversy triggered by the NSO Group after the US blacklisted the technology firm, which had developed the Pegasus spyware that was allegedly used to target government officials, activists and journalists globally, saying that it is a private company and it has nothing to do with the policies of the Israeli government.

The US sanctioned the Herzliya-based company over alleged misuse of its phone-hacking spyware in countries across the world, including in India.

(Except for the headline, this story has not been edited by NDTV staff and is published from a syndicated feed.)

Courtesy **NDTV**, January 29, 2022. 

Modi, Netanyahu signed deal for Pegasus spyware purchase in 2017: NYT

Modi-Netanyahu signed deal for Pegasus spyware purchase in 2017, amended U.N. vote: New York Times

A new political storm erupted over an investigation by the New York Times that said the Indian government purchased Israeli NSO group's Pegasus software in July 2017 in order to carry out targeted surveillance on citizens, claiming that high-level visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and even a U.N. vote on a Palestinian organisation was part of a larger backroom deal.

The revelations that come just two days before the budget session of Parliament has provided fresh ammunition to the Opposition parties to corner the government on the issue. The Opposition parties attacked the government on Saturday, accusing it of "misleading" parliament and the Supreme Court on the issue, while the Congress said the alleged use of spyware on Opposition leaders, Supreme Court judges, journalists and activists was an "act of treason", and said they would raise the issue in the upcoming budget session as well.

In the report published on January 28, the New York Times said that ties between Mr. Modi and Mr. Netanyahu had "warmed" because of their agreement for the sale of "a package of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear worth roughly \$2 billion — with Pegasus and a missile system as the center-pieces". The NYT did not divulge sources for the claim that India had in fact bought the Pegasus system, and did not respond to an email from The Hindu asking for any details used to verify the story. In their detailed investigation, NYT's reporters named several countries including India, UAE,

Hungary, Poland and Mexico on the list of those who had purchased the spying software, and said that they had not just strengthened ties with the Netanyahu government, but had shifted on support to Palestine and muted Opposition to Israel at the United Nations.

"In June 2019, India voted in support of Israel at the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council to deny observer status to a Palestinian human rights organization, a first for the nation," it added. India's Ambassador to the U.N. at the time Syed Akbaruddin denied the last claim however. "The vote was a decision taken by me locally (as U.N. Permanent Representative in New York). No one talked to me about it before or after," Mr. Akbaruddin, now retired, said in response to a query from The Hindu, adding that "The NYT seems to have wrongly made an insinuation."

The government, including the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to the NYT report. In August 2021, after the original revelations of the extent of Pegasus spyware found on thousands of telephones worldwide were published by The Wire and other international news agencies, the Ministry of Defence had said in parliament that the "Ministry of Defence has not had any transaction with NSO group technologies".

Launching an attack on the U.S. newspaper for the latest report, Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Civil Aviation Gen (Retd) V.K.Singh called the New York Times a "supari" (hit-job) newspaper. 🌈

Show commitment to equity in the Budget

Aruna Roy Nikhil Dey

The Government needs to stop India's avalanching slide into a grossly divided society, made worse by the pandemic

On January 17, 2022, Oxfam International presented its annual global "Inequality Report". Titled Inequality Kills, the report calculated and presented the quantum growth in wealth of a minuscule few, and the simultaneous impoverishment of millions of working people. During the novel coronavirus pandemic, the report reveals, more than half the world's new poor are from India; 84% Indian households have suffered a loss of income, with 4.6 crore people falling into extreme poverty. In this period, the richest 142 people have more than doubled their wealth to more than ¹ 53 lakh-crore. This is clearly happening by design, and can only be corrected if our policymakers reverse their framework of paying lip service to the poor while making policies that support the rich. One of the most important places to show commitment to equity, is the Union Budget; and inequality should perhaps be discussed threadbare in India before, and after every Union and State Budget.

This is the guiding light

There is also a constitutional mandate to reduce inequality. In India today, some of the most basic human rights that allow people to stay alive are under threat. It is the sacred responsibility of the Government to follow the Constitution, and ensure delivery of these rights. The policymaking "duty" of all governments is to follow Part IV of the Constitution — the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Budget is one of the most important annual exercises in state policy, and it is the Directive Principles that should be a guiding light. In terms of inequality, Articles 38 and 39 mandate a policy path. Among other important principles, Article 38(1) states: "The State shall strive to promote

the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life." Article 39 (c) states: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing — (c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

'Duties' talk

A rights-based policy framework, should, therefore, be followed by the Indian state to protect the poor and the marginalised. But the Prime Minister advocates that people concentrate on their duties and stop demanding their rights. On January 20, 2022, at the launch of the Brahma Kumaris' year-long programme of events (as part of the Government's celebration of 75 years of Independence) the Prime Minister declared, "In the last 75 years, we only kept talking about rights, fighting for rights and wasting our time. The talk of rights, to some extent, for some time, may be right in particular circumstances, but forgetting one's duties completely has played a huge role in keeping India weak." Ironically, the Prime Minister did not seem to be referring to his own duties.

In a country like India, reducing inequality should be a high priority. Today, this principle is being inverted. The Oxfam report does not exclusively examine the multiplying wealth of India's billionaires. Let us look outside this 0.00001% of our population, and for the purposes of the Budget, look at their analysis of basic social services — particularly those that affect the survival of the poor.

India must be one of the only countries in the world where during the COVID-19 pandemic the health Budget has declined — and that too

by a huge 10% in the last year. Social security expenditure has declined from an already pathetically low 1.5% in 2020-21 to 0.6% of the Union Budget in 2022. It is at this end of Budget allocations where people are deprived of the most basic services and entitlements and are unable to survive. Social security pensions, for the elderly, for the disabled, and widows have been frozen at ¹ 200-¹ 300 a month for almost 15 years. The Government says there is not enough money to even index these to inflation. In contrast, policymakers have just in the last year increased their own salaries and pensions through a DA increase to 28%, and given themselves a bonus of 3% — with just the increase for one crore central government employees and pensioners costing the exchequer more than the total social security pension budget for 3.3 crore beneficiaries.

The Prime Minister's outburst against "rights" perhaps explains his lack of support for the implementation of rights-based laws. Nevertheless, during the pandemic, even his government had to turn to the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to save millions of Indians from hunger and premature death. After increasing allocations in the first phase of the pandemic, allocations were frozen, and budgets were slashed in Budget 2021-22. The Government said it will supplement as and when needed. However, it is clear that supplements come in an extremely miserly fashion, causing extensive distress, and in MGNREGA, undermining the legal guarantee of work on demand.

During a recent 18-day "Accountability Yatra" in the State of Rajasthan, we came across thousands of cases of needy people not receiving ¹ 2 per kilo wheat. The answer to grievances and appeals filed in writing is that the portal is closed and no more entries allowed. The priority list of households under the NFSA has been frozen in absolute numbers, based on

a percentage determined from the 2011 Census. In the last 11 years, population increases amounting to approximately 10 crore eligible beneficiaries have been kept out. Therefore, approximately 12% legally entitled people — even children of existing "priority households" — cannot get subsidised foodgrain. To use digital codes to block even the appellate process mandated by law is a live example of callous multi-dimensional inequality, demonstrating why the "Inequality Kills" title of the Oxfam report is poignant and true.

Children and education

The pandemic has also produced a generation of children who have forgotten what formal education is. Many teenagers from poor households have already joined the workforce. In this period, there has been a 6% cut in the education Budget. Relying on online teaching, accompanied by Budget cuts, amounts to the institutionalisation of endemic multidimensional poverty.

The list can go on and on. As we await Union Budget 2022-23, will this trend be reversed? There will be much talk among affluent analysts cautioning against social sector expenditure, calling them "welfare and doles". Programmes such as the food security Act will not receive the quantum of allocations needed, even though food grain stocks are more than 90 million tons. The People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) has estimated that approximately ¹ 2,64,000 crore will be needed to guarantee 100 days work for currently active job cards. Even half that amount is unlikely to be allocated for MGNREGA. Social security pensioners will continue to face hunger, insult, sickness and death. One would expect that if nothing else, their millions of votes in crucial State elections would fetch these families some basic rights. But, in polarised elections, the basic needs of unorganised and voiceless people are easily ignored.

(To be Contd....on Page - 24)

Nine non-BJP ruled states oppose Centre's proposal on IAS officers' deputation

Synopsis

Sources in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said a trend of decreasing representation of IAS officers, up to the Joint Secretary-level at the Centre, has been noticed as most of the states are not meeting their Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) obligations and the number of officers, sponsored by them to serve at the Centre are much lesser.

As many as nine non-BJP ruled states have opposed the Centre's proposal that gives it an overriding power while deciding on central deputation of IAS officers, whereas eight others have given their consent, officials said on Wednesday.

A reminder will soon be sent to the states and Union Territories which have not yet responded to the proposal on making changes in the relevant service rules, they said.

Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan have raised their voice against the amendments, the officials said.

On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh have given their consent, they added.

Karnataka and Meghalaya had opposed the proposal initially sent to them last month but are expected to send a revised proposal, the officials said, adding that Bihar had also opposed the move earlier.

While the nine states opposed the suggested changes saying they were against the federal structural of the country, the Centre has defended its proposal asserting that the states are not sparing sufficient number of IAS officers for deputation which is affecting its functioning, the officials said.

Sources in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said a trend of decreasing representation of IAS officers, up to the joint secretary-level at the Centre, has been noticed

as most of the states are not meeting their Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) obligations and the number of officers, sponsored by them to serve at the Centre are much lesser.

Officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) are allocated a cadre, which is a state/states or states and Union territories.

Every cadre is allowed a CDR to ensure that officers have the opportunity to work on central deputation, which adds to their experience.

According to DoPT sources, the number of IAS officers on CDR has gone down from 309 in 2011 to 223 as on date.

The DoPT has recently proposed changes in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 that will take away the power of states to override the Centre's request for seeking officers on central deputation.

Odisha, in its opposition, said once the move comes into force, it will affect the administration of states and have an impact on the implementation of various development projects.

Describing the proposed amendments as "draconian" and intended to promote unilateralism, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "bury" the proposal.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, first to air her voice against the move, has urged Modi to withdraw the proposal as it would "create a fear psychosis among officers and impact their performance".

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has also asked the prime minister to drop the move that "strikes at the very root" of the nation's

federal polity and states autonomy.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has said the proposed changes will violate the constitutional jurisdiction prescribed for the central and state governments, and reduce the spirit of working fearlessly and faithfully by the officers.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has said the proposed amendments are against the spirit of federalism and if implemented may lead to “collapse” of administrative system of states.

Information and Broadcasting Secretary Apurva Chandra, an IAS officer of Maharashtra cadre, had on Friday said working with both the Centre and state governments broadens the perspective of the officers.

Citing shortage, the DoPT has been writing to the states seeking more officers on central deputation.

It had in June last year asked all state governments to nominate more officers for central deputation at the level of deputy secretary, director and joint secretary.

According to the DoPT proposal, sent to chief secretaries of all state governments on January 12, “in specific situations where services of cadre officer(s) are required by the central government in public interest, the central government may, seek the services of such officer(s) for posting under the central government...and the state government concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time”.

It further states that “wherever the state government concerned does not give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time, the officer(s) shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the central government”.

Existing rules allowed mutual consultation for the officers’ central deputation.

The DoPT had written to chief secretaries of all state governments on December 20, 2021, after

which reminders were sent on December 27, 2021 and January 6 and January 12.

The January 12 letter to states specifically mentions the Centre’s power to override the states’ disagreement on sending the officers on deputation.

Courtesy **The Economic Times**, 26 January 2022. 

Contd. from page - (22)

Show commitment to...

Time to generate data

Policymakers will tell us that resources are scarce. Oxfam says the combined wealth of India’s 142 billionaires has increased by a massive ¹ 30 lakh-crore, in just the pandemic period. Jan Sarokar, a network of more than 30 social sector movements, has suggested that a 2% wealth tax, and a 33% inheritance tax on the top 1% of our population will fetch an estimated ¹ 11 lakh crore per annum, to support basic social sector entitlements. Suggestions such as this are already being ridiculed by market fundamentalists. Which way will the Government go?

The Bharatiya Janata Party’s response to most international reports has been to claim flawed methodology and analysis. It is time to introspect, generate robust data, and face the truth. The Budget is a policy that matters to all. There is, unfortunately, little hope that this Government will stop this avalanching slide into a grossly divided society. It is perhaps up to society to stand up and make sure that we are true to our constitutional commitment of building a more just and equal society. That is our most fundamental duty.

Nikhil Dey and **Aruna Roy** are social activists with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). The views expressed are personal

Courtesy **The Hindu**, January 31, 2022. 

Politics of the farmers' movement!

Dr. Prem Singh

I have written five-six articles on the unprecedented farmers movement organised under the aegis of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) against the three agricultural laws. Therefore, to avoid repetition, this short comment.

The peasant movement was kept apolitical in the sense that the leaders of any political party were not allowed to use the platform of the movement. However, the opposition parties/leaders supported the movement and tried to win the sympathy of the farmers so that they could take electoral advantage of the farmers' resentment against the government/BJP. In view of the simultaneous assembly elections in five states, the government abruptly withdrew the agri-laws, without further discussions with farmer leaders. This move of the government is a proof that the movement had the potential to create political influence against the ruling party. Especially in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh is a large state with 403 assembly constituencies. The election pundits talk about the decisive impact of the farmers movement in 70 seats in western Uttar Pradesh, and not in the entire state. Punjab is a smaller state with 117 assembly seats compared to Uttar Pradesh. But the impact of the peasant movement is here is state-wide. The farmers of Punjab played an important role not only in terms of the rise, conduction and success of the farmers movement, but also in terms of a clear understanding of the neoliberal economic policies, responsible for the labour and agrarian laws. In fact, the small and big farmers of Punjab were convinced that because of these laws their land and farming would go out of their hands to the corporate houses. And they will remain subordinate of them. They were really scared of this outcome of the agri-laws. Children, adults,

women - all. They marched to Delhi gearing up for a long struggle against the laws and the government that legislated them.

The electoral scenario of Punjab is in front of the people, in which 28 farmers' organizations, which have been the constituents of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, are also in the electoral fray under the banner of Samyukta Samaj Morcha. Farmers' organizations have decided to enter the election-battle very late and without proper preparations. It seems unlikely that this coalition of farmer organizations will be able to make any effective intervention in the multi-cornered elections. Nevertheless, if some of the Samyukta Samaj Morcha candidates win, it will be considered a direct victory over the neoliberal policies.


It is no secret that the Congress government in Punjab, of which Captain Amarinder Singh was the chief minister, had a consistent support to the farmers movement. Had the Captain remained with the Congress after being removed from the chief minister's post, and the Congress would have been the biggest beneficiary of the peasant movement, then the Congress could be pressurized against neo-liberal economic policies in the future. That would have been an achievement of the peasant movement to some extent but in the right direction. But the 80-year-old Captain, who claims to be humiliated by the Congress High Command, is contesting the elections with the BJP by forming a new party. Now defeating Navjot Singh Sidhu in the assembly elections is the only goal of his long political career! Captain's newly formed Punjab Lok Congress has an alliance with the BJP which imposed the agri-laws. By doing so, Captain has stood against the core spirit of the farmers movement. If he thinks that the government, by withdrawing the agri-laws, has abandoned the neoliberal policies behind them,

then it is not so. Days after withdrawing the agri-laws, the government has stated that it has not given up. It will bring the agri-laws again. The budget that came after the farmers movement has once again given a clear message that the government is moving fast on the path of liberalization-privatization without any hesitation.

In Punjab, the BJP had a long-standing alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) against the Congress. The BJP would like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to be benefitted against the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal, which left the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) after the agri-laws were passed in Parliament. It is being said that the pro-BJP voters of the urban middle class of Punjab have sided with AAP. To break the Akali-Congress supremacy in Punjab politics, AAP has the support of radical Sikhs residing in Punjab and settled abroad from the very beginning. Along with spreading consciousness against the neoliberal policies, the peasant

movement has also done a great job of promoting communal harmony. Obviously, all this manoeuvring of Captain, BJP, AAP is against the basic spirit of the farmers movement. Otherwise too, AAP, which supported the agri-laws, tried to encircle the agitating farmers, who reached the Delhi border in November 2020, at Burari Maidan along with the central government by preventing them from going to Ramlila Maidan/Jantar Mantar.

It is meant to say that the peasant movement went on for more than a year even in the face of all kinds of phantom obstacles. If only the politics of neo-liberal policies emerges victorious from its womb, then it is a matter of serious concern. The leadership of the peasant movement should think honestly towards the creation of a new politics. Like the peasant movement, it will be a long and sustained struggle.

(The author is a former Delhi University teacher and Fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla) 

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CASE LAW OR FACE LAW?

S.N. Shukla

As General Secretary of our organization Lok Prahari, set up in 2003 by a group of well known civil servants in the state, I have been pro bono drafting and conducting in person the PILs filed by it only on important issues relating to probity in governance and electoral reforms. Our organization has been working on the very poignant remark of the President of the Constituent Assembly Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his concluding speech at the time of adoption of the Constitution that *“If the people who are elected are capable and men of character and integrity, they would be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country.”*

When, after topping in 1964 in the LL.B.(Final) Examination of then undivided Agra University I was selected for the IAS in 1967, I rued that, unlike the ICS, I had no option to join an All India Judicial Service- to provide for which the Constitution was amended 43 years ago way back in 1978, but which not yet been formed *despite the directions of the Supreme Court* for this purpose in 1991, reiterated in 1993, thanks to the opposition by some states and High Courts and the dilly dalling approach of the successive Central governments. Hence, after 35 years of service in the IAS, in 2003 I started practice before the High Court at Lucknow basically to continue to help in keeping the governance on the right track. I was then told that sometimes ‘face law’ matters more than the case law. While I noticed that it was occasionally true as regards the High Court, my experience in the Apex Court at that time was otherwise.

Lok Prahari’s first PIL in the Supreme Court WP(C) No. 657/2004 was filed against grabbing of palatial bungalows by the ex-Chief Ministers UP. Since I was conducting it in person as the General Secretary of the organization and it was

my first appearance before the highest Court, it was like appearing for interview for the IAS. Despite being thoroughly prepared I was quite nervous about the response from the Court. But when the matter was called out in Court No. 2 on 3.1.2005 before the Bench comprising of Hon’ble Mr. Justice N. Santosh Hegde and Hon’ble Mr Justice S.B.Sinha, even before I could open my mouth, the Hon’ble Presiding Judge said: “Issue notice”. Not only this the Hon’ble Court was pleased to issue notice on the prayer for interim relief also. It was such a pleasant surprise. Evidently, the Hon’ble Judges had read the petition filed by a person totally new to the profession and unknown to them, but saw merit in it. The order passed by them had nothing to do with the standing of the petitioner in person as an advocate, who was making his first appearance before the Court.

Thereafter, at the first hearing on 13.5.2005 of Lok Prahari’s second PIL WP (C) No.231/2005, the Bench, comprising of the then Chief Justice of India Hon’ble Mr.Justice R.C.Lahoti and Hon’ble Mr. Justice N.Santosh Hegde and Hon’ble Mr. Justice G.P.Mathur, was pleased to issue rule regarding the validity of **54 years** old Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which permitted even *murder convicts* to continue as “Hon’ble” MPs/MLAs/MLCs desecrating our ‘temples of democracy’.

The first PIL was allowed by landmark judgment dated 1.8.2016 reported in AIR 2016 SC 3637/(2016) 8 SCC 389, quashing the non-statutory rules framed by UP government permitting ex-Chief ministers to retain for life palatial government bungalows. The second one resulted in the impugned provision being struck down by the historic judgment dated 10.7.2013 reported in AIR 2013 SC 2662/ (2013) 7 SCC 653, resulting in termination of membership of Parliament of Lalu Prasad Yadav, Jagdish Sharma

and Rashid Masood. At the time of final hearing of this matter in 2013 the Hon'ble Court showed indulgence of granting uninterrupted hearing to the petitioner in person *for more than three hours*. Evidently, in both these cases what mattered to the Court was the merit of the cause before it and NOT as to who was arguing it.

However, over the years things seem to have changed as would be evident from some later instances described hereinafter. In **2008** Lok Prahari filed in the Supreme Court PIL WP (C) No. 172 against exorbitant RTI application fee of Rs. 500 by the Allahabad High Court. However, vide order dated 5.5.2008, the petitioner was relegated to the High Court despite the well settled juristic principle that no one can be the judge of his own cause. Review Petition (C) No.874 of 2008 was also dismissed by the following order without even mentioning, leave alone discussing, the grounds taken in it-

“Application for oral hearing is rejected.

*We have **carefully** gone through the review petition and the annexures thereto. We find **no merit** therein. Hence, the review petition is dismissed.”* (emphasis supplied)

However, subsequently, the face law worked and another Writ Petition (C) No. 194 filed in **2012** by Mr. Prashant Bhushan on behalf of Common Cause on the same issue was entertained. Thereupon, Lok Prahari moved a transfer petition for transferring back to the Apex Court their writ petition filed in the High Court in pursuance of the earlier order of the Court. Mercifully, it was allowed, and the prayer in the WP filed by Lok Prahari initially in the Supreme Court in 2008 was finally granted when the writ petition of Common Cause filed in 2012 was ultimately allowed on 20 3 2019. But as a result, the petition filed by Shri Bhushan became the lead petition, denying the rightful credit to Lpk Prahari and the decision in this important matter of citizens' valuable right to information was unnecessarily delayed for 4 years. It also resulted in avoidable multiplicity of litigation, and

consequent waste of precious time of the Hon'ble Court, in the shape of compelling Lok Prahari to file another writ petition in the High Court and later transfer petition in the Supreme Court to get the same transferred to the Apex Court for hearing along with the writ petition filed by Common Cause. Even otherwise, there was no point in relegating Lok Prahari to the High Court in the first instance as the party aggrieved by the decision of the High Court would have approached the Apex Court in any case. But the Face Law first resulted in multiplicity of litigation and delay in decision, though later helped in having the matter heard with a positive outcome.

Another instance of the operation of face law relates to video recording of the court proceedings. A report in the Times of India dated 15.8.2017 said that while hearing WP (C) No. 99 of 2015 Supreme Court was set to examine the issue of video recording of Court proceedings, even though a Supreme Court Bench headed by the then CJI had dismissed a PIL in 2015 seeking its direction for video recording of Court proceedings. Thereupon, Lok Prahari filed an intervention application in the aforesaid WP to improve the quality of proceedings in High Courts and subordinate Courts and thereby enhancing their dignity and decorum and ensuring fair play and higher public confidence with the prayer that till such time as the facility of audio visual recording is installed at government expense in all Courts of the Country, a party to any Court proceeding may be permitted to do such recording in his matter. While avoiding the unnecessary burden of the cost of installing such facility on public exchequer, this will ensure transparency and improve functioning of courts. Since Court proceedings are in any case by way of public hearing there should be no objection to their audio/ video recording at the option of the concerned party. But while disposing of the said writ petition, the said intervention application was rejected. However, subsequently, another writ petition filed by senior advocate Mrs. Indira Jai Singh for live

streaming of court proceedings was entertained.

The third instance of the operation of face law relates to writ petition (C) no. 667 of 2017 filed by Lok Prahari in the Apex Court under Article 32 of the Constitution for proper interpretation of the ambit and scope of Section 29 A of the RP Act, 1951 and the extent of powers of the ECI regarding registration and deregistration of the political parties so that persons like Lalu Prasad Yadav *disqualified to be a legislator* do not nominate candidates for elections to Parliament/state legislatures. In the said writ petition it was also submitted that the judgment of the two Judge Bench in the case of Indian National Congress vs. Institute of Social Welfare and others on the non-applicability of Section 21 of the General Clauses Act, 1897 needs reconsideration by a larger Bench for the reasons stated in the WP. However, the said writ petition was dismissed in limine like a Special Leave Petition by the Bench headed by the then Chief Justice by a one line cryptic order saying “The writ petition is dismissed”, without even indicating any reason for not entertaining the said writ petition. But subsequently another WP No 1152 of 2017 on the same subject filed **later** by **BJP** leader and advocate Ashwini Upadhyay was entertained by the same Bench. Still our Review Petition against the dismissal order and hearing of our WP with the other WP filed by Mr. Upadhyay was rejected leaving us bewildered at this discriminatory treatment.

The next example of the power of face law also relates to the leader of the ruling party at the Centre and advocate Shri Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay. Lok Prahari had filed PIL WP (C) No. 1380 of 2018 to challenge the constitutional validity of sub-sections (1), (2) and (3) of Section 8 and Section 9 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 **in so far as these limit the period of disqualification/further disqualification** to only 6 years from the date of conviction/ release of the convicted legislator in case of Section 8 and 5 years from the date of

dismissal in case of Section 9, **as being violative of Articles 14, and 102(1)/191(1) of the Constitution**. The writ petition also challenged the validity of Section 11 of the Act **which empowers the Election Commission to remove/reduce the period of disqualification** against the settled law that a delegatee - in this case Parliament under Articles 102 & 191 - cannot delegate further. However, the said writ petition was dismissed summarily on first hearing vide order dated 3.12.2018 at the threshold on the ground that “*the issues raised were being examined by this Court in another writ petition No. 699 of 2016* “ (filed by Mr. Upadhyay) **even though**, with due respect to their Lordships, **actually** the original Prayer in that writ petition had nothing to do with the prayer in the petitioner’s writ petition and **till then** even notice on the application for amending the Prayer in the said writ petition for the relief *only partly similar* to that prayed for in the petitioner’s writ petition, was not issued and was issued much later only on 10.9.2020. *Thus, the very premise on which the writ petition was dismissed was not borne out by the record*. Even otherwise, the dismissal was contrary to the law laid down by the Apex Court that when one petition has been admitted another similar one should also be entertained.

The aforesaid instances give an impression that sometimes for some inexplicable reason the person presenting the case matters more than the merit of the case and some litigants are more equal than others resulting in such differential treatment on the same issue showing the power of the face law. This power is reflected not only in judicial orders, but is also evident in the treatment by the Registry of courts. Petitions filed by local influential lawyers with similar or even more serious defects may be registered and listed before the Court while the one filed by an outsider/less known lawyer may keep languishing for registration for months even after curing of defects. The PILWP (C) filed on **9.9.2021** by

Lok Prahari with Diary No. 24676/2021 for effectuating the provision in Article 130 of the Constitution by setting up Regional Benches of the Supreme Court is a case in point. Likewise, even fresh petitions of lesser mortals like Lok Prahari have remained unlisted for first hearing for months, and even more than a year.

To cap it all, not one pending matter or Interlocutory Application of Lok Prahari has been listed in the last 9 months despite repeated requests and mentioning applications ignoring the dictum that public good should prevail over private interest. Consequently, the respondents have not bothered to file their reply for months/years in very important matters challenging the validity of Constitutional/statutory provisions. As regards IAs a glaring example is non listing of the 6 year old application for vacation of the **blanket stay**, obtained by **Shri Prashant Bhushan** in Contempt Petition (C) No.235/2014, of Rule 7 of the IPS Cadre Rules (which was amended in 2014 to provide security of tenure to them as per directions of the Apex Court itself in the case of TSR Subramanian & ors), due to which *the IPS officers have become subservient to the politicians of the ruling party in the state and have lost their control over the state police as evident from the sordid Maharashtra episode*. Another recent example is non listing of the Intervention Application No. 77008/2020 filed on

14.8.2020 in WP (C) No.1022/1989 for effectuating implementation of the directions of this Hon'ble Court in paras 10A & 11 of the judgment dated 13.11.1991 (AIR 1992 SC 165) for operationalising 43 years old amendment in Article 312 of the Constitution for creation of All India Judicial Service (AIJS) that "**An All India Judicial Service essentially for manning the higher services in the subordinate judiciary is very much necessary**" reiterated on 24.8.1993 (AIR 1993 SC 249) while rejecting the plea for reviewing the earlier direction, even though the plea for urgent hearing of the IA is supported by the recent statements of the Union Law Minister for formation of AIJS and of the present Hon'ble Chief Justice of India that "*Without robust justice delivery system at the grassroots level, we cannot imagine a healthy judiciary*". Evidently, by not listing the aforesaid IAs the Registry seems to think otherwise. Or else, the only reason can be annoyance with the petitioner-in-person due to face law factor.

We leave it to the legal luminaries of the country to ponder and decide about the propriety of such differential dispensation to different advocates on the same issues as in the cases mentioned above.

S.N. Shukla is a former IAS and General Secretary, Lok Prahari. 🌈

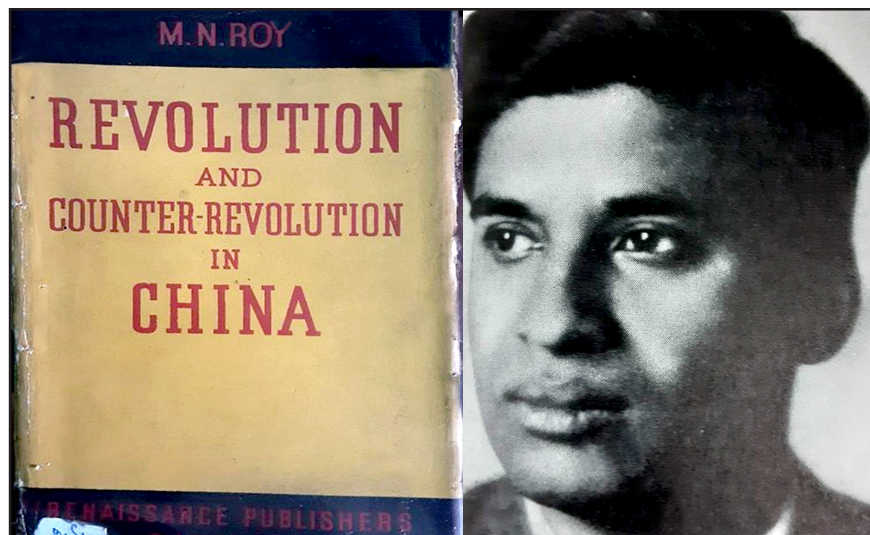
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Roy in China: The Abortive Revolution of 1927

Bhaskar Sur



As a global revolutionary and an organic intellectual M N Roy (born on January 21, 1887) has few peers. His activities spanned three continents: Asia, Europe and North America. He was a rebel against the Raj who dreamed of an armed insurrection to overthrow it. He was the founder of the Mexican communist party, the second outside Russia. Roy also founded the Indian communist party in exile in 1920. He presented his Supplementary Thesis on Colonialism which was to serve as a template for revolutions in backward agrarian societies. He became a member of the powerful Presidium of the Comintern and was sent to China to steer the course of revolution. He was also one of the few to fearlessly critique the rise of authoritarianism under Stalin for which he was expelled from Comintern in 1928. Roy returned to India to radicalize the nationalist movement led by conservative Gandhi. He was arrested and served a long jail term which he used to reflect deeply on social and philosophical issues. From the jail he inspired the founding of Indian Socialist Party in 1934. An apostle

freedom and reason, he didn't hesitate to oppose fascism and Japanese imperialism when there was a deep undercurrent in their favour. He spent his last years in developing a post-communist revolutionary theory based on humanism and freedom. A proud cosmopolitan and polyglot, he wrote in no less than five languages - Spanish, German, Russian, French and English. Roy's writings on Mexican, Russian and Chinese Revolution and his Memoirs provide a rich storehouse of valuable information and insight into the communist history: its triumphs and tragedies.

Roy's Colonial Thesis rather than Lenin's which was more balanced and realistic had a tremendous appeal to many revolutionaries of the colonies for the simple reason it promised a break from the European time frame and insisted on skipping the tiresome stages of revolution. When the promised revolution in the capitalist west didn't happen, the revolutionary regime in Russia was looking to the East. They had adopted a policy of setting the East on fire to strike at the weakest points of the world capitalism. China, more than India, offered the

opportunity. India in the mid 20s had a stable political system. The British had introduced political reforms empowering Indians and the Indian bourgeoisie was coming into its own. China, on the other hand, was in a state of chaos. There was a revolution in 1912 ending Manchu Empire but the new republic had failed to consolidate itself. Stalin had a great faith in Roy's ability to guide revolution in a semi colonial, semi feudal country like China. After the Seventh Plenum, Roy, therefore left for Canton along with a group of Comintern leaders. Soviet Union had already been arming the Kuomintang and hoped that the Left wing would ultimately assume its leadership.

Borodin, Roy's mentor, was already there as the chief envoy of the Comintern, giving direction, coordinating activities and controlling the purse. The Comintern was aware that a large section of the Kuomintang was coming from the land owning class, and therefore wary of annoying them by encouraging the peasants to seize their lands. On the contrary, Roy in keeping with his Draft Thesis, advocated in his articles and speeches the immediate need of starting an agrarian revolution instead of trusting the unreliable Kuomintang. Stalin in this context instructed the Chinese communists to combine land seizure with continued collaboration with the Kuomintang. The Chinese communists were weak and rather confused. They were caught unawares when the Kuomintang, sensing the next step communists, were to start their onslaught, killing about 27000 of them in Canton alone. For the time being at least, the communist challenge had been contained. Mao later ironically commented, "Borodin stood a little to the right and Roy to the Left. But both of them only stood." In retrospect Mao's evaluation would appear grossly unfair. As Kris Manjappa has noted, Roy did not merely stand helplessly, indulging in abstract theorization as many communist Christians would have us

believe, but travelled extensively through the villages around Canton and Kankow, trying to mobilize peasants. He even contacted the Sikh community based in Hankow and Sanghai and even the British soldiers of Indian origin. Roy returned to Moscow with a heavy heart crossing the Gobi desert on the way on a jeep provided by the officials. It was as arduous and as perilous a journey as it could be.

Indian communists following his expulsion from the Comintern, came to regard him as an enemy - worse still a renegade. They spread the canard that Roy had been expelled for the Chinese disaster. But the Comintern never put the blame on him: otherwise his detailed report on the debacle would never have been published. On his part he took the defeat seriously and thought deeply over the Chinese situation. The product was the massive "Revolution and Counterrevolution in China", based on his research and firsthand experience in China. Very few scholars of modern Chinese history are familiar with the text. The communists with their enormous propaganda machinery succeeded in stigmatizing Roy and blocking him almost completely from eager activists and scholars within and outside the party. The communist movement disintegrated and in most countries, died out; the Comintern was abolished in 1943 and the Soviet Union, the land of revolution imploded in 1991. However, our Marxists still remain prisoners to the past. Roy still remains excommunicated, neglected and reviled for having the courage to critique communism and think out of the box. As it stands, Indian communists have to accept multiparty democracy and also the market despite their inherent limitations. The challenge before them is how to deepen democracy and save it from corporate takeover with the help of religious fascists. Roy has much to offer in this regard.

Taken from the Facebook post of Bhaskar Sur dated 24 January 2022. 🌈

Stalin's young man: M.N. Roy and the Russian Revolution



The high point in M.N. Roy's turbulent political life was when he rubbed shoulders with the most important leaders of the international communist movement.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Livemint

A century after the Russian Revolution, we look at back at those tumultuous events through the eyes of M.N. Roy, a remarkable Indian witness to the making of an epoch

Few Indian political leaders had as eventful a life as M.N. Roy did. He plunged into the nationalist movement after the partition of Bengal in 1905. His early idols were the Bengali revolutionaries as well as the fiery Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Roy left India in 1915 to acquire weapons for the fight against the British. The months he spent in the US radicalized him, and Roy improbably became one of the founders of the Mexican Communist Party.

Roy later rose to the highest levels of the international communist movement, before he parted ways. He returned to India only to be sent to jail for six years by the colonial government. One result of these years of incarceration was a comprehensive critique of Marxism.

Roy would later be the guiding light of the radical humanist movement. Among its core beliefs was that freedom is for individuals rather than collectives, social progress should be measured by the amount of freedom every individual has, human beings are innately rational, philosophy should be rooted in science

rather than in religion, political change has to be preceded by a cultural renaissance and that decentralized democracy without political parties is the best way to organize political life.

His most celebrated books include *Science and Philosophy*, *New Humanism: A Manifesto and Reason*, *Romanticism and Revolution*. A more detailed look at Royist philosophy is available at the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Roy, who died in 1954, is now a forgotten man, though some of his ideas found echoes in the total revolution movement launched by Jayaprakash Narayan in the 1970s. The high point in Roy's turbulent political life was when he rubbed shoulders with the most important leaders of the international communist movement.

Here, we present extracts from his memoirs of his days in Russia soon after the October Revolution, which took place 100 years ago this week. These extracts include his first impressions of Moscow, pen portraits of Lenin and Stalin, the abortive effort of getting radical Indian nationalists to work with the communists and his plan to build an army for the liberation of India.

First day in Moscow

It was about noon when the train reached our destination. Lomonosov looked at his watch and declared that it was exactly on time. The railway system of Russia had been very badly dislocated by the civil war. It was years before regular train service was restored, and trains ran according to any time-table. In 1920, the entire railway system was still reserved for military transport. There was no private passenger traffic. None could simply go to a station, buy a ticket and board a train to travel. The Revolution had abolished money; consequently, there was no distinction between the rich and the poor.

Only pass-holders could use the railway for travel on official business. In order to get a meal in a restaurant or a pair of boots in a shop or board a tram-car in the city, one must produce the certificate of labour. Public life was governed by the principle of revolutionary social justice: "No work, no bread."

While leading us out of the station, Lomonosov apologised that it would take years to run a regular train service on all the lines, and proudly reminded us that Russia had the second largest railway mileage in the world. But one thing had been already achieved: on the line connecting the two capitals, no less than three trains were run daily, and they all kept the time. He added in a whisper that the second important man of the country travelled three times a week in the train which had brought us. But our privilege did not go to the extent of travelling in the same train with him. No private person was allowed to do so.

I learned later that the awe-struck reference was to Zinoviev, who travelled between the two capitals three times a week because he was President of the Leningrad Soviet, Member of the all-powerful Political

Bureau of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. A man who wore the imposing triple crown (none else had the distinction) was naturally regarded as the most important person next only to Lenin.

The political capital of the Republic had been shifted to Moscow, because Leningrad was exposed to the danger of invasion. A powerful German army was still entrenched in Finland, just across the frontier, only at a distance of a few miles. The White Army of the Tzarist General Yudenitch, backed by the German Baltic Army and encouraged by the Entente Powers, had reached the southern suburb of the city in the summer of 1919. Situated deep in the heart of the country, Moscow could not be so threatened. But being traditionally the centre of feudal power and reaction, its social and cultural atmosphere was hardly congenial for the rise of new revolutionary institutions. The medieval walled city of the Kremlin was the most incongruous seat for the headquarters of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic.

Leningrad, on the contrary, was a modern city with an industrial periphery which was the social base of the revolution. The revolution began there and spread to the rest of the country. Not only was the Petrograd proletariat the first to capture power, they also defended the new revolutionary government with their lives. Therefore, the Soviet and the Party organisation of Leningrad were given the pride of place in the revolutionary State, and dominated the political life of the Republic.

The vast open space in front of the station was crowded with men in uniform; rickety carriages pulled by emaciated horses lurched on the cobblestones at the risk of being smashed by motor cars which defied all usual traffic regulations. The recklessness was all the more remarkable because the

madly dashing cars were all occupied by military men. I suppose the recklessness demonstrated the feeling of power which, as I lived to learn, bred callousness to other people's lives. I was jolted out of a daze caused by the impact of first impressions, expected and unexpected, when a large black limousine stopped in front of us. The driver was in a soldier's uniform.

Lomonosov opened the door for Madame Sadoul to get in. Schlipkin gave him an address and the car moved on. We followed in another with the hood down. In the front seat by the driver sat a grim-faced soldier holding a gun in his hand. The heavy car bounced and rattled as it dashed on the cobbled road at a high speed. The streets looked deserted because all the shop windows were boarded up. Nobody seemed to loiter; all the passers-by looked purposeful.

Presently, we crossed an iron bridge on a rather narrow stream. It was the Moscow River. Driving along the river for a short distance our car swung through the iron gate into the spacious compound of what looked like a large private house. Borodin came out in the portico and led me up the magnificent wooden stair into a suite of rooms which simply took my breath away. It was not a palace; but who lived in the regal comfort and luxury of the gorgeous mansion? Borodin answered my unspoken question. In the old days, it had been the town residence of Count Gutchkov. A nobleman taken to business, he had a large share in the beet sugar industry and was known as the "Sugar King" of Russia. The revolution having abolished private property, the "Gutchkov Mansion" belonged to the State; the ground-floor was the private residence of Karakhan, Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs. The upper-storey was reserved for distinguished State guests. Before I could ask more questions which were rushing to my mind,

Borodin conducted me to a tall window and pushed aside the thick pink satin curtain.

The Moskwa was flowing in front of the house; along the other bank there ran a high wall behind which, in a forest of proud minarets and high church steeples, several huge golden domes glistened in the afternoon sun. That was the Kremlin. It was built several hundred years ago as a castle, but large enough to be a walled city within a much larger fortified city. So, I was in Moscow, and living right under the wall of the Kremlin.

Borodin was occupying the adjacent suite. He withdrew so that I could get ready for dinner, which was served at 5 P.M., after office hours. In the evening, I was to meet Karakhan, who was my host. The dinner was a striking contrast to the house. Served on a magnificent table in a spacious room, whose high walls were panelled with reddish brown wood, the meal consisted of cabbage soup, a slice of black bread and kasha (a kind of very dark grain, broken and cooked), Borodin informed me with grim humour that the last dish was a luxury, and the tiny bit of meat in the soup was not always available.

That was the standard meal served in all government establishments. Equality had been attained, though on a very low level, but now that the civil war was practically over, the level would rise. Compared with the conditions in the previous winter, when counterrevolutionary armies were marching on Moscow from all sides, the situation had improved considerably. In addition to the scarcity of food, there was an extreme shortage of fuel, and the temperature was far below the freezing point. Some peasants took pity, and came to the gates of the Kremlin with a cartload of wood for Lenin. The hardships experienced in Moscow were mainly due to the resistance to war

communism in the countryside. The entire surplus produce of nationalised land was claimed as the share of the State. The peasants simply would not produce more than they needed for subsistence. The result was scarcity and starvation in the urban areas. Moscow with its inflated population was the worst sufferer.

First meeting with Lenin

The entrance to the office of the President of the Council of People's Commissars was guarded by an army of secretaries headed by an oldish woman. Unassuming in behaviour, plain in looks and rather shabbily attired, she was evidently efficient with her unobtrusive authority. Pindrop silence reigned in the large room occupied by Lenin's personal Secretariat, which was composed of about a dozen people. The grey-haired chief moved silently from one desk to another whenever she wanted to speak to any of her subordinate colleagues. They all spoke in the lowest possible whisper. None but the chief was privileged to enter Lenin's office. No ordinary person could occupy the position of great trust. The quiet and rather colourless Saint Peter of the Bolshevik heaven was a senior member of the party, a well known figure in Moscow, and respected by all.

The way to Lenin's Secretariat lay through a well appointed ante-room which was always empty. No expectant visitor was ever kept waiting there. Lenin did not share the proverbial Russian disregard for time, which is a national characteristic the Bolsheviks had inherited. Punctuality seemed to be blacklisted as an abominable petit-bourgeois prejudice. The disregard for time was the greater the more eminent was the leader. It was justified by his manifold duties and engagements. Zinoviev beat all records. There was occasions when he kept sessions

of a Congress of the Communist International or meetings of its Executive Committee waiting for hours.

Lenin was the only exception. As regards the attitude towards time, he was most un-Russian. That explained the emptiness of the ante-room of a man who received numerous callers every day. Generally, interviews were brief, often allotted unusual fractions of time, such as nine or thirteen minutes, and the limitation of time was rigidly enforced. A couple of minutes before a particular interview was due to end, Comrade Maria (the head of Secretariat) pressed a button and a small electric bulb flashed on Lenin's desk. But the latter was not given any chance to risk his reputation for punctuality. Having given the signal, Comrade Maria would usher in the next caller; if there was none to follow immediately, she would herself appear with some paper and lay it in front of Lenin. In the inner circle, it was said in joke that Comrade Maria treated Ilyitch like a school boy.

Passing through the empty ante-room, I was escorted into the Secretariat. Engrossed in their respective preoccupation, the inmates took no notice of me. But St. Peter of the Bolshevik, heaven was always on the alert. She stood up, looked at the big clock on the wall, and silently came forward to take over the charge from the subordinate colleague who had escorted from the entrance of the palace. She conducted me towards a tall silver and gold door, pushed it open gently, just enough for one to pass, and with a motion of the head bade me enter. I stepped in, and the door silently closed behind me.

It was a vast rectangular room, with a row of tall windows giving on a spacious courtyard surrounded by other wings of the palace. The ceiling was so high as almost to touch the sky. The room was practically

bare; only the floor was covered with a thick carpet. My attention was immediately attracted by the bald dome of a head stooping very low on the top of a big desk placed right in the middle of the room. I was nervous and walked towards the desk, not knowing what else to do. By silencing my footsteps, the thick carpet sympathized with my anxiety not to cause the least disturbance. It was quite a distance, from the door to the desk. Before I had covered hardly half of it, the owner of the remarkable head was on his feet and briskly came forward with the right hand extended. I was in the presence of Lenin.

Nearly a head shorter, he tilted his red goatee almost to a horizontal position to look at my face quizzically. I was embarrassed, did not know what to say. He helped me out with a banter: "You are so young! I expected a grey-bearded wise man from the East." The ice of initial nervousness broken, I found words to protest against the disparagement of my seven and twenty years.

Lenin laughed, obviously to put an awe-struck worshipper at ease. Though much too overwhelmed by the experience of a great event to observe details, I was struck by the impish look which often relieved the severity of the expression of a fanatic. It belied the widely held view that in Lenin's personality the heart was choked in the iron grip of a hard head; that the great revolutionary was a willful machine without the least touch of humanness. The impish smile did not betray cynicism. Lenin was the most unmitigated optimist. Not only was he convinced unshakably that Marxism was the final truth, but he believed equally firmly in its inevitable triumph. He combined the fervor of the prophet with the devotion of the evangelist. Otherwise, he could not advocate capture of power, single handed, as against the stubborn

opposition of all his followers, when there appeared to be very little chance for the Bolsheviks to hold it longer than a few days or weeks. At that juncture, Lenin was guided more by faith than by reason; and it was faith not in the secular Providence of historical determinism, but in man's unlimited capacity to make history. In the most crucial moment of his life and also of contemporary history, Lenin acted as a romanticist; and that one act of extraordinary audacity raised him to the pinnacle of greatness, and won for him a place amongst the immortals of human history.

Danton and Lenin are the two greatest revolutionaries of modern times, and Danton was also a romanticist. The soul of the Great French Revolution was killed when jealousy of the hypocritical High-Priest of Reason sent Danton to the guillotine. Like his great predecessor, Lenin also had the audacity to call for moderation before the cup was drained to the dregs, before it was too late. He had no rival, though Trotsky might pretend to imitate Robespierre's fanaticism after Lenin's death, if he had the chance. Therefore, had not the cruel hand of a natural death removed him prematurely Lenin might have turned the course of the revolution to a more fruitful direction. The New Economic Policy was the signal. Its unfoldment might have headed off the subsequent relapse into terrorism and coercion, which destroyed the utopian ideal of Communism. But Trotsky's Left opposition compelled Stalin to kill the Dantonist spirit of Lenin. The two contenders for the succession to Lenin together did for the Russian Revolution what Robespierre had done for the French.

These ideas about Lenin's personality and his place in the history of revolution took shape in my mind gradually, years after I met him for the first time. But their roots can be traced to the initial impression.

The man whose ominous shadow was cast athwart the capitalist world, in reality, did not at all live up to his frightful reputation. The crown of dictatorial power sat on his head very lightly. There was nothing of a dictator in his physical bearing or manner of speaking. Nor was his remarkable modesty an affectation — a repulsive demonstration of the consciousness of superiority. He was frank in speech and friendly in behavior. For years he had been the undisputed leader of the Bolshevik Party. More than once, a majority of the Central Committee of the party disagreed with him. But none ever dreamed of replacing him as the leader of the party. He was more than a leader, he was the preceptor — High Priest of Bolshevism. He was friend and philosopher for the old cadre of the party. They loved him.

Since the early years of his political career, Lenin had fought bitter factional fights inside the Russian Social-Democratic Party and the Second International. His polemics against the right-wing leaders were charged with brimstone and fire. He expounded the dangerous theory that the party of the proletariat must be an iron cohort of professional revolutionaries. But his behaviour inside the Bolshevik Party was always democratic. Whenever he failed to persuade the Central Committee to agree with his view, he referred the issue to the rank and file of the party, and in those days, there was no bureaucratic machinery to manipulate the party and manufacture a rank and file endorsement for the opinion of the leader. In July 1917, a majority of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party rejected Lenin's proposal that it should call for an armed insurrection preparatory to capturing power. He returned to his place of hiding in Finland, and wrote a series of articles in the party organ, *Pravda*, expounding his thesis. Within a couple of

months the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies met to issue the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

In discussions inside the party, Lenin used to drive his point home with picturesque arguments. He backed up his view that the new-born Soviet Government should sign the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the argument that the soldiers had voted for peace with their feet. How? By running away from the fronts. While defending the New Economic Policy in the All-Russian Congress of Soviet, he pleaded: "We must now learn the housekeeping of the Revolution." Expounding in the Second World Congress his thesis that the movement for the liberation of the colonial peoples was a revolutionary force, he warned: "But don't paint Nationalism red."

Having helped me out of the initial embarrassment and nervousness, Lenin returned to his seat at the desk and asked me to take a chair across it. As he turned back to walk to his seat, I had good glance at the man. I had by then recovered my wits and poise. The height of the room accentuated the shortness of the man, so much so that he looked almost like a dwarf. His big head was quite appropriate to the deceptive picture. The picture was deceptive because Lenin was not a dwarf, being well above five feet. He was 5 ft. 4 inches, I believe. Another habit made him look shorter than he really was. He walked with a stoop, without turning the head either in the left or to the right; nor did he raise his eyes to see that was ahead. The posture suggested that he was engrossed in thought even when walking; and the quickness of his steps seemed to synchronise with the swift rhythm of his mind. He seemed to be always in a great hurry as if keenly conscious of the magnitude of his mission and the inadequacy of time at his disposal. One may wonder if


he had a premonition of early death. He was so very impatient to get things done quickly that he restricted the freedom of the tongues of the members of the all-powerful Politbureau. In his time, it had only seven members. In its weekly meetings, none was allowed to speak more than twice, fifteen minutes for the first time and five for the second. Though he thought quickly, his speech was deliberate and sometimes even slow. Except when addressing the masses, he spoke like a teacher lecturing in the class room or an advocate arguing a case in the law court.

Having resumed his seat, Lenin leaned forward on the desk and fixed his almond-shaped twinkling eyes on my face. The impish smile lit up his face, I felt completely at ease, as if I was accustomed to sitting by the desk, not in the presence of a great man, a powerful dictator, but in the pleasant company of an old friend. Indeed it might be that of a benevolent father smiling benignly on a son who has made good and promises to do better. The remembrance of Balabanova's congratulation made me somewhat dizzy, but her motherly admonition was also fresh in my memory.

Lenin's voice disturbed my introspection. Borodin had reported my activities in Mexico. I must give a more detailed account. It was a highly interesting experiment in revolutionary strategy. Surely I was reluctant to leave the work so well begun. But there were more urgent revolutionary tasks which must have priority. It would be long before revolutions could succeed in the New World. Conditions might mature in Mexico and other Latin American countries in the near future. But American Imperialism was on the alert to intervene as it had done in the past. We must for the present concentrate on the old world; and the oppressed and exploited masses of Asia have to be mobilized in a

gigantic revolutionary movement. My experience in Mexico was extremely valuable for the purpose. In practice, I had anticipated the theory of revolutionary strategy in colonial and semi-colonial countries outlined in the draft theses for the Second World Congress. Had I read them? No, I apologized. Because the documents was given to me just before I was to see its author; but I would study it as soon as I had the time. Then we must meet again to discuss it. Lenin added, and proceeded to plead his ignorance of the conditions in the colonial countries. Therefore he needed my cooperation in the preparation of a document which was destined to be a landmark in the history of the revolutionary movement. My understanding of Marxism was sure to throw a new light on the history and the present conditions of the colonial countries.

The little electric bulb gave the signal — Lenin sat back and remarked that the interview must end on Maria's order. The impish smile returned in his eyes. I got up to say good-bye, and found Lenin by my side. Taking me by the arm, he conducted me towards the door which opened to let in a man with a shock of black hair, a sensitive face and a little paunch. He was dressed in baggy trousers and a soft white shirt, its collar held together with a black silk string instead of a necktie. He was carrying a bulging leather portfolio under one arm. Lenin introduced me to the newcomer. It was Comrade Zinoviev, who took my hand in a limp grip. His was small and soft like a woman's. He spoke a few words in a high pitched voice and desired me to see him soon. Outside in the Secretariat, a young man was standing guard on three big suitcases, each of which contained, as I learned later, important papers pertaining to one of the three high offices held by Zinoviev.

To be continued in the next issue.... 

Continued from the last issue...

Science and Philosophy by M.N. Roy

The mystery of Life

Summarized by: **Vinod Jain**

The mystery about the origin of life was believed to be beyond the reach of science It was pointed out that the very term “organic” or “living” was the antithesis of the concept of inert matter; it stood for a spiritual being. It was further maintained that the purpose of a creative power pervaded the animal kingdom. Every particular organism was supposed to be created to fit into its allotted place in a grand scheme of divine providence.

Upon the discovery of the cell, the modern science of the phenomena of motion (life) in animals and plants, namely physiology, also adopted the mechanistic view. Finally,

Darwin changed all this.

The basic principles of Darwinism, outlined previously by other eminent naturalists, such as Lamarck, St. Hilaire Goethe and others completely revolutionised the science of biology. Formerly, biology simply discovered, verified and assorted various organic forms. Darwinism made us acquainted with the causality of the process of continuous development which runs throughout the organic world. Therefore, Haeckel defined Darwinism as “the science of the true cause of nature”. Darwinism defined the position of man in nature.

Darwinism explained the mechanism of the evolution of organic forms from the lowest to the highest. The works of Huxley and Haeckel suggested the possibility of the spontaneous generation of organic matter out of inanimate matter. Still there remained “the missing link” to baffle biologists and to provide the spiritualists with what they declared to be an

irrefutable argument against materialist philosophy.

Eventually, the problem of the “missing link” was also solved theoretically by the discovery that there is no uniformity in nature; that the process of evolution includes sudden jumps. The doctrine of mutation revolutionised the doctrine of evolution.

Life is not a mysterious immaterial force. It grows out of inanimate matter in a certain state of organisation. Intelligence is a physiological function; brain is the organ of thought; and thought is the function of the brain.

Half a century before Darwin, Lamarck had laid down in broad outlines the mechanistic principle of modern biology. He wrote: “Life is nothing more than a mere physical phenomenon. All appearances of life can be traced back to mechanical — physico chemical — causes which lay in the very structure of organic matter. The simplest forms of animal and plant, which represent the lowest stage of the process of the evolution of life, have grown and are still growing out of the root cause.” (Zoological Philosophy).

Darwin, however, carefully avoided the question of the origin of the organisms or organic matter. In “Origin of Species” he expressly remarks that he has nothing “to do with the origin of the soul nor with that of life.”

Haeckel carried Darwin’s theory to its logical conclusion, and reinforced Lamarckian hypothesis of spontaneous generation of organisms with observational data.

Scientific knowledge about the history of the Universe shows that organic beings did not exist on this earth from time immemorial. They could not, because of the uninhabitable state of this planet as well as of the other members of the solar system. Only at a certain stage, after the earth's surface was covered by water, organisms came into being.

Haeckel discovered the very simplest forms of organisms floating on the surface of the sea. He called them the 'monera' and described them as "organisms without organs". He wrote: "They are very small living carpuscles, which strictly speaking do not deserve the name of organism, not composed of any organs at all, but consist entirely of shapeless, simple homogeneous matter. The entire body of one of these 'monera' is nothing more than a shapeless, mobile, little lump of mucus or slime, consisting of an albuminous combination of carbon. A simpler or more imperfect organism we cannot possibly conceive." (General Morphology).

Huxley also discovered a similar form of lowest organism in the depth of the ocean — twelve to thirteen thousand feet below the surface. They are found in great quantities, sometimes in the shape of roundish, formless lumps of mucus, and sometimes in the form of a network of mucus, covering fragments of stone and other objects. Huxley named these creatures of his discovery 'Bathybius Haekelii'.

The discovery of these simplest and lowest organisms threw some light on the secret of life. The very term "organism" means a combination of various parts (organs), which function in unison to produce the phenomenon of life. The 'monera' and the 'Bathybius Haekeli' were not composite organisms; they "consist solely of a single chemical combination and yet grow, nourish and propagate themselves." (Haeckel). A simple compound of carbon is the seat of original life, which is

nothing more mysterious than the totality of the molecular motion of matter. Originally, all organisms are nothing more than simple lumps of an albuminous substance called protoplasm — a combination of carbon with oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen.

There is no essential difference between organic and inorganic matter. All material bodies are formed out of the combination of such elements as carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, sulphur, potassium, sodium etc. These chemicals are also found in vegetables and animal bodies. There are no such elements which are absent in the inorganic substance. The difference lies in life. That is to say, when a certain combination of a number of chemical elements produces the phenomenon called life, it enters into the domain of organic nature. The primary manifestation of this phenomenon is the process of nutrition and multiplication. The simplest and lowest forms of organism discovered by Haeckel and Huxley appear to mark the boundary line between the organic and the inorganic nature. Haeckel wrote : "On a count of the perfect homogeneity of the albuminous substance of their bodies, on a count of their utter want of heterogeneous particles, the 'monera' are more closely connected with the inorgana than with organisms, and evidently form the transition between the organic and the inorganic world of bodies."

A systematic experimental investigation into the origin of life began when the discoveries of Redi and Leeuwenhock in the middle of the seventeenth century led to the formulation of the doctrine of biogenesis. Pasteur's researches, more than a hundred years later, also led to the conclusion that living beings originated only from other forms of life.

Primeval atmosphere (after the cooling down of the earth's crust) contained no oxygen or very little of it. The present supply of oxygen warrants that theoretical deduction. At present,

there is just enough of it to burn all the store of coal and other organic remains. There is evidence of the existence of carbon dioxide and ammonia in the primeval atmosphere.

We know life only as connected with certain definite chemical compounds which consist essentially of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. How the actual living substance — protoplasm — is related chemically to these compounds, is not yet fully explained. Protein is the main constituent of protoplasm. Colloid compounds may be regarded as the intermediate stage between dead and living matter. Spontaneous generation of life takes place in this region now being investigated by colloid chemistry, which is building the bridge over the gulf between the organic and inorganic world.

There are no chemical substances or processes in organisms, which cannot be imitated. Beginning with Woehler's manufacture of uric acid, a succession of biochemical compounds have been synthetically produced.

Finally, the latest development of bacteriology has practically eliminated the border-line between the dead and the living. The chemical compound of a cell does not possess life. The link between living and dead matter, therefore, must be somewhere between the cell and the atom.

In the last analysis we are up against the problem of another "missing link" down in the scale of evolution. The actual cycle of life is biological. The break occurred once upon a time. We cannot reverse the process of the

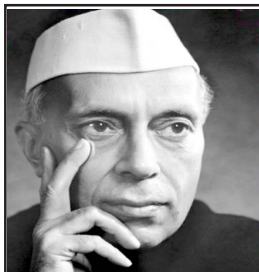
earth from its fiery origin to observe actually the first appearance of life. But the process can be reconstructed conceptually, and deductions made therefrom logically should be theoretically valid.

The phenomenon called life appears under certain definite physical conditions. That warrants the hypothesis that life is a chemical process, which takes place in a certain physical state. Once in an earlier stage of evolution, the most primitive form of life appeared. There began the cycle of life — protista — plant — animal — decomposition into organic compounds — their absorption in the organic world. The original point of contact between the organic and inorganic world broke up. Therefore, spontaneous generation cannot be traced. It was a event in the past.

It can now be established logically. The fact (a) that the cycle of life takes place in the context of the physical world, (b) that inorganic matter is continuously going into the formation of organisms, (c) that every point of the cycle is connected with the physical context shows (d) that life is conditional upon matter.

The assumption that life is an independent category cannot be taken seriously, unless there is a possibility of showing that life can exist by itself. Therefore, the origin of life can no longer be kept shrouded in a metaphysical mystery.

The process of the evolution of matter includes emergence of novelties. Life originated as a novelty in the context of the physical Universe. 🌈



'We have laid down in Our Constitution that India is a secular state. That does not mean irreligion. It means equal respect for all faiths and equal opportunities for those who profess any faith.'

-: Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

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- Mahi Pal Singh

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