

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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MUBARAK BALA SENTENCED TO 24 YEARS IN PRISON

It is a sad day for the global humanist community.

Humanists International regrets to inform you that Mubarak Bala, the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria and our colleague, has been sentenced to 24 years in prison.

“The thoughts of the whole global humanist movement are with our friend Mubarak, his wife, and his baby son. This is a day of shame for the Nigerian authorities, who have imposed an unthinkable punishment on an innocent man,” Andrew Copson, President of Humanists International said.

Humanists International is currently working with the legal team to fully understand the impact of these developments, and to explore all options for appeal. I know some of you will have questions about this unexpected outcome, and we will aim to provide more information as soon as we are able to.

Humanists International continues to call on the Nigerian authorities to quash this completely unjust and entirely outrageous conviction, and safely release Mubarak Bala.

Gary McLelland,

Chief Executive, Humanists International

**Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI) supports the movement of
Humanists International – Mahi Pal Singh, Secretary, IRI**

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Articles and Features :

Special Article as a tribute to India's Greatest Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, on his 58th death anniversary on 27th May:

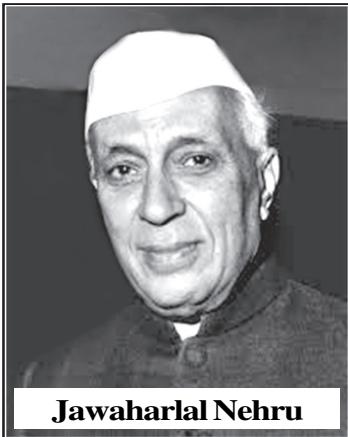
Nehru: India's Extraordinary Atheist Prime Minister

Mark Koisen

Historians have been reluctant to acknowledge that India's most famous Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was not only an atheist but an extraordinarily learned atheist. His atheism did not develop as a reaction to a religious upbringing or the suffering of the Indian people (though he thought that only a secular society could alleviate the suffering). Nor did Nehru become a non-believer due to the contradictions and violence inherent in "holy" scriptures. Rather, Nehru's atheism was grounded in his education and reading of science; especially his remarkable understanding of history, evolutionary biology and physics. Comparing Nehru to Napoleon, the Australian diplomat Walter Croker wrote in his 1966 book, *Nehru: a Contemporary's Estimate* [Oxford University Press], "few indeed have been Heads of Government in our time with such a force, or range, of mind." Crocker added: "Few errors in reasoning ever escaped him," and told how he once witnessed Nehru correcting a Nobel Prize winner for a careless statement the scientist had made. On religion, Crocker wrote that Nehru was a "declared agnostic."

But Croker's observation is exceptional, because writers often mask Nehru's atheism – or "agnosticism"¹ – while focusing on his critique of religion. For example, in his 1956 *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Macmillan Publishers), Frank Moraes correctly states that

Nehru believed religion replaced clear thinking with dogma and that politicians especially should eschew religion and concern themselves with improving Indian society. But Moraes also states that "it is not that [Nehru] is godless but



Jawaharlal Nehru

he feels religion is a purely personal and private affair which has no place in politics, particularly Indian politics, which has always been sensitive to fanatical religious appeals." As I will show, Nehru was in fact "godless", and it is further nonsense for Moraes to backpedal by later admitting that "In the stress of the moment, Nehru has been known to give vent to utterances suggesting a

profound scepticism in the existence of the Almighty." I say "nonsense" because many of Nehru's "utterances" were done during his nine jail terms (total time served: nine years) when, by Nehru's own accounting, he had plenty of time to ponder theology and was more bored than "stressed".

Similarly, in 1968 the Catholic Reverend Victor Z. Narivelil wrote a well-researched master's degree thesis titled "Nehru and the Secular State of India". Like Moraes, Narivelil emphasized that because of India's history of religious conflicts, Nehru wanted a strict separation of church and state. Religion, he thought, should be a private matter. But to Narivelil, Nehru's "secularism" was merely the means by which Nehru resisted communalism in India. Instead of doing the "easy" thing and

creating a Hindu state, Nehru had “courageously” kept India’s diverse faiths on an equal footing so that all classes of people could identify with him and the Indian state. By Narivelil’s account, Nehru was thus a “humanist”, not a “secularist”. And Narivelil does not even entertain the possibility that the “courageous” Nehru was an “atheist”. (The ecumenical spirit of Vatican II didn’t extend that far!)

Indian writers have also shied away from Nehru’s atheism. C.A. Perumal (“Nehru and Secularism”, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, July-September 1987), accurately argues that Nehru thought religion regulated every aspect of an individual’s life and that only a “secular state” could unite which was plagued by communalism. But Perumal thinks that Nehru’s main problem with religion was that, by attributing all worldly phenomena to God’s will, religion inhibited the introduction of scientific methods into Indian society. By Perumal’s account, Nehru thought religion should address “final causes” and let science deal with the immediate causes” of worldly phenomena. Perumal is correct that Nehru wanted science to prevail in India, but religion was more than an inhibitor that should “stay in its lane.” Their more honest piece (“Nehru and Gandhi on Religion”, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, July-September 2005), Nehru thought orthodox religion “absurd” and a personal god “very odd”. Yet, even these two authors circumvent Nehru’s atheism by quoting Nehru’s commonsense statement that “Whether we believe in god or not, it is impossible not to believe in something, whether we call it a creative life-giving force or vital energy in matter which gives its capacity for self movement and change and growth.” Yes, these are Nehru’s words, but to Nehru this “force” or “energy” had nothing to do with metaphysics or the supernatural. Rather, Nehru was probably referring here to atoms! More

on this shortly.

It should be added that FREE INQUIRY has also not recognized Nehru’s extraordinary atheism. In the archives, he’s only mentioned twice. In a 2016 op-ed (“Two Nations, one Abyss”, December 2015/January 2016), Tom Flynn credited Nehru with launching “a vigorous secularizing campaign” under the assumption that (here Flynn quoted University of Chicago’s Ronald Inden). “In order to modernize, India would have to set aside centuries of traditional religious ignorance and superstition and eventually eliminate Hinduism and Islam from people’s lives altogether.” This statement was fundamentally accurate, though I doubt Nehru ever really thought he could eradicate religion from India. However, while recognizing Nehru’s (unsuccessful) efforts to secularize Indian politics. Flynn never delineated Nehru’s beliefs. In the next *FI* issue (February/March 2016), a letter from a Hindu challenged Flynn by asserting – contrary to all evidence – that Nehru “never was a secularist.” Besides these two instances, Nehru seems to have been forgotten in these pages. It’s time to make amends!

Nehru’s Path to Atheism

In his *An Autobiography* (The Bodley Head, 1936), Nehru chronicles how his areligious “temper” developed early in life, beginning with the influence of his father, an important Indian politician, who served twice as president of India’s Congress and who had no taste for religion. It accelerated in college and during World War I, when he read Bertrand Russell and “first heard the modern definition of faith: to believe in something which your reason tells you cannot be true.” At university he was particularly influenced by “scientific studies”, including Carl Marx’s “scientific” analysis of capitalism and the inequalities it generated. Throughout his life Nehru always

maintained that although Marx did not – indeed, could not – anticipate how capitalism would adept to left-wing challenges and government interventions, his analysis of capitalism’s nature was fundamentally correct. And only socialism – not a dogmatic socialism but one modified to India’s special conditions – could alleviate poverty, especially in rural India. Before 1947 – when India achieved independence – Nehru thought that instituting socialism through constitutional means was impossible and concluded, “There is no way out except by revolution or illegal action.” Perhaps his conclusion was reached – or reinforced – in 1927 when his father and he were invited to the Soviet Union, where Nehru was impressed by the nation’s efforts to reduce inequality. Although Nehru’s attitude toward the USSR changed during Stalin’s reign of terror, he always thought that the early USSR offered India a model for alleviating its own poverty.

Marx’s dialectical materialism also enabled Nehru to understand a major problem with religion:

The religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of society ... Moral standards have no relation to social needs but are based on a highly metaphysical doctrine of sin. An organized religion invariably becomes a vested interest and thus a reactionary force opposing change and progress.

No one better exemplified the problem than Gandhi, “the greatest peasant, but with a peasant’s outlook on affairs, and with a peasant’s blindness to some aspects of life.” To Nehru, Gandhi glorified poverty, “the usual religious attitude everywhere ... [but] poverty seemed to me a hateful thing, to be fought and rooted out in any way.” Nehru often wondered how the faith-based Gandhi, his peace-loving good friend, could “accept the present social order ... which was based on violence and

conflict.”² In the end, because it justified Indian suffering,

The spectacle of what is called religion or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation and vested interests.

Of course, Nehru understood why people were drawn to religion. In his autobiography he wrote that Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism all offer comfort, “the assurance of a future life which will make up for the deficiencies of this life.” In England, the Church of England “has served the purposes of British imperialism and given both capitalism and imperialism a moral and Christian covering.” And among the non-oppressed, religion – he thought – also fulfills an inner human craving, a search for meaning.³

While Marx influenced his understanding of capitalism and religion, Nehru’s atheism was ultimately grounded in his understanding of history and science. In his remarkable *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1929), Nehru explains – with no references to god – the origins of the solar system and man. Exhibiting familiarity with George Darwin’s 1898 hypothesis that the moon had been spun from Earth, Nehru speculated that Earth – “merely a speck of dust hanging in the air” – may have been ejected by the sun. In 1912, German meteorologist Alfred Wegener had presented evidence for continental drift, a view Nehru conveyed to his daughter as he explained how continents and seas had evolved over time. And pointing to the fossil record as evidence, Nehru explained human development in terms of Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection. He emphasized the similarities between man

and animals, with man's greater "intelligence" being their main difference.

And for religion, Nehru expressed a view still held today: gods originated "through the fear of the unknown ... [humans] not understanding nature and much that happens around us." Being "simple and ignorant" people and fearing punishment from the gods, prehistoric man created temples and "terrible" images to worship. To drive home to his daughter (then twelve years old) the irrational and "foolish" nature of religion, Nehru explained that to placate their imaginary gods, Cretans sacrificed humans, including women and children. According to Crocker, Nehru so wanted to distance his daughter from religion that he did not even allow her to hear fairy tales.

Nehru's understanding of science increased over time. In a 1938 address to India's National Academy of Science, he talked knowledgeably of "astonishing developments in scientific thought", specifically quantum mechanics:

[T]he reality of even a particle of matter, we are told, is not its actuality but its potentiality. Matter becomes just a "group agitation" or "for the inter relations of activities". Everywhere there is motion, change, and the only unit of things real is the "event", which is and instantaneously is no more. Nothing is except a happening.

As for mankind: "[Humans] may be specks of dust on a soap-bubble universe." During this speech, Nehru implored scientists as they worked in their respective specialities, not to lose sight of the bigger picture: scientists must have a "social objective" and work with politicians to solve India's social problems. Nehru always believed that science not only discovered important truths but also could, on many difference levels, alleviate poverty in India.

In perhaps his most famous work, *The discovery of India* (John Day Company, 1946), Nehru wrote that science was so "widening its boundaries" – especially into the "invisible" world – that it might eventually "help us to understand the purpose of life in its widest sense, or at least give us some glimpses which illumine the problem of human existence ... [by] the application of the scientific method to emotional and religious experiences." After the United States had exploded an atomic bomb in 1945, many world leaders undoubtedly learned more about atoms, but Nehru understood the issue on a fundamental level:

Space-time and quantum theory changed the picture of the physical world. More recent research into the nature of matter, the structure of the atom, the transmutation of the elements, and the transformation of electricity and light ... have carried human knowledge much further. Man no longer sees nature as something apart and distinct from himself. Human destiny appears to become a part of nature's rhythm energy.

He later added, "The belief that all things are made of a single substance is as old as thought itself; but ours is the generation which, first of all in history, is able to receive the unity of nature, not as a baseless dogma or a hopeless aspiration, but a principle of science as sharp and clear as anything which is known."

Nehru's Legacy

After India achieved its independence in 1947, Nehru served as prime minister for eighteen years, first as interim prime minister and then as full prime minister of the new republic. As A.M. Rajasekhariah has beautifully documented ("Jawaharlal Nehru's Contribution to Secularism in India – an Estimate," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, April-June 1987), Nehru was

instrumental in establishing India as a secular state, embodied in Part 3 (“Fundamental Rights”) of India’s Constitution and several of its amendments. Envisioning “a political structure in which the individual was not subject to any social inequalities imposed by religious sanctions,” Nehru – in the words of Chester Bowles in a 1954 Ambassador’s Report – “created a secular state in which the 45 million Muslims who chose not to go to Pakistan many live peacefully and worship as they please.” In fact, although Indians still debate the meaning of “secularism”, and although religious intolerance still rears its ugly head there, India – thanks to Nehru – is more firmly secular than the United States.

During his long stint as prime minister, Nehru enacted many other policies. Nehru’s Wikipedia entry nicely summarizes his policy accomplishments – especially in education – and his failures, such as the Indo-China War of 1962. It also summarizes his extraordinary popularity, not only among Indians but among world leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower and Winston Churchill, who in 1955 called Nehru “the light of Asia”, greater than even Gautama Buddha. Almost all Indians I have met remember him, although their opinions of him vary. On a recent trip to Ecuador, I spoke with four elderly Indian expatriates, all of whom criticized Nehru’s “mixed economy” for inhibiting entrepreneurship and economic growth. Yet they also credited him with industrializing India. And when I detailed Nehru’s scientific/atheistic worldview and his efforts in creating India’s secular state, these four critics – now working in Silicon Valley – nodded approvingly.

¹ *I assure that any advocate of the scientific method (such as Nehru) conceives no real difference between agnosticism and atheism. As Richard Dawkins has often said, ultimately most scientists are atheists because theism has*

no evidence to support it. Yet scientists must also be open to new evidence, and if worthwhile evidence for god appeared, then scientists would be obligated to modify their views. So – almost by definition – every scientifically originated atheist is also an agnostic.

² *Throughout much of his life, Nehru expressed much ambivalence toward Gandhi, whom he dearly loved and respected but whose religious nature always rubbed Nehru the wrong way. In 1960, late in his life, Nehru’s opinion clearly had softened. He called Gandhi “a great and mighty leader” who waged “an almost continuous struggle … against inequality for the underdog.” Nehru cited Gandhi’s campaign to overturn the caste system and end untouchability in India.*

³ *On the other hand, Nehru thought that although religion offered a false answer to those who sought life’s “purpose”, a materialist lifestyle didn’t necessarily fulfil the craving. During a 1960 interview, he worried that increasing affluence and leisure time were producing increasingly discontented younger generations, manifested in growing rates of juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, and crime. To Nehru, leisure time left “the human mind hungry for something deeper in terms of moral and spiritual development.” The “struggle for survival” had kept previous generations busy, but satisfying their material needs now left newer generations in a “spiritual vacuum”. To Nehru, “{spiritual} fulfilment could be gained only one way: by leading an honourable moral life and working to help the oppressed. His definition of true “spirituality” closely resembled that of Robert Green Ingersoll.*

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on Modern South Asian Studies in Lund, Sweden 6-9 July 2004.*

Gujarat Riots - The Ugly Scar on Secular India

Dr. B.V. Muralidhar

ABSTRACT

Secularism is the backbone of Indian Constitution. The Constitution writers deliberately included this as India is a land of many religions. Occasionally, one could witness communal conflicts between Hindus - Muslims from the days of British rule and Hindus - Christians (now). They became a regular feature of late. The differences between the Indian National Congress and Muslim League during independence struggle sparked communal tensions, which was exploited by British. The partition of the sub-continent in 1947 is the result of the hatred between these two communities. The purpose of this paper is to trace the roots of this problem, how far the secular concept is followed and the backdrop of Gujarat riots which is a blot on Indian secularism.

Introduction

In the West, the term secularism was coined by Holyoke in 1849. To India and Nehru it means "Granting of equal status to all religions" - (see Ghule, Third Concept, December 1990). Secularism involves a whole way of life - an enlightened, rational view of society.

It demands that not only there should be tolerance between various communities but there should be a close and active interaction among them (see Singh, Third Concept, December 1990). The main concern of the leadership during independence struggle was to build an integrated nation. India being an ethno-cultural mosaic provides scope for variety and diversity. At the dawn of independence religion became a formidable

force and led to partition after considerable blood bath and painful migration on both sides of the border. After independence, the fact remained that India is the second largest Muslim population in the world next only to Indonesia (see Mohanasundaram, Third Concept, November 1999). Hence leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Moulana Azad and others tried to preserve the unity of India. This was partly because of their training in the West and partly due to their non-religious character were against the domination of religion in politics. Nehru wished to have an "Unity of mind and heart, which breaks down the barriers raised in the name of religion" (see Ravindra Kumar, Composite Culture of India and National Integration. 1987). This brand of secularism was termed as a radical form. The Indian model of nation- building should be viewed from the background of a highly diverse society with a long history of disunity.

Though the Nehruvian model of secularism was put to practice, there were threats to this concept even during his tenure. The painful memories of partition, the ever present problem of Kashmir since independence, in addition to communal tensions tested the applicability of this model. But as Rajni Kothari observes, Certain elements in the nation-building process prevented any major danger to this concept during the first decade of India's independence (see Kothari, New Delhi, 1977).

Growth of Secularism

Indian secularism has been buttressed by its people's fascination with non-violence and aversion to violence in course of their inquiry

into the nature of life, as manifested till date in its vegetarianism. It started with Buddhism and Jainism and though it was also extolled by the Upanishads (Ancient Scriptures), was seldom followed because of the myriad of other competing values. Buddha was an embodiment of non-violence and later Mahavira (founder of Jain religion) treated non-violence as an absolute and supreme virtue. But it was Buddha's teachings which was carried across the world. This noble task was performed by Emperor Ashoka (after the Kalinga war) and by Buddhist monks across Tibet, China, SouthEast Asia and Japan (See Sharan, Mainstream, 27 December 2003).

The tragedy and bane of India has been that after Ashoka, the logic of non-violence was not carried to politics or statecraft. Where as large sections of her people want to live by non-violence, the ruling class has been uninhibited in using violence to capture power (This was since 1960's). The country therefore presents a strange spectacle of extremes of violence by its rulers and non-violence by a great many of its people. It was left to Mahatma Gandhi to link non-violence with the country's political culture and social change. He became the greatest revolutionary of his time and addressed the crucial importance of the purity of both ends and means in attempting social change.

Gandhi adhered to Jainism for its principles of non-violence and universal tolerance. He was greatly impressed with Buddha and Christ for their revolutionary nature to change the old rotten traditions. He thus observed, "Jesus and Buddha were capable of intensely direct action. Christ defied the right of a whole empire and Gautama brought down on his knees before an arrogant priest hood" (see Jha, Third Concept November 2000). The same was carried into the independence struggle by Gandhi and other majority Indian National Congress leaders.

Reasons For Communal Violence

Then why one witness communal violence in India? Ever since India's independence, the adult franchise extended to the millions of people slowly forced castes and communities to realignment. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru adopted various methods to foster national unity and suppressed separatist and secessionist tendencies besides regional and communal fanaticism. Due to his efforts the elements were made to accept a secular framework through modification of their respective stance. The Congress party was the one which stood by the Muslims. Mrs. Gandhi who came to power after the split in 1968 laid a great deal of emphasis on secularism and socialism which continued till the "Emergency period" (see Mohansundarm, Third Concept) The qualitative change in the thinking of Muslims against Congress began after 1977 general elections as it started to adopt a policy of 'Soft Hinduism'. Such a step pushed parties like Bharathiya Janata Party (BJP) to the other extreme, the hard 'Hindutva' line which naturally did great deal of damage to the secular polity (see Engineer, The Hindu).

The progenitor of the concept 'Hindutva' was V. D. Savarkar, who implied that Hindu alone and exclusively is a full fledged Indian. (Quoted in his work, 'Who is Hindu'?).

This made Muslims and other minorities of other religious faiths to think they are supposed to be inferior and not complete Indians. The emergence of Hindu fundamentalism, naturally stimulated other forces which eventually weakened the nation-building process. Besides the Hindu-Muslim problem, the Sikhs issue in Punjab also became the focal point. One must understand the role of local issues or micro-level factors to understand the pattern of communal politics in India in the recent past. Asghar Ali Engineer, a noted columnist argued that the changing socio-economic factors played a crucial role in the communally sensitive

areas. This was due to slow process of economic growth which resulted in large scale unemployment and poverty. The result-ruling classes in India easily converted the economic problems into caste and communal problems (see Engineer, *The Hindu*). Though the word 'Secular' was incorporated in the constitution through 42nd Amendment in 1976, the handling of this sensitive concept produced negative result.

The social transformation which took place during Nehru's period gave birth to a spirit of Nationalism and identity as Indians. A sense of belongingness, though not cultural but secular emerged in the years after independence. It is this feeling which got rudely shaken in the communal frenzy since 1980's. The communal riots in places like Meerut, Aligarh, Moradabad, Jamshedpur, Benarus, Bhiwandi, Old city of Hyderabad, Coimbatore to name a few made the common man to lose faith in the practicality of secularism in the Indian context.

It is unfortunate that while paying lip service to secularism, all attempts were made to exploit religion by the political elite. Majority political parties made compromises with the fundamental elements for the sake of power and political benefit. Another trend emerging in the recent past also indicates how the government sometimes succumbs to the communal pressure from the fundamentalist elements. This politicises the religious identify and inturn gives legitimate role to communal organisations as real representatives of different religious communities (see Singh, Third Concept, March 1989). The Hindutva concept submerged in the body polity surfaced again in the changing atmosphere. They began to question the very secular spirit of the constitution. These forces gradually became a major challenge to the secular fabric in the country. To achieve their narrow political goals, places of worship became a battle field to gain

the support of what was believed as the 'Hindu vote bank'. The post Ayodhya scenario explained a number of things. The failure of the ruling class to preserve the principles of secularism in the face of communal pressures, emergence and later submergence of fundamental elements on both sides and the realignment of forces against such communal flare-ups make the issue a dynamic one (see Mohanasundaram, Third Concept).

Poverty and rate of illiteracy is very high in India. They are the pillars through which the journey of communal riots starts. They cannot understand the 'ifs' and 'buts' of religious conservatism. There are many ills in both Hinduism and Islam. We need to change these religious conservatism with the growing needs of time. It is easy for the political elite to fool public and achieve their goal of vote bank through communal card, if people are poor and illiterate and think that they do not have anything to do with changing times. They are the soft targets of politicians who use them to achieve their selfish political ends (see Purnima Singh, Third Concept, May 2002). This is very much evident in any incident of communal violence. It is the poor, who are the prime targets and pay dearly with their lives which is evident during the post-Babri masjid demolition Bombay riots and even the worse Gujarat's Godhra carnage.

Background of Godhra Carnage

If communal politics began to dominate the political system in the 1990's another malaise which afflicted the body polity from the beginning was corruption. It was from then the entire nature of Indian politics changed into a more visceral politics based on Caste/Other Backward Castes and a communal agenda. It was a result of the fragmentation of the Indian society between castes, due to a policy change by the central government led by V.P. Singh to implement Mandal Commission report.

The decision to reserve jobs for the other backward castes excluding caste Hindus led to a great upheaval in the country particularly among the youth. The BJP, which was waiting for an opportunity to garner the Hindu votes decided to meet the Mandal challenge with 'Kamandal' (see Sharan, Mainstream). The party which was a coalition partner withdrew support to the government on this issue. It also successfully mounted a national campaign to build a Ram temple at the site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The BJP was of a strong view that mosque had been built allegedly after pulling down the temple in the past.

In the early eighties, the BJP in order to consolidate her position began to question the Nehruvian concept of secularism and attacked it as 'Pseudo – Secularism'. It started a strong propaganda saying it was a sham and was meant only to create a Muslim vote bank.

It also demanded a 'Common Civil Code' (At present Muslim Personal Law allows a

Muslim to have four wives where as under the Hindu code Bill of 1956, Hindus can have only one). This demand was further aggravated by the agitation Muslim launched on the Shah Bano case. The Muslim leadership in the country construed the Supreme Courts' verdict as an interference in the Shari'ah law which is divine and cannot be changed.

Without realizing the long-term consequences, they launched a very aggressive movement forcing the then Rajiv Gandhi government to change the law for Muslims. When the Muslim Women's Bill was passed (which make section 125 of the CrPC inapplicable to Muslims), Rajiv Gandhi as a balancing act, had the doors of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya got opened, where Ram Lalla idol exist sealed under court orders since 1949. Rajiv Gandhi's step unleashed another controversy which was exploited to the hilt by BJP.

In order to expand its political base in rural areas, which was hitherto confined only to

urban upper-caste Hindus. It launched an aggressive movement for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya by taking the Ramjanmabhoomi movement into rural India.

The BJP propaganda easily caught on and began to pay rich political dividends. In the 1989 general elections, V.P. Singh made seat adjustments with the BJP to check Congress from coming to power. It had 88 seats (In the 1984 elections it got only 2 seats). The Ram janmabhoomi movement and the 'Rath yatra' across the country by L.K. Advani helped BJP to win that many seats. As a result of the rath yatra nearly 300 riots took place all over India.

Babri demolition and its Aftermath

The V.P. Singh government could not survive in power for a long time and this led to mid-term elections in the country. During an election campaign in Sri Perumbadur, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a human bomb. The elections brought Congress party back to power and P.V. Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister. Keeping up pressure on his government, the BJP and its other constituents like Sangh Parivar, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal (B D) finally entered Ayodhya with thousands of Kar Sevaks from all over the country. The Uttar Pradesh government sensing trouble asked the centre for full police assistance. The response of P.V. Narasimha Rao's government was not encouraging. Ultimately taking advantage of the dilemma of both State and Central governments, the Kar Sevaks demolished the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992 which shocked the nation. This was followed by communal riots in Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Bhopal, Delhi and several other places. Its impact could be felt even outside India - where Hindus were attacked in neighbouring countries. Mumbai

witnessed one of the worst riots in the post independent India (see Engineer, The Gujarat Carnage). It was a black day in the history of India.

Though there was a lull in communal violence after the post – Babri Masjid riots, Gujarat remained hypersensitive throughout. On every festival occasion of either Hindus or Muslims, riots broke out claiming few lives. After coming to power in Mumbai state elections with Shiv Sena as its ally, the BJP was planning carefully to seize power in Gujarat also. In the following Assembly elections it captured power and Narendra Modi was its Chief Minister. The VHP and BD became more militant and started attacking both Muslims and Christians under one pretext or the other. This was in the view that Christian missionaries are bent upon converting the low caste Hindus into Christianity.

The Gujarat riots must be seen in this background. The Godhra carnage did not occur suddenly and simply in reaction to what happened on 27 February 2002. The liberal funds from Gujarat NRIs to VHP, the defeat of BJP in assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the scandals in Gujrat earthquake relief fund of January 2001 were some of the hard reasons which made the state and central governments to polarize Hindus and Muslims and consolidate Hindutva forces. According to different mass media and press reports, it was a well planned and executed with finesse (see Engineer, *Ibid*).

It all started with a group of Muslims in a fit of rage over an heated argument with kar Sevaks who where returning from Ayodhya, set fire to coach No.6 of Sabarmati Express in which they were travelling 56 passengers were roasted alive, 43 sustained injuries. The State government ordered an enquiry. Even before the investigations could be completed to know the reasons for the incident, the

Gujarat government jumped to the conclusion that Muslim militants at the instance of Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan (ISI) planned this incident well in advance. The next day VHP announced Gujarat bandh and the government assured the police officials that it would be peaceful. On the contrary violence broke out on a large scale and by the end of the day more than 100 persons were done to death. The Chief Minister, Mr. Modi justified that violence subsequent to the Godhra incident was keeping with Newton's law of action and reaction.

The violence continued unabated for more than 60 days with only one section of the population becoming the prime targets. The whole police force with some honourable exceptions was communalised or abdicated its duty. The administrative apparatus was no different. People were burnt alive, women raped in front of their own children and family, infants were done to death before their mothers. By the time the state government, coming under severe criticism both inside and outside the country realised its blunder, more than 2000 people were killed or burnt alive and displaced from their homes.

There are some interesting points to be noted about the Gujarat carnage First, it was not a pure Hindu - Muslim riot. It was carnage, meticulously planned and organised against one community.

Secondly, never in any of the communal riots of the past, there was such a furious outburst of violence as witnessed in this against one community.

Thirdly, one can see complete police inaction or complicity through out.

Fourthly, participation of Cabinet Ministers by leading the mobs against the Muslims and threatening the police not to book cases is a disturbing trend.

Fifthly, for the first time a few foreign nationals were killed, even though they showed

their passports. They were attacked deliberately just because they were Muslims.

Sixthly, a first occasion is the fact that some nations of the European Union sent their investigating teams and submitted demarches to the Union government for failing to save lives of innocent people.

On the other, despite all-round condemnation, the state government defended the killings.

This was evident when not a single accused person in the Gujarat communal carnage of February-April 2002 has been punished so far. In all, 88 persons from the police and bureaucracy stand indicted, including some leading officials. Also 730 people, many of them from the Sangh Parivar, have been named and identified as perpetrators of mass crimes by witnesses, victims and NGOs. (Now the case is with the Supreme Court which was highly critical of not only state government but even of the High Court for the way they handled this sensitive case) The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and several public interest litigations have appealed that the riots be handed over to a body which Chief Minister Narendra Modi and his administration does not control.

The state government has consistently refused to recommend a CBI investigation. "I told NHRC to recommend a CBI enquiry from the very start", reminds Amubhai Rawani, former chief judge of Rajasthan High Court. In 2003, the NHRC also asked the Supreme court to intervene and initiate a CBI enquiry.

Several cases have also been stayed. This has stopped the process of punishing the perpetrators of hate. Out of a total of 4,256 FIRs filed, the police summarily dismissed 2,108 as no accused were found. This means that in as many as 49.75 percent of the cases, no legal action was taken. In 2,130 cases chargesheets were filed (see Vora, Gagged Elsewhere, Tehelka Report).

Government response to the Carnage

Both State and Central governments took their own time to react to the gruesome carnage ever in the history of independent India. When the state government turned a blind eye to the happenings, the centre should have acted more firmly. The Prime Minister not only failed to control the situation but also lost the credibility of making totally contradictory statements. He visited Ahmedabad more than a month after the carnage. While visiting a refugee camp he asked "what face shall I show to the World?" He further stated that Gujarat events were a blot on India which had enjoyed respect and prestige in the comity of nations because of the way in which 100 crore people of diverse religious, cultures and ethnic groups lived together happily, shared their grief and joys, but never forgot the message of peace and brother hood. He felt the happenings in Gujarat were not only heartrending but most inhuman and horrible and advised Narendra Modi to follow 'Raj dharma' (ruler's duty towards the subjects) (see Engineer, *The Gujarat Carnage*).

After a week, at the meeting of the National Executive of the BJP, he made a complete turn around and accused Islam and Muslims of militancy and conflict. He almost echoed Mr. Modi's line on Gujarat. Thus Mr. Vajpayee proved to be as much an RSS pracharak as Mr. Modi. The BJP which promised a 'riot-free India' in its election manifesto, is unfortunately doing the quite opposite. Mr. Vajpayee's statements clearly show that the BJP fully approved Narendra Modi's policies for tackling the communal situation in Gujarat. Thus the chances of peace prevailing there is very little. The party would like many more Gujaratis to happen in order to establish 'Hindu Rashtra' (see Engineer, *Ibid*).

It is not the intention of the author of this article to beatify some and demonise another

section of Indians. To externalise the enemy is a common human failing, to which Indians are not averse. Because of its sub continental size and great diversity of race, religion and social status, the enemy is often externalised within the country's borders and not without.

The more powerful and homogenous European nations tend to do so beyond their borders where they are capable of projecting their power (USA did in Afghanistan and Iraq). It is easier to fit our minorities and other being too weak or too strong to fit enemy's image and also with false images. The multi racial European states are doing the same now.

The people of India are not gullible and have traditionally seen through and rejected false images. And the secular Indian from all religions has condemned the train incident and the subsequent massacre of the innocent which could have put even a dictator to shame.

The fires are out. The smoke has settled. But the carnage still haunts one community very much. They feel persecuted and have lost faith in the administration. The culprits are still at large. For the living dead, justice is only a hope. The guilty – to which ever community he may belong must be punished. The Non-Governmental organisation (NGOs) are making every effort to bring Hindus and Muslims closer in Godhra. Both the communities are meeting frequently, thanks to the innovative programmes conducted by these NGOs.

Hindus and Muslims badly needed space to meet each other, which the NGOs are providing. Their efforts should be appreciated and encouraged.

Let every Indian remember the photograph published in many dailies during the Gujarat turmoil, a 'Muslim pleading with the rampaging mob with folded hands to spare him' is still fresh in the memory of every Indian. This is not what the founding fathers of the Indian constitution wanted to happen.

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‘Electoral democracy’ is in total disarray

M.G. Devasahayam

Soon after BJP’s “jeet ka chauka” (a winning four) in distant states like Goa and Manipur besides Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a victory speech at his palatial party office in New Delhi. And this is what he said.

“After the 2019 LS polls some gyanis (wise ones) said there was nothing special about it as it had been decided in the 2017 UP assembly polls. I hope that these gyanis will once again show the courage to say publicly that the 2022 assembly election results have determined the fate of the 2024 LS polls.” Obviously, Modi had in mind the key state of UP which is home to one-sixth of India’s electorate.

Many gyanis and journalists seem to have taken this hook as is evident from the hype being created that the BJP is invincible and a juggernaut that cannot be stopped by the political opposition. Some of them are even forecasting that Parliament 2024 is done and dusted and the opposition should look at 2029!

Under the wrong presumption that BJP had captured majority Hindu votes Shekhar Gupta of The Print gave an SOS call to the opposition:

“If you want to beat the Modi-Shah BJP, you have to still win a sufficient number of Hindu votes to deny it that critical 50-plus percentage. If you can’t, as in UP, Bihar and Assam, you are wiped out. That is why the parties of Akhilesh and Lalu Yadav, built on a Muslim-Yadav core, can no longer win. Unless they are able to bring in other strong and large caste groups from within the Hindus, they do not have a chance. Unless you fight the BJP for the Hindu vote, you have no chance.”

But the realities are different and the numbers in UP, the state that matters for 2024,

do not support his bombast and the commentators’ predictions in any manner.

The fallacy is that almost all of them are looking at the mandate only from the angle of votes polled. This is completely misleading, because while making an analysis of people’s mandate we must look at the number of registered and eligible voters and not the polled votes which could sometimes be dismal. And under the archaic first-past-the-post system prevalent today it could well be disastrous.

Let’s look at the UP scenario. There were 153 million eligible voters in the just concluded election. The average voter turnout was 60.6% as against 61.04 in 2017. This means that around 90 million electors voted and 63 million did not vote. The BJP’s vote share is 41.33% of the 60.6% who voted, or 37.2 million votes in absolute terms. This works out to just 24.3% of the total eligible voters. Less than one-fourth of the UP electorate have voted for BJP.

It is a very low mandate that does not behove a representative democracy.

Coming to Hindu votes at 80% it would translate into 122.4 million eligible Hindu voters. Assuming hardly any Muslim voted for the BJP, the percentage of Hindu electorate who voted for BJP would be 30.4% or less than one-third. It would therefore be a fallacy to say that Hindus of UP are swayed by the hardcore Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State) agenda and the resultant spewing of communal venom by the BJP.

The Election Commission of India miserably failed to maintain 100% secrecy of voting within each constituency by not randomising the vote count, which is essential for conducting elections in a free and fair manner as mandated by Article 342 of the Constitution of India and Section 128

of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. This exposed the vulnerable sections - Muslims, Dalits, women, the working poor, the young unemployed and some farmers - to intense pressure by ruling party politicians hell-bent on winning the election at any cost.

It also raises the question as to how many of the 63 million eligible voters did not, or could not, vote this time as a result of the incumbent regime's tactic of 'voter suppression'. How many of these 63 million voters would have voted for the BJP, and how many against the BJP, if they had voted?

Of the 37.2 million who voted for BJP, how many votes were by rigging the electoral rolls and by impersonating the Covid dead? How many were from 'spurious vote injections' which is very much possible in EVMs, particularly after the introduction of VVPATs. And how many were from the EVMs in the trucks which were seen freely moving on the roads of UP?

This report has credence considering the fact that the EVM patents of BEL and ECIL having expired there is no clarity as to where the Election Commission is procuring these machines from and who is manufacturing them. And the Commission has been very secretive about it, even rejecting RTI queries.

Be that as it may, the voting pattern, mandate and BJP's vote share in the UP election is almost the mirror image of the 2019 Parliament election and a shade less. For the Parliament election, India had a total electorate of 910.5 million of which 67.4% votes were polled which was 613.6 million. BJP secured 37.36% of these polled votes which was 229 million. Its vote share as percentage of total electorate was 25.15%, just about one-fourth of the electorate.

Coming to Hindu votes in the Parliament election, the ratio is almost the same. At 80% the Hindu electorate in 2019 was 728.4 million. 31.4% of the total Hindu electorate gave its mandate to BJP which is less than one-third. Overall, on both counts (total electorate and

Hindu voters) the BJP's 2022 performance in UP is marginally lower than in Parliament 2019. Media and even some gyanis calling it a 'landslide' and 'magnificent' mandate is nothing but pathetic.

This low performance is despite the widely reported violations of electoral ethics and code of conduct by the ruling party and its VIP campaigners. This included hate speeches and communal polarisation, oligarchic might, immense mainstream and social media misuse, massive money and criminal power and cash-for-vote.

What is worse, Opposition Unity Index was almost zero. ECI also chipped in by conducting the polling and counting of votes without concern for fairness and integrity. There have been brazen and repeated violations of its Model Code of Conduct at every stage of election by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and ECI did not even whimper.

'Electoral democracy' is in total disarray. EVMs have come under heavy criticism. It is universally known that EVM voting does not comply with the essential requirements of democratic principles: that is, each voter has direct knowledge and capacity to verify that their vote is cast as intended, recorded as cast, and counted as recorded.

It also does not provide provable guarantees against hacking, tampering and spurious vote injections. Even the Voter Verifiable Paper Trail or VVPAT system does not allow voters to verify the slip before the vote is cast. Due to the absence of end-to-end (E2E) verifiability, the present EVM system is not verifiable and, therefore, unfit for democratic elections.

Making things worse are duplication in voting, which is a truism since the introduction of VVPATs. There are two votes now: one recorded in the EVM and one printed by the VVPAT. Rule 56D(4)(b) of the Conduct of Election (Amendment) Rules, 2013 provides for the primacy of the VVPAT paper slip count

over the electronic tally of the memory chip in EVMs.

Though VVPATs are installed in every EVM, not even one paper slip was counted and matched to verify the votes polled and counted before the results became public, mandate claimed and conceded. This exposed the election results to serious fraud.

As the numbers show, compared to 2019 all three parameters (polled votes, electorate mandate and Hindu vote share) have declined for the BJP. It is evident that the vast majority of UP electorate have stood firm and secular and rejected the Hindutva hate agenda. Only the political opposition let them down by not coming together.

Bravado and bombast notwithstanding, the BJP ‘juggernaut’ is getting nowhere for 2024. Hence the manufactured outrage of communal fervour through the state sponsored and promoted ‘Kashmir Files’ movie and the desperate effort of the Union government to defer/cancel the elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi due in April, 2022.

The writing is on the wall but gyanis have eyes that will not see!

M.G Devasahayam is a former Indian Army and IAS officer. He is editor of the book *Electoral Democracy - An Inquiry into the Fairness and Integrity of Elections in India*

Courtesy **The Citizen**, 29 March, 2022. 

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The Kashmir Files: The view from the Valley

What Kashmir's people and politicians have to say about Vivek Agnihotri's blockbuster film and the turbulent situation in the Valley in the early 1990s

Moazum Mohammad

(With the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers of BJP states adopting the film as their own the communal situation could become explosive... During my conversation few years ago with a senior colleague of ours who was Chief Secretary, J&K, he categorically held Governor Jagmohan responsible for the deliberate mishandling of the situation triggering the killings and KP exodus... AS Daulat has issued some statements calling the film a blatant communal propaganda and I tend to agree. As it became clear later Jagmohan turned out to be a hard-core RSS... Inadvertently, I happened to be present in some of the coffee sessions at IIC lounge attended by Jagmohan, Arun Jaitley and Delhi RSS honchos and have heard them conversing... Could not the 'manufactured' KP episode be part of the long term RSS polarisation agenda which is now being blown up to cover governments disastrous failure in J&K and boost the communal politics which is showing diminishing returns?

– M.G. Devasahayam)

When militancy had erupted in Kashmir towards the end of the 1980s, Srinagar resident Mudasir Ahmad used to study in a school where most of his teachers were Kashmiri Pandits. Mudasir is now 38 and runs a business in Kashmiri handicrafts at Srinagar's Lal Bazar. He faintly recollects how the teachers would reassure his mother that he would be taken care of and made to finish his tiffin in school.

Mudasir says the spread of militancy and the ensuing military crackdown forced a long shutdown of his school, and things were never the same. Not until he had grown up did Mudasir figure out why, and where, those 'sari-clad teachers' had suddenly vanished.

When *The Kashmir Files*, Vivek Agnihotri's film on the killings and exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley, released and became an overnight hit across the country, Mudasir, in the absence of movie theatres, circumvented piracy restrictions through the virtual private network

(VPN) and watched it. "I feel guilty to have seen the film. It is inflammatory and only aimed at maligning Kashmiri Muslims," he says, and has given up plans to introduce the movie to his family.

Indeed, Agnihotri's film has triggered a controversy with two opposing narratives emerging around it. The dominant one is that it gives a true account of the atrocities on Pandits; the other version is that it's a propaganda film that only fans anti-Muslim sentiment. "Kashmir's Muslims have been portrayed as perpetrators in the exodus of Pandit. That's utterly untrue. Even now, whenever a Pandit family visits their birth place anywhere in the Valley, they are welcomed with hugs by their Muslim neighbours," says Mudasir.

The fallout of the movie is already evident with a sense of insecurity gripping many Kashmiris, including students, living outside the Valley, particularly in the face of circulation of

hate videos and messages on social media. Disturbed by these developments, the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA), run by Kashmiri students from across India, has appealed for peace and disowning of the “unfortunate attempts at propagation of hate”. “Students from J&K are ambitious Indian citizens pursuing various courses in the mainland. They have nothing to do with the unfortunate exodus of a particular community,” says Nasir Khuehami, national spokesperson, JKSA. “We unequivocally condemn the distrust and discord that the particular movie has attempted to sow amongst the masses, who were otherwise coexisting peacefully.”

A retired J&K government official, who now lives in Delhi, feels the movie will increase the vulnerability for Kashmiris outside the Valley and lead to more misgivings about Kashmir and its people. “It has not only made Kashmiri Muslims vulnerable but generally cast aspersions on Muslims across the country. The anger is reflecting on social media,” he says. The former official cites a ludicrous recent incident wherein a vendor he buys fruits from regularly came under fire from a customer for selling ‘Kashmiri apples’.

There is no denying that Kashmiri Pandits have suffered unspeakable hardships. It is estimated that some 150,000 members of the community had to leave Kashmir in the early 1990s due to threats from militants. Along with them, many Muslims, including legislators from the pro-India mainstream political parties, were also forced to flee to Jammu or other safer locations. According to the Union home ministry, around 40,000 Kashmiri Pandit families are based in Jammu and another 20,000 in New Delhi. The ministry’s data puts the number of registered migrant families in J&K at 64,827—60,489 Hindu families, 2,609 Muslim families and 1,729 Sikh families. Data shared on the floor of the J&K legislature in 2010 said that 219 Kashmiri Pandits had been killed in the Valley since 1989. This

includes the killing of retired district and sessions judge Neelkanth Ganjoo on November 4, 1989. Ganjoo had sent Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) founder Maqbool Bhat to the gallows. Three months prior to this, in August 1989, Mohammed Yusuf Halwai became the first political worker in Kashmir to be eliminated by the militants. Halwai was a National Conference (NC) member. “Since then, political workers have been falling victim to militants’ bullets. My former colleagues were forced to abandon their homes and run for safety,” says a retired NC worker from the time when Sheikh Abdullah was jailed in 1953. According to him, his family members had faced social boycott and were even heckled on the streets by political rivals. But they stayed put until threats from militants drove them out of the Valley. “We had to issue a public apology and live in silence out of the fear of getting killed,” he says, requesting anonymity.

The turbulence did not affect ordinary political workers alone. CPI(M) leader Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami had to flee to Jammu when militants surrounded his home in Kulgam in November 1989. The former legislator was not holding any official post at the time and was merely associated with his party. Tarigami says people from all communities and faiths were being targeted. For instance, the Valley’s chief cleric, Mirwaiz Maulvi Mohammad Farooq, was assassinated at his home on May 21, 1990. Maulana Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, one of the founders of the NC, was killed in December 1990 at the age of 90. “Kashmiri Pandits, being fewer in numbers, felt threatened in this environment and left. It is an unfortunate part of Kashmir’s history,” says Tarigami, who is also spokesperson of the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, a grouping of prominent political parties in Kashmir fighting for the restoration of Article 370.

Tarigami accuses the BJP-led central government of stoking polarisation by promoting *The Kashmir Files*. (To be Contd....on Page - 23)

Why the Modi government gets away with lies, and how the opposition could change that

As with Putin's Russia and Trump's America, India faces a 'fire-hosing of falsehood'. Mere fact-checking won't defeat it.

Shivam Vij

The Narendra Modi government announces a grand stimulus 'package' that it claims is worth Rs 20 lakh crore or '10 per cent' of India's GDP. But barely a fraction of it is new money being pumped into the economy. What is made to look like a stimulus is mostly a grand loan *mela*.

The Modi government is making hungry migrant labourers pay train fare. When this became a political hot potato, it said it was paying 85 per cent per cent of the fare and the state governments were paying the rest 15 per cent. Truth was that that 85 per cent was notional subsidy — in effect, the migrants were being charged the usual fare, and in some places, even more.

If no one else, at least the endless sea of migrant labourers would be able to see through the '85 per cent' lie. It is curious that the Modi government openly lies — lies that are obvious and blatant. Just a few examples:

Narendra Modi said on the top of his voice that there had been no talk of a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in his government, when in fact both the President of India and the Home Minister had said it in Parliament.

Narendra Modi said the purpose of demonetisation was to destroy black money but when that didn't work, his government kept changing goal-posts. Many lies to hide one truth: that demonetisation had failed.

Doublethink

The Modi government has made lying an art form. This non-stop obvious lying was described by George Orwell as doublethink: "Every message from the extremely repressive leadership reverses the truth. Officials repeat

'war is peace' and 'freedom is slavery,' for example. The Ministry of Truth spreads lies. The Ministry of Love tortures lovers."

People are thus expected to believe as true what is clearly false, and also take at face value mutually contradictory statements. The Modi government talked about NRC, but it also did not talk about it. The Modi government is making migrants pay for train fares, but at the same time, it is not charging them. Doublethink also applies other Orwellian principles — Newspeak, Doublespeak, Thoughtcrime, etc.

But why do people accept it all so willingly? Why do the people who are lied to every day go and vote for the same BJP?

There are many obvious answers to this question: weak opposition, mouthpiece media, social media manipulation, and Modi's personality cult that makes his voters repose great faith in him.

But the lies are so obvious, you wonder why anyone would lie so obviously. Surely, when someone is caught lying they can't be considered credible anymore?

What's happening here is the plain assertion of power. Our politics has become a contest of who gets to lie and get away with it and who will have to go on a back-foot when their lies are caught.

When the Modi government lies so blatantly, it is basically saying: 'Yes we will lie to make a mockery of your questions. Do what you can.'

Fire-hosing of falsehood

In 2016, Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews wrote a paper for RAND Corporation, an American think-tank, in which they analysed propaganda techniques used by

the Vladimir Putin government in Russia. They called it the “Firehose of Falsehood” (read it here). The Russian model is not to simply make you believe a lie — the lie is often so obviously a lie, you’d be a fool to believe it. The idea is to “entertain, confuse and overwhelm” the audience.

They identified four distinct features of the Putin propaganda model, all of which are true for the Modi propaganda machinery as well, as they are for Donald Trump’s.

1) High volume and multi-channel: The Modi propaganda machine will bombard people with a message through multiple channels. By “multiple” we really mean multiple — you will even see Twitter handles claiming to be Indian Muslims saying the same things as the far-Right Hindutva handles. Of course, some of the Muslim handles are fake. But when you see everyone from Akshay Kumar to Tabassum Begum support an idea, you’re inclined to doubt yourself. If everyone from Rubika Liyaquat to your WhatsApp-fied uncle is saying the same thing, it must be right. If so many people are saying the Citizenship (Amendment) Act will grant citizenship and not take it away, they must be right.

2) Rapid, continuous and repetitive: The hashtags, memes and emotionally charged videos will be ready before any announcement is made. The moment the announcement is made, both social and mainstream media will start bombarding you with messages in support of it. The volume and speed of the propaganda will barely leave you with the mind space to judge for yourself.

While the government will be careful to avoid saying it is not charging migrants, its deniable propaganda proxies will go around suggesting exactly that until the voice of the doubters has been drowned out. (A

liberal journalist I know actually thought the migrants were not having to pay train fares anymore.)

3) Lacks commitment to objective reality: In other words, fake news. We know why fake news works: confirmation bias, information overload, emotional manipulation, the willingness to believe a message when it is shared by a trusted friend, and so on. There’s no dearth of this in the Modi propaganda ecosystem. There are countless fake news factories like *OpIndia* and *Postcard News*. Moreover, the mainstream media itself has been co-opted to manufacture fake news at scale, as the absolutely fictional charges of JNU students wanting India to be split into pieces (“Tukde tukde gang”) shows.

PM Modi himself is happy to lie for political posturing: from attributing a fake quote to Omar Abdullah, to saying there are no detention centres in the country, to exaggerating all kinds of data.

4) Lacks commitment to consistency: This is the bit where the fake news and claims are exposed, and yet they don’t hurt the leader. One day the Modi government says demonetisation is for destroying black money and next day it says it was to push cashless transactions, and third day it says the idea was to widen the tax base.

Ordinarily, such contradictions should hurt the credibility of Modi and his government. But, coupled with the three points above, the RAND researchers suggest, “fire hosing” manages to sell the changed narrative as new information, a change of opinion, or just new, advanced or supplementary facts presented by different actors.

How to fight the fire-hosing of falsehood

The RAND corporation researchers also suggest five ways for the United States to counter the Russian “fire-hosing of falsehood”.

These are applicable to any actor who undertakes this propaganda model, including Modi and Trump.

- 1. First Information Report:** Try to be the first in presenting information on a particular issue. In shaping public opinion, the first impression can be the last impression. (With our lazy opposition, this ain't happening, but the Congress party's announcement of paying train fares for migrant labourers was one example of creating the first impression of an issue.)
- 2. Highlight the lying, not just the lies:** The world needs fact-checkers, but they're not going to be able to stop the fire-hosing of falsehood. That's like taking paracetamol for Covid-19. You may need it for the fever, but it won't kill the virus. What might treat the virus of fire-hosing, however, according to the RAND researchers, is to chip away at the credibility of the liar by simply pointing out that he's a serial liar. M.K. Gandhi's assertion of truth as the core of his politics, for example, served the purpose of painting the British colonial rule as being based on falsehoods.
- 3. Identify and attack the goal of the propaganda:** Instead of simply fact-checking the propaganda, the political opponents need to understand the objective of the lies and attack those. So, if the objective of lying about migrants having to pay for train fares is to not let them travel for free, the opposition should spend great time and energy addressing migrant labourers about how the government is being insensitive to their plight. This will take a lot more work on the ground, and simply tweeting facts won't be enough.
- 4. Compete:** Across the world, fire-hosing of falsehood is becoming a powerful propaganda tool. Those who want to defeat such propaganda may have to do their own fire-hosing of falsehood. As the Hindi saying

goes, iron cuts iron. When public opinion is being manipulated with fake news and lies, the opposition cannot win the game with mere fact-checking. It may have to do its own rapid and continuous misinformation with little regard for the truth. The RAND researchers suggest this is what the US should do against Russia.

- 5. Turn off the tap:** Lastly, attack the opponent's supply chain of lies. If opposition-ruled states are not cracking down on fake news and communal hate-mongers in their states, for example, they're making a huge mistake.

The author is contributing editor to ThePrint. Views are personal.

Courtesy [Theprint.in](https://theprint.in), 15 May, 2020. 

Contd. from page - (20)

The Kashmir Files: The view...

“What has the central government done for Kashmiri Pandits since coming to power in 2014? Action-reaction is a cycle and it will only spread anger and hatred in the Valley and shrink the room for reconciliation,” he says.

Many in the Valley concur with Tarigami that while Agnihotri's film will generate empathy for Kashmir Pandits, facilitating the community's rehabilitation in Kashmir will require credible efforts towards building trust and a secure environment. “Unfortunately, the basic issue of the return of Pandits remains unaddressed,” says a Kashmir watcher, who teaches political science at the University of Kashmir in Srinagar. “In any conflict, it's the minorities who are at the receiving end. The Pandits faced threats like many Kashmiri Muslims. They naturally panicked and fled but that does not mean they alone have suffered. I doubt if the environment created by this movie can aid the reconciliation process.”

Courtesy [India Today](https://www.indiatoday.in), March 24, 2022. 

Hate speech is violent in itself and must be called out

SY Quraishi writes: It is at the root of many forms of violence that are being perpetrated and has become one of the biggest challenges to the rule of law and to our democratic conscience

S. Y. Quraishi

What is to be done when the Indian republic, committed to working within the framework of constitutional democracy and the rule of law, starts to accommodate elements that are stridently anti-constitutional and anti-secular? What once belonged to the fringes of Indian society now has increasingly become mainstream, their disruptive actions being registered in the public sphere more frequently and viciously. Hate speech is at the root of many forms of violence that are being perpetrated and has become one of the biggest challenges to the rule of law and to our democratic conscience.

One of the most visible consequences of hate speech is increased electoral mobilisation along communal lines which is also paying some electoral dividends.

Hate speech must be unambiguously condemned and the law must take its course, although not merely because it can lead to events of violence in the future. Hate speech, in itself, must be understood and treated as a violent act and urgently so, for it has become an indispensable resource for the ruling powers. No wonder, during the elections, it becomes louder.

Several instances of hate speech and religious polarisation have been reported in Yogi Adityanath's poll campaign in the recently concluded UP elections, for instance. In 2019, the Supreme Court reprimanded the Election Commission, calling it "toothless" for not taking action against candidates engaging in hate speech during the election campaigns in UP. The Commission responded by saying that it had limited powers to take action in this matter. So far, the **Supreme Court does not appear to**

have acted decisively in response to allegations of hate speech in electoral campaigns, indicating that the EC must assume more responsibility and the EC has argued that in matters of hate speech, it is largely "powerless". In any case, the EC's role is confined to the election period. So who is responsible for the non-election times?

Is the state powerless? Not at all. There are a whole bunch of laws meant to curb hate speech. The Indian Penal Code, as per Sections 153A, 295A and 298, criminalises the promotion of enmity between different groups of people on grounds of religion and language, alongside acts that are prejudicial to maintaining communal harmony. Section 125 of the Representation of People Act deems that any person, in connection with the election, promoting feelings of enmity and hatred on grounds of religion and caste is punishable with imprisonment up to three years and fine or both. Section 505 criminalises multiple kinds of speech, including statements made with the intention of inducing, or which are likely to induce, fear or alarm to the public, instigating them towards public disorder; statements made with the intention of inciting, or which are likely to incite, class or community violence; and discriminatory statements that have the effect or the intention of promoting inter-community hatred. It covers incitement of violence against the state or another community, as well as promotion of class hatred.

While examining the scope of hate speech laws in India, the Law Commission in its 267th report published in March 2017, recommended introduction of new provisions within the penal code that specifically punish incitement to violence in addition to the existing ones. In my

view, any recommendation for more laws is a red herring and provides an excuse for inaction. It's the lack of political will, blatant inefficiency and bias of the administration and shocking apathy of the judiciary that is killing the secular spirit of the Constitution.

Another watchdog should have been the media. In recent years, hate speech in all its varieties has acquired a systemic presence in the media and the internet, from electoral campaigns to everyday life. Abusive speech directed against minority communities, particularly Muslims, and disinformation campaigns on media networks have made trolling and fake news significant aspects of public discourse. By desensitising the citizenry with a constant barrage of anti-minority sentiments, the ethical and moral bonds of our democracy are taking a hit.

This epidemic of “mediatised” hate speech is, in fact, a global phenomenon. According to the Washington Post, 2018 can be considered as “the year of online hate”. Facebook, in its Transparency Report, disclosed that it ended up taking down 3 million hateful posts from its platform while YouTube removed 25,000 posts in one month alone.

On April 2, amidst unconcerned police officials and cheering crowds, Mahant Bajrang Muni Udasin, the chief priest of the Badi Sangat Ashram in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur district, publicly threatened sexual violence against Muslim women and against Muslims in general — “you and your pigsty will cease to exist”. Although this particular video went viral recently, and he has now been arrested by the Sitapur police, Udasin has had a long history of spewing

hate and stoking communal polarisation with apparent impunity. In the past, Udasin celebrated Dara Singh, a Bajrang Dal member who is currently serving a life sentence for leading a mob on January 23, 1999 in Orissa and setting fire to the wagon in which the Christian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were burnt to death. Likening Dara Singh to a godman, Udasin appealed to Hindu monks to declare him a Shankaracharya. With this, Udasin joins the ranks of a multitude of “holy” men and women, most prominent among them being Yati Narsinghanand, Pooja Shakun Pandey and Jitendra Tyagi, who have been at the forefront of the politics of fear and hatred.

With elected members currently sitting in the legislative assemblies and Parliament giving political sanction to these self-styled mahants, and ordinary citizens mobilised into mob violence and complicit public officials, hate speech is becoming the dominant mode of public political participation. Two people died in the Ram Navami violence recently while many were arrested across states. Shocking images also surfaced from JNU of students injured during a face-off between two groups on Ram Navami on campus.

This should prick the conscience of the nation. Enough damage has been done. We cannot wait another day to address this growing challenge.

This column first appeared in the print edition on April 15, 2022 under the title ‘Calling out hate’. The writer is former Chief Election Commissioner.

Courtesy The Indian Express, 15 April 2022. 

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

My nation, its dignity and welfare, is being defaced'

Jyoti Punwani

'Religion is being deprived of its spirituality and is being used for strife and war.'

'The task right now is to keep raising a voice in favour of the 'Real Hindustan', its democracy, its composite culture, its people and their welfare.'

For the second election in a row, the Bharatiya Janata Party won a majority in the Uttar Pradesh assembly with more than a two-thirds margin, with its vote share having gone up from 39.6% to 42.3%.

What does this mean for those who have been openly targeted during Yogi Adityanath's first term in office: Muslims and secular activists?

Everyone in Lucknow knows Dr **Rooprekha Verma**, not only as the former vice chancellor of Lucknow University, but also as a committed fighter for secularism and women's rights through her organisation Saajhi Duniya. Her experience of the last five years leaves the 78-year-old educationist with little hope.

Did you expect these results?

No. The country has been so impoverished on all scales of well-being, I expected voters to use minimum wisdom and concern for the country and consequently vote out the present incumbents.

Also, there seemed to be huge resentment among youth over unemployment, deep dissatisfaction among farmers, especially with respect to the killings in Lakhimpur and easy bail to the accused. There seemed to be great anger among the common citizens over the openly false claims of medical facilities during Covid.

The fact that despite these monumental failures on the part of the regime it got majority support is perplexing. The possible explanations lead to very sad conclusions

about the changing consciousness of the nation. It looks almost suicidal.

Was the victory only because of anti-Muslim rhetoric or more than that?

Predominantly anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Also, I guess, a 'couldn't care less' macho (*dabangg*) posture by the main actors at the helm of affairs got currency with the public. The public has generally been confused over the distinction between courage and machismo or between courage and high-handedness.

This posture has begun to fire the imagination of today's youth more than the older Gandhian values of ahimsa, tolerance and sensitive co-existence.

Demonisation of Muslims, distortions of history and false narratives of communities, packed with emotional hurt, have blinded many towards the true narratives and basic character of Hindustan.

In these last 5 years, have you been able to carry on your work of communal harmony in the same way as before?

Not at all!

'Harmony', 'Ganga Jamuni Tahzeeb', 'tolerance' and several such words have systematically been maligned and ridiculed. Not only this, these words and conforming acts have invited punitive action by the State.

Any critique of communally divisive acts or discourse, any protest over violation of a woman's body and dignity, any correction of historical distortions, any

demand for human rights has brutally been suppressed and penalised.

The theme most disliked by the State is ‘composite culture’, even though it is this feature which defines the basic spirit of Bharatvarsh or India.

In the last five years almost every attempt of ours to raise a voice was disturbed by the police. Most of the time we were insulted, pushed, ridiculed and detained or house-arrested. ‘Zubanbandi’ has been the basic State policy all these years.

This gave clear signals to others. The institutions which used to be more than happy to have us for sensitisation discourses suddenly developed cold feet. Some institutions which invited me for talks, withdrew the invites.

Have the last 5 years affected the way Hindus and Muslims interact with each other within your group? And with people outside your group?

Not in my group.

In my general acquaintance I noticed some change. Muslims have mostly adopted silence over most political and religious matters. They have become more uncommunicative in the presence of non-Muslims. Many of them hesitate even to correct historical distortions and lies, or to remind others about the contribution of Muslims in different spheres of the nation’s life, lest they face longer and distorted rebuttals.

A similar change is noticed in some secular-minded Hindus too.

Happily, many of these silent ones are those who, in the presence of more reasonable people, show full confidence in overcoming this attitude and make rightful claims on the nation, asserting that this is their country and that they will fight and die only here. (*Ye hamara vatan hai,*

hum isi ki khaq mein dafan honge).

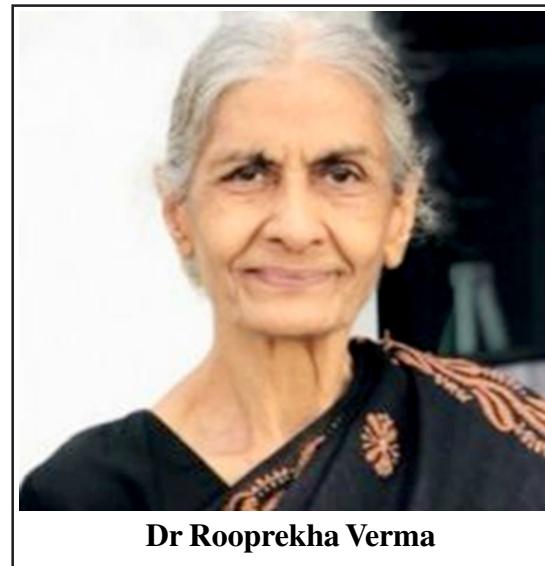
The ‘safety zones’ are tragically divided, creating a new level of ‘ghettos’.

Is your work cut out for you in the next five years?

I am still trying to understand the present phenomenon.

What’s immediately obvious is that much is at stake just now. Almost everything which is prideworthy for the nation and also for humanity is being eroded. My nation, its dignity and welfare, is being defaced. It is being divided.

Religion is being deprived of its spirituality and power of solace and is being used for strife and war.



Dr Rooprekha Verma

The task cut out right now is only to shun lamentation and keep raising a voice in favour of the ‘Real Hindustan’, its democracy, its composite culture, its people and their welfare. And, to try sensitising people towards equality of caste, creed and gender.

I may not live for 5 more years. Even if I do, I may not remain capable for that long. But as long as body and mind work, I shall carry on my work.

Courtesy [Rediff.com](https://www.rediff.com), March 22, 2022. 

How Modi-Shah Can Be Beaten

Shekhar Gupta

To beat BJP, you either deny them a critical mass of Hindu vote or build a regional leader and party strong enough to protect their turf, observes Shekhar Gupta.

The BJP, since its rise under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, has been an election-winning cavalry. But it has also lost some.

With its sweep in Uttar Pradesh and three other states now, the air is overloaded with *gyan* from the entire pundit class on why and how the BJP wins.

It is important, and interesting therefore, to step away and examine when, how and why it loses. And lose it does.

If in any doubt, check out how much of India the BJP controlled at its peak in early 2018, 2019, and now.

In terms of area, it is now about 44 per cent, accounting for about 49.6 per cent of the population.

The 2018 winter loss in the three heartland states — Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — was the Modi-Shah BJP's first, and last, defeat by the Congress.

Karnataka, the same year, was a messy story as the BJP topped the tally but didn't cross the halfway mark and initially conceded the state to a short-lived Congress-JD-S coalition.

We do not count Punjab 2017 or 2022 because the BJP is marginal there.

Since its second national sweep in 2019, the BJP has also lost big time in West Bengal to the TMC, and decisively to the Congress-JMM-RJD coalition in Jharkhand, where it was the incumbent.

Two other BJP setbacks are qualified. In Haryana it fell short of a majority soon after sweeping all Lok Sabha seats with humongous margins, and lost Maharashtra after winning it because the stalwart ally Shiv Sena walked away.

In the Modi-Shah era, the basic BJP

playbook is clear. Get 50 per cent of the Hindu vote and win. Check out Uttar Pradesh, for example.

Yogi Adityanath may have made an indiscrete remark about this being a battle of 80 versus 20, but it was at worst a Freudian slip. He was speaking the truth.

In UP, the Muslim vote is just over 19 per cent.

So it follows that if BJP discounts the Muslim vote it targets only the 80 per cent Hindus.

In the final tally, if the party with allies polled around 44 per cent of the vote, it is evident that it collected more than 55 per cent of the Hindu vote. That is good enough for a landslide.

Of course, we are presuming that the Muslim vote for the BJP, if any, would be insignificant.

This 80:20 formula works with local variations, but only in the Hindi heartland and the three big west coast states — Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka.

In the Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh in 2019, the BJP with allies polled 52 per cent of all votes.

Again, discounting the Muslims this would be about 67 per cent or almost two in three of all Hindu votes.

That's the reason it was able to annihilate the SP-BSP alliance which, on paper, was unbeatable.

What happens where this equation doesn't exist?

Take West Bengal. The BJP invested more time, energy, and resources in winning the state than in any other except Uttar Pradesh.

The CAA commotion set the stage for a super-polarised election.

The BJP was eyeing another first conquest of yet a major state. The opposite happened. Mamata Banerjee's TMC trounced it.

How and why did the BJP lose here?

Especially as in the 2019 Lok Sabha election it had annexed 18 of the 42 seats, was ascendant, and, then of course, threw in the campaigners, funds, and the 'agencies'.

If we just look at the vote counts, the BJP polled about the same nearly 40 per cent in the 2021 assembly elections and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Yet this did not translate into a comparable number of seats in the assembly.

Because the TMC also went up, from 39.59 to 47.94 per cent.

What changed within two years? First of all, after the destruction in 2019, the Left-Congress combine lost almost all its remaining voters.

But more importantly, unlike UP, West Bengal does not offer the BJP an 80:20 equation. It is more like 67:33.

A mere 50 per cent of the Hindu vote cannot get it past the halfway mark.

At 38.59 per cent of the total vote, it netted much more than 50, more likely about 57 per cent of the Hindu vote.

But in a 67:33 equation, it would have needed close to 65.

That was denied as Mamata was able to retain the loyalty of her women voters.

Gender, in this case, defeated Hindu consolidation.

That is the first lesson then.

If you want to beat the Modi-Shah BJP, you have to still win a sufficient number of Hindu votes to deny it that critical 50-plus percentage.

If you can't, as in UP, Bihar, and Assam, you are wiped out.

That is why the parties of Akhilesh Yadav and Lalu Prasad, built on a Muslim-Yadav core, can no longer win.

Unless they are able to bring in other strong and large caste groups from within the Hindus,

they do not have a chance.

Unless you fight the BJP for the Hindu vote, you have no chance.

Or, like Mamata, find an answer through gender.

In Uttar Pradesh, it worked in reverse.

All reliable exit poll data indicates that many more women voted for the BJP than they did for the Samajwadi Party.

Maybe Priyanka Gandhi had an interesting idea, appealing to young women with her catchy '*ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon*' campaign. But her party was in no position to exploit it.

Something like that might have made some difference for the Samajwadi Party. But it lacked the imagination for something so innovative, *hakte*.

The conclusion, therefore, is that for any chance in hell to beat the Modi-Shah BJP, you must deny them a sufficient number of Hindu votes.

Don't take just the Muslims and one loyal caste to this battle.

Mere party combinations cannot defeat the BJP.

The Congress-SP alliance was swept away in the UP assembly polls in 2017, and so were the alliances SP-BSP in UP, Congress-NCP in Maharashtra, and Congress-JD-S in Karnataka in Lok Sabha 2019.

Jharkhand 2019 is the one exception where an alliance — Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Congress-RJD — won.

But please note that the BJP had run a particularly listless government under Raghubar Das and the experiment of handing over the state to a non-tribal had caused resentment.

About 15 per cent of the state's electorate is Muslim, and the 85:15 fight, going by Yogi's standard, became more like 60:40 as about 25 per cent of the voters are tribal.

Evidently it is the loss of the tribal vote that left the BJP only about 2 per cent behind the winning coalition.

The state is back with a tribal chief minister in Hemant Soren.

We are not making Delhi 2015 and 2020 part of this analysis because it is a city state with *sui generis* politics and in the Lok Sabha elections here in 2014 and 2019, the BJP had a sweep.

That phenomenon, the voters making a distinction between a Lok Sabha and an assembly election, is evident elsewhere too, notably in Odisha.

In 2019, the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections were held on the same day.

In the Lok Sabha, the BJP won eight of the 21 seats with 35.44 per cent of the vote, just 4 per cent behind Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal.

For the assembly, on the same count, the BJP stopped at 32.9 per cent and was smashed by the BJD at 44.7 per cent.

We're also staying clear of the Rajasthan-MP-Chhattisgarh results of 2018 because the

BJP was facing anti-incumbency (in MP and Chhattisgarh it was in power for three terms at that).

And the only one it lost decisively was Chhattisgarh, the smallest of the three.

Three lessons then. To beat the BJP, you either deny them the critical mass of the Hindu vote, or build a regional leader and party strong enough to protect their turf.

And third, the best of all, have a regional, ethnic and linguistic fortress so strong that the Hindus vote primarily as Tamils or Malayalis or Telugus.

This will be put to the test in the next Telangana elections.

But, in the big picture, here is evidence to show how the BJP can be beaten if you get your politics right.

Note: Election data sourced from Trivedi Centre for Political Data, Ashoka University.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, March 22, 2022. 

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‘BJP is insecure about the youth vote’

‘They have to be seen as being responsive to the employment woes and economic stagnation afflicting many young people.’

Archana Masih

“I would expect that they will invest a lot of energy in ensuring that young voters do not defect from the party. How they will do this, I do not know,” says **Milan Vaishnav**, director and senior fellow, South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

One of the most incisive commentators on India, Dr Vaishnav’s primary research focus is the political economy of India. He examines issues such as corruption and governance, state capacity, distributive politics, and electoral behaviour.

In a detailed e-mail interview from Geneva with **Rediff.com**’s **Archana Masih**, Dr Vaishnav says the real question is whether the Opposition can champion a principled secularism that acknowledges the missteps of the past and articulates a new vision that goes beyond the binary of Hindu supremacy or minority appeasement.

What would it take by the Opposition parties to defeat the BJP? Does it have the ability to wean away a part of its Hindu support base by espousing a lite version of Hindutva?

I’ve said elsewhere that the Opposition’s success rests on it being able to locate answers to three large, but important questions.

First, what is the appropriate relationship between the State and religion? There’s a temptation to offer a lite version of Hindutva, but that’s like offering a knock-off version of Coca-Cola when consumers would rather buy the real thing.

I think the real question is whether the Opposition can champion a principled secularism that acknowledges the missteps of the past and articulates a new vision that goes beyond the

binary of Hindu supremacy or minority appeasement.

For instance, could the Opposition envision a progressive uniform civil code that actually resonates with voters?

Second, what is the optimal design of the welfare State? There’s no doubt that the BJP has done a fabulous job in perfecting the public delivery of private welfare goods like toilets and gas cylinders. But it has had very little to say on public goods.

And public goods, like health and education, are what are needed for a society to be prosperous in the long run. This is where the AAP has had some notable success in Delhi. Rather than mimicking the BJP’s schemes — which have more credibility, more name recognition, and are boosted by considerable non-governmental (RSS) support — can the Opposition actually go beyond them?

Third, I think the Opposition has to figure out the correct balance between caste versus class mobilisation. Social justice for social justice’s sake has run its course in most parts of India.

The BJP has successfully picked up on a formula that its coalition partner Nitish Kumar (of the Janata Dal-United) in Bihar successfully pioneered — which is to link social justice to economic empowerment. Caste matters in today’s Bihar, but there is a marked difference with the past.

As a journalist once remarked, caste is in the subtext of everything Nitish does, but for Nitish’s predecessor Lalu Prasad Yadav, it was the text *and* the subtext. Look at how the BJP has been able to pick up votes from non-dominant Other Backward Class (OBC) and Dalit *jatis*

who feel left behind.

They've figured out how to fuse caste grievance with class appeals. But they have done so without creating the perception that they care only about caste identity. There's a lesson there for the Opposition.

After its win in UP and three other states, where does the BJP go from here? The combination of Hindutva, women support and welfare schemes served as BJP's trump card in this election — what other groups is the BJP likely to target in the run up to 2024?

The BJP will not be content to rest on its laurels. It is going to continue its expansion into eastern and southern India with renewed vigour.

The BJP has struggled when it has gone head-to-head with regionalist parties in Bengal,

Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and so on. It has made important inroads in several of these states, but it is still a bit player in many of them.

I think the BJP is also feeling somewhat insecure about the youth vote. Remember, young voters overwhelmingly favoured the BJP in 2014 and 2019. But Axis-MyIndia polling data suggests that in Uttar Pradesh the BJP enjoyed the smallest advantage among young voters — a reversal of past trends.

I would expect that they will invest a lot of energy in ensuring that young voters do not defect from the party. How they will do this I do not know, but they have to be seen as being responsive to the employment woes and economic stagnation afflicting many young people

Courtesy [Rediff.com](https://www.rediff.com), March 30, 2022. 

Truth about Savarkar and caste

Attempts by his followers to portray V D Savarkar as a crusader against untouchability, are not borne out by Hindu Mahasabha archives, his own words

Shamsul Islam

The Savarkar rehabilitation project is taking ever-newer forms. The latest attempt ('How



Savarkar with RSS chief MS Golwalkar (Dec 24, 1960)

Photo: Courtesy Counterview, 31 March 2022

Savarkar fought for a casteless society, IE, February 28) is to claim that "he had imagined a nation free of malevolent social evils such as

caste cruelty, untouchability, and injustice towards women. He advocated a casteless society based on notions of social justice coupled with social cohesion. He wanted to uproot the diversity of the caste system and build a nation based on Hindu unity, where Dalits could live with dignity and happiness." It is also claimed that "he spoke out against scriptural injunctions that advocated caste, such as the Manusmriti. According to Savarkar, these scriptures are often the tools of those in power, used to control social structure and maintain their supremacy".

Let us compare these claims with the writings and deeds of V D Savarkar as recorded in the

Hindu Mahasabha archives. In 1923, Savarkar defended casteism in Hindu society, regarding it as a natural component essential for making a nation. While dealing with the subject, under the title ‘Institutions in favour of Nationality’, he declared that the institution of caste was the peculiar mark of identifying a Hindu Nation. “The system of four varnas, which could not be wiped away even under the Buddhist sway, grew in popularity to such an extent that kings and emperors felt it a distinction to be called one who established the system of four varnas... Reaction in favour of this institution grew so strong that our nationality was almost getting identified with it.”

Savarkar, while defending casteism as an inalienable constituent of a Hindu Nation, went on to quote an authority (not identified by him) who said: “... the land where the system of four Varnas does not exist should be known as the Mleccha country: Aryavarta lies away from it.”

Savarkar’s defence of casteism was, in fact, a corollary to his racial approach to the understanding of the Hindu nation. He argued that it was due to caste that the purity of the Hindu race was maintained:

“All that the caste system has done is to regulate its noble blood on lines believed—and on the whole rightly believed—by our saintly and patriotic law-givers and kings to contribute most to fertilise and enrich all that was barren and poor, without famishing and debasing all that was flourishing and nobly endowed.”

Interestingly, Savarkar also advocated for the elevation of the status of the untouchables in Hindu society for a short period. He conducted programmes against untouchability and denial of entry to “untouchables” in Hindu temples. This was not due to an egalitarian outlook but mainly due to the fact that he was alarmed at the numerical loss that the Hindu community had been experiencing due to the steady conversion of Dalits to Islam and Christianity, which guaranteed them normative social equality.

The most authentic record of Savarkar’s beliefs and actions on this issue is available in a compilation by his secretary, A S Bhide, titled ‘Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President’s Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941’. The book is an official guide for Hindu Mahasabha cadres. According to it, Savarkar declared that he was undertaking these reformative actions in his personal capacity “without involving the Hindu Mahasabha organisation into social and religious [sic] activities not guaranteed by its constitutional limits...” Savarkar assured Sanatani Hindus who were opposed to untouchables’ entry into Hindu temples in 1939 that the Hindu Mahasabha, “will not introduce or support compulsory Legislature [sic] regarding Temple Entry by the untouchables etc. in old temples beyond the limit to which the non-Hindus are allowed by custom as in force today”.

On June 20, 1941, he once again pledged that he would not hurt the sentiments of Sanatani Hindus so far as the issue of entry of Untouchables in temples was concerned. This time, he even promised not to touch anti-women and anti-Dalit Hindu personal laws: “I guarantee that the Hindu Maha Sabha shall never force any legislations regarding the entry of untouchables in the ancient temples or compel by law any sacred ancient and moral usage or custom prevailing in those temples. In general, the Mahasabha will not back up any Legislation to thrust the reforming views on our Sanatani brothers so far as personal law is concerned...”

Savarkar remained a great protagonist of casteism and worshipper of the Manusmriti throughout his life: “Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worshippable [sic] after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed

by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manusmriti. Today Manusmriti is Hindu Law. That is fundamental.”

Sadly, Savarkarites bent upon establishing Savarkar’s anti-untouchability credentials have no hesitation in playing mischief even with a letter B R Ambedkar wrote to Savarkar on February 18, 1933. They produce it as a testimonial to establish Savarkar as a crusader against untouchability, which according to the Savarkarites reads as: “I wish to take this opportunity of conveying to you my appreciation of the work you are doing in the field of social reform. If the Untouchables are to be part of the Hindu society, then it is not enough to remove untouchability; for that matter, you should destroy ‘Chaturvarna’. I am glad that you are one of the very few leaders who have realised this.”

Unfortunately, the sentences have been picked up from the letter deleting all the critical comments on Savarkar’s agenda. The letter is produced in full so that the intellectual dishonesty of Savarkarites is known to readers:

“Many thanks for your letter inviting me to Ratnagiri to open the Temple on the fort to the Untouchables. I am extremely sorry that owing to previous engagements, I am unable to accept your invitation. I, however, wish to take this opportunity of conveying to you my appreciation

of the work you are doing in the field of social reforms. As I look at what is called the problem of the untouchables, I feel it is intimately bound up with the question of reorganisation of Hindu society. If the untouchables are to be a part and parcel of the Hindu society, then it is not enough to remove Untouchability, for that you must destroy Chaturvarnya. If they are not to be a part and parcel, if they are only to be appendix to Hindu society then Untouchability, so far as temple is concerned, may remain. I am glad to see that you are one of the very few who have realised it. That you still use the jargon of Chaturvarnya although you qualify it by basing it by basing it on merit is rather unfortunate. However, I hope that in course of time you will have courage enough to drop this needless and mischievous and jargon.”

In fact, Ambedkar came to the conclusion in 1940 that “If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country... [It] is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account, it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost”.

The writer taught political science at the University of Delhi.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, March 23, 2022. 

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

Putin's War—Russia, Ukraine, and NATO

John Mueller

When a group of academics interested in national security visited the headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) some years ago, our guide, a British officer, said that its acronym stood for “No Action, Talk Only.”

It was a joke of course, but it had some point. And it relates more broadly to the quite limited achievements of the storied alliance over the decades in which it was likely unnecessary to prevent international war—its primary purpose—yet played a mainly inadvertent, and perhaps even innocent, role in creating the current conflict in Ukraine, the first substantial international war in Europe—once the most warlike of continents—in over three-quarters of a century.

The NATO Experience

At the time the officer was speaking, NATO's main, and perhaps only, apparent accomplishment had been to deter the Soviet Union from invading Western Europe. That had been its central formative mission, and it was pushed into high gear at the time of the Korean War when, as defense analyst Bernard Brodie recalls, many, particularly in the Pentagon, were “utterly convinced” that the Soviets “were using Korea as a feint to cause us to deploy our forces there,” while preparing to launch “a major attack on Europe.”

However, later analysis and information indicates that this was hysterical nonsense. The invasion of South Korea by the North was not part of a global scheme of military expansion, but an opportunistic foray in a distant and then-minor area, one that was expected to be quick and easy.

More generally, there is not much evidence to support the notion that NATO had much to do with its most highly-touted achievement: deterring the Soviet Union from invading Western Europe. Evidence from Soviet archives

and elsewhere indicates that the Soviets, from top commissar to street drunk, never had the slightest interest in fighting anything that might remotely resemble World War II. That is, there was nothing to deter.

In later years, NATO moved a couple of times from its “no action” position by bombing Serbia in 1999 in support of the secession of its province of Kosovo, and by joining the United States in its costly post-9/11 failure in Afghanistan.

NATO's greatest accomplishment likely came in the 1990s in the aftermath of the Cold War, when the enemy it was designed to counter had ceased to exist. At the time, countries in Eastern Europe, suddenly freed from Soviet control, were looking for desirable clubs to join and were willing to jump through hoops about developing domestic democracy and capitalism if that was required. There was lot of skepticism at the time that those countries, after a half-century of communism, would be able to “make it,” but for the most part they did.

NATO surely deserves some credit for husbanding this remarkably successful development, but other Western European institutions, or coalitions, particularly the European Union, were likely more significant in the process. And of course, for the most part, NATO did not have to do anything to be influential except to exist and to continue talking.

The Russia Conundrum

But there was trouble as well: NATO's expansion to the east had the unintended consequence of alarming Russians—not only nationalists and Communists, but Western-oriented elites as well. NATO did urge that its expansion should not be seen as threatening, and it created a sort of ancillary club called the “partnership for peace,” which included such proto-members as Russia. Indeed, Russia's

President, Vladimir Putin, says he once discussed the idea that Russia might join the alliance with President Bill Clinton, who said he had “no objection.”

Since then, things have gotten worse. Russian perceptions of threat from NATO expansion may be misguided, even absurd, like those of the Pentagon about Soviet global designs in Korea. But they should be taken seriously. In particular, they are not simply a temporary whim of Putin; they are widely held in Russia: polls there find that people overwhelmingly blame NATO for the current crisis over Ukraine. As Virginia Tech’s Gerard Toal puts it, “NATO does not get to define Russia’s security perception.”

Putin sought to halt NATO’s expansion by obtaining guarantees that Ukraine and other former Soviet republics will not be admitted to the alliance, and by having NATO cut back or eliminate seemingly-threatening military exercises and deployments in its neighborhood.

That demand was central to his current posturing that seemed to be designed, in particular, not to conquer Ukraine, but to get the US and others to pay some attention to Russia and its security concerns. Putin felt he had been disrespected: his repeated requests to discuss what he considers Russia’s security had been ignored, and he responded by threateningly moving troops around to get attention. As he reportedly put it last year, a degree of tension would force the West to take Russia, and its security concerns, seriously.

Two Prospective Solutions

Since developed countries have pretty much given up on wars with each other for over 75 years, this looked for a while to be something of a teapot crisis that might be ameliorated by a few simple, and fundamentally trivial, adjustments.

One approach would have been to guarantee that Ukraine would be kept out of NATO, not forever as Putin demanded, but for, say, 25 years (when Putin would be 95). In the end, this moratorium would be a gesture without much

immediate practical significance. Many NATO members oppose membership for Ukraine, and it may not be formally eligible for membership anyway because it is plagued by border disputes, as well as decades of corruption and systematic looting by its elected politicians and their cronies; ill-led, faction-ridden, and deeply corrupt, it has managed to become the poorest country in Europe. When Ukraine attained independence in 1991 its per capita wealth was about the same as Poland’s; today is less than one-third of Poland’s. It would likely take decades, or a generation of reform, for it to become a plausible applicant for NATO membership in any case. Accordingly, giving some sort of guarantee that Ukraine will not enter NATO for a long time, if ever, would only formalize reality. As Alexander Dykin and Thomas Graham put it hopefully before the current conflict, “it should prove possible to find a mutually acceptable way to make it clear that Ukraine is not going to join NATO for years, if not decades, to come—something American and NATO officials will readily admit in private.”

Another approach would have been for Ukraine to adopt a form of neutrality, as was done with Austria after World War II. Like Austria, Ukraine could continue to develop economic and political ties with the West and continue to embrace democracy and capitalism. Interestingly, last summer Putin put forward the example of Germany and Austria as a model for what the relationship between Russia and Ukraine might be.

As part of a deal, there could also have been some reassessment of military deployments and exercises that dismay Russia, and there might also have been a relaxation of economic sanctions on Russia—a politically popular exercise that, as usual, had inflicted pain without impelling consequential policy change. For its part, Russia might have agreed to a non-aggression guarantee. The government of Ukraine had suggested an openness to neutrality, and its

president had called its quest for NATO membership a “dream.”

Resolving the War

Astonishingly, these proposals seem never to have been put forward by the West during the runup to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, presumably because it might look like it was giving in. In practice, these seemingly-simple solutions might have been complicated to work out, and other issues and concerns might have gotten in the way. But it seems that neither was ever even floated as a basis for discussion. Instead, diplomats walked, or sleepwalked, into war.

Now with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, that wariness about giving in has likely been heightened. However, a few days into the war, Putin contended that a settlement was possible if Ukraine was neutral, demilitarized, and “denazified”, and if Russian control over annexed Crimea was formally recognized. If this is the extent of his demands, both of the proposed solutions here deal with the first and potentially the second. Since rightwing extremist parties have been unable to obtain even a single seat in Ukraine’s parliament, and since the country’s president is Jewish, the third has already been substantially embraced, while the fourth could probably be decoupled for the time being: Crimea will go back to Ukraine about the same time Texas goes back to Mexico.

Thus, although there is no guarantee it will be possible to sell them to both sides, the two proposed solutions still, at least in principle, remain viable. In the current situation, they could facilitate a cease fire in the war and then a Russian withdrawal. However, although there are two perfectly sensible ways of substantially solving the problem, it seems that many in the West would prefer a war with all of its death, destruction, and misery, because pursuing the alternatives might seem to be giving in somewhat, or even appeasing, which since the time of Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of

Hitler has become anathema in the West.

Putin might gain some bragging rights in such a settlement, but the long-term prospects for him and for Russia are pretty grim. If his goal is to establish some sort of consequential “sphere of influence” over Ukraine and other areas, as many analysts darkly contend, his moves have proved to be spectacularly counterproductive. In particular, his efforts over the last decade have driven Ukrainians to look ever more to the West. In 2012, 14 percent of Ukrainians said they wanted to join NATO; by the eve of the current war, this figure had risen to 54 percent.

The Russian economy has been on the skids for most of the decade before the current crisis, and, even before the crisis, economists were finding the prospect for economic growth over the next decade in Putin’s economically-declining kleptocracy to be grim. And his war, even if it is settled without additional bloodshed and material destruction, is likely to have alienated prospective buyers and investors for at least as long as he is in charge.

Pulling back to take a bigger perspective, historian Stephen Kotkin points to a common theme over Russia’s last 500 years: “weakness and grandeur combine to produce an autocrat who tries to leap forward by concentrating power, which results in a worsening of the very strategic dilemma he is supposed to be solving.” Putin’s invasion of Ukraine seems likely to be a modern case in point.

However, while it provides a severe test, the war is unlikely to halt or shatter the remarkable post-World War II trend in which international war has greatly declined. Putin’s war seems almost entirely to have inspired outraged condemnation, not desires for imitation.

Dr. John Mueller is a political scientist at Ohio State University and a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. His most recent book is *The Stupidity of War: American Foreign Policy and the Case for Complacency*.

Courtesy **Skeptic**, March 8, 2022. 

Continued from the previous issue...

Science and Philosophy by M.N. Roy

Neo-Vitalism

Summarized by: **Vinod Jain**

(Vitalism: the doctrine that there is a vital principle)

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) wanted to avoid offending the traditional belief about the origin of life. Therefore he did not say anything on the matter.

But to fight the atheistic, irreligious and immoral doctrine became the task of orthodox philosophy in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer, for instance, loftily dismissed it as “cheap empiricism”. Hartmann declared that Darwinism would be consumed by its own logical consequences. The great Nietzsche, from the height of his vanity, looked down upon Darwin as a “mediocre intellect”. Finally, the authority of Lamark (1744-1829) was invoked to refute Darwinism.

The zoological philosophy of Lamark was essentially materialistic. Lamark held that the evolution of life was brought about mechanically by physical and chemical causes as the result of the striving for self-preservation. According to him, necessity is the cause of all adaption.

Scientifically, as well as philosophically, the conception of necessity is identical with the law of causality.

Lamark himself had decidedly rejected the mediaeval theory of vital force, which split up nature into two parts — the inorganic and the organic. Besides, the least regard for scientific knowledge would not permit an open return to the religious philosophy of the Middle Ages. The neo-Lamarkists, therefore, sought to revive vitalism without openly breaking with science. They declared to have found in science itself the material to build a bridge between the ‘organa’ and the ‘inorganica’.

Schopenhauer was the first to expound the doctrine of neo-vitalism; he also relied upon the authority of Lamark for the purpose. He denounced the materialist view of life as “not only false, but positively stupid; highest point of absurdity; sheer nonsense”. He simply abused Lamark when he expounded his neo-vitalism on the latter’s authority.

Adolf Wagnor summarises the doctrine of his school as follows: “Old vitalism held that there was an absolute difference between the organic and the inorganic parts of nature. For the mechanists the unity of entire nature is an axiomatic notion which, according to them, can be arrived at only (by studying nature) from the bottom up. Neo-Vitalism also looks upon nature as a unity but holds that such a unitary conception is possible only through viewing nature from the top downwards. It discovers the “possibility” for a unitary view of nature in a return to pantheism, and consequently to mysticism, and full-blooded faith.

Thomas Hunt Morgan (1867-1945) has contributed greatly to the elaboration of the theory of mutation, with the help of which biology consolidates the empirical foundation of philosophical materialism. Morgan’s investigations in the obscure, sub-microscopic realm of genetics tear away the veil of mystery which previously shrouded the origin of life.

C. Lloyd Morgan, as a scientist, also comes to the materialistic conclusion that “life emerges out of non-living matter.” Yet he would distinguish mind from life, and is “not prepared to concede the possibility of mind emerging out of life.” (“The Emergence of Novelty”).

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

On 135th Birthday of M.N. ROY



M.N. Roy (4th from right) and Mrs. Ellen Roy (3rd from right) at their residence at 13, Mohini Road, Dehradun

Manabendra Nath Roy (21 March 1887 – 25 January 1954), born Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, was an Indian revolutionary, radical activist and political theorist, as well as a noted philosopher in the 20th century. Roy was a founder of the Mexican Communist Party and the Communist Party of India.

He was born on 21 March 1887, at Arbalia, a village in 24 Parganas district in Bengal. His father, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya, was head pandit of a local school. His mother's name was Basanta Kumari.

Militant Nationalist Phase: In Search of Arms

Roy began his political career as a militant nationalist at the age of 14, when he was still a student. He joined an underground organization called Anushilan Samiti, and when it was banned, he helped in organizing Jugantar Group under the leadership of Jatin Mukherji. In 1915, after the beginning of the First World War, Roy left India for Java in search of arms for organizing an insurrection to overthrow the British rule in India. From then on, he moved from country to country, using fake passports and different names in his attempt to secure German arms. Finally, after

wandering through Malay, Indonesia, Indo-China, Philippines, Japan, Korea and China, in June 1916, he landed at San Francisco in United States of America.

Roy's attempts to secure arms ended in a failure. The Police repression had shattered the underground organization that Roy had left behind. He had also come to know about the death of his leader, Jatin Mukherji, in an encounter with police.

Towards Communism

The news of Roy's arrival at San Francisco was somehow published in a local daily, forcing Roy to flee south to Palo Alto, California near Stanford University. It was here that Roy, until then known as Narendra Nath Bhattacharya or Naren, changed his name to Manabendra Nath Roy. This change of name on the campus of Stanford University enabled Roy to turn his back on a futile past and look forward to a new life of adventures and achievements.

Roy's host at Palo Alto introduced him to Evelyn Trent, a graduate student at Stanford University. Evelyn Trent, who later married Roy, became his political collaborator. She accompanied him to Mexico and Russia and was of great help to him in his political and literary work. The collaboration continued until they separated in 1929.

At New York, where he went from Palo Alto, Roy met Lala Lajpat Rai, the well-known nationalist leader of India. He developed friendships with several American radicals, and frequented the New York Public Library. Roy also went to public meetings with Lajpat Rai. Questions asked by the working class audience in these meetings made Roy wonder whether exploitation and poverty would cease in India with

the attainment of independence. Roy began a systematic study of socialism, originally with the intention of combating it, but he soon discovered that he had himself become a socialist! In the beginning, nurtured as he was on Bankimchandra, Vivekanand and orthodox Hindu philosophy, Roy accepted socialism except its materialist philosophy.

Later in Mexico in 1919, Roy met Michael Borodin, an emissary of the Communist International. Roy and Borodin quickly became friends, and it was because of long discussions with Borodin that Roy accepted the materialist philosophy and became a full-fledged communist.

In 1920, Roy was invited to Moscow to attend the second conference of the Communist International. Roy had several meetings with Lenin before the Conference. He differed with Lenin on the role of the local bourgeoisie in nationalist movements. On Lenin's recommendation, the supplementary thesis on the subject prepared by Roy was adopted along with Lenin's thesis by the second conference of the Communist International. The following years witnessed Roy's rapid rise in the international communist hierarchy. By the end of 1926, Roy was elected as a member of all the four official policy making bodies of the Comintern - the presidium, the political secretariat, the executive committee and the world congress.

In 1927, Roy was sent to China as a representative of the Communist International. However, Roy's mission in China ended in a failure. On his return to Moscow from China, Roy found himself in official disfavor. In September 1929, he was expelled from the Communist International for "contributing to the Brandler press and supporting the Brandler organizations." Roy felt that he was expelled from the Comintern mainly because of his "claim to the right of independent thinking." (Ray 1987)

Return to India: Prison Years

Roy returned to India in December 1930. He was arrested in July 1931 and tried for his role in

the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment.

When Roy returned to India, he was still a full-fledged communist, though he had broken from the Comintern. The forced confinement in jail gave him more time than before for systematic study and reflection. His friends in Germany, especially his future wife, Ellen Gottschalk, kept providing him books, which he wanted to read. Roy had planned to use his prison years for writing a systematic study of 'the philosophical consequences of modern science', which would be in a way a re-examination and re-formulation of Marxism to which he had been committed since 1919. The reflections, which Roy wrote down in jail, grew over a period of five years into nine thick volumes (approximately over 3000 lined foolscap-size pages). The 'Prison Manuscripts' have not so far been published in their totality, and are currently preserved in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Archives in New Delhi. However, selected portions from the manuscript were published as separate books in the 1930s and the 1940s. These writings show that Roy was not satisfied with a primarily economic explanation of historical processes. He studied and tried to assess the role of cultural and ideational factors in traditional and contemporary India, in the rise and expansion of Islam, and in the phenomenon of fascism. He was particularly severe on the obscurantist professions and practices of neo-Hindu nationalism. Roy tried to reformulate materialism in the light of latest developments in the physical and biological sciences. He was convinced that without the growth and development of a materialist and rationalist outlook in India, neither a renaissance nor a democratic revolution would be possible. In a way, seeds of the philosophy of new humanism, which was later developed fully by Roy, were already evident in his jail writings.

Beyond Communism: Towards New Humanism

Immediately after his release from jail on 20

November 1936, Roy joined Indian National Congress along with his followers. He organized his followers into a body called League of Radical Congressmen. However, in December 1940, Roy and his followers left Congress owing to differences with the Congress leadership on the role of India in the Second World War. Thereafter, Roy formed the Radical Democratic Party of his own. This signaled the beginning of the last phase of Roy's life in which he developed his philosophy of new humanism.

After Roy's release from jail in 1936, Ellen Gottschalk joined Roy in Bombay in March 1937. They were married in the same month. Subsequently, Ellen Roy played an important role in Roy's life, and cooperated in all of his endeavors.

Roy prepared a draft of basic principles of "radical democracy" before the India conference of the Radical Democratic Party held in Bombay in December 1946. The draft, in which his basic ideas were put in the form of theses, was circulated among a small number of selected friends and associates of Roy. The "22 Theses" or "Principles of Radical Democracy", which emerged as a result of intense discussions between Roy and his circle of friends, were adopted at the Bombay Conference of the Radical Democratic Party. Roy's speeches at the conference in connection with the 22 Theses were published later under the title Beyond Communism.

In 1947, Roy published New Humanism - A Manifesto, which offered an elaboration of the 22 Theses. The ideas expressed in the manifesto were, according to Roy, "developed over a period of number of years by a group of critical Marxists and former Communists."

Further discussions on the 22 Theses and the manifesto led Roy to the conclusion that party-politics was inconsistent with his ideal of organized democracy. This resulted in the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948 and launching of a movement called the Radical

Humanist Movement. At the Calcutta Conference, itself where the party was dissolved, theses 19 and 20 were amended to delete all references to party. The last three paragraphs of the manifesto were also modified accordingly. Thus, the revised versions of the 22 Theses and the manifesto constitute the essence of Roy's New Humanism.

Final years

In 1946, Roy established the Indian Renaissance Institute at Dehradun. Roy was the founder-director of the Institute. Its main aim was to develop and organize a movement to be called the Indian Renaissance Movement.

In 1948, Roy started working on his last major intellectual project. Roy's magnum opus Reason, Romanticism and Revolution is a monumental work (638 pages). The fully written, revised and typed press copy of the book was ready in April 1952. It attempted to combine a historical survey of western thought with an elaboration of his own system of ideas. While working on Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, Roy had established contacts with several humanist groups in Europe and America, which had views similar to his own. The idea gradually evolved of these groups coming together and constituting an international association with commonly shared aims and principles. The inaugural congress of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) was planned to be organized in Amsterdam in 1952, and Roy was expected to play an influential role in the congress and in the development of the IHEU.

However, before going abroad, Roy needed some rest. He and Ellen Roy went up for a few days from Dehradun to the hill station of Mussoorie. On June 11 1952, Roy met a serious accident. He fell fifty feet down while walking along a hill track. He was moved to Dehradun for treatment. On the 25th of August, he had an attack of cerebral thrombosis resulting in a partial paralysis of the right side. The accident prevented the Roys from attending the inaugural congress

of the IHEU, which was held in August 1952 at Amsterdam. The congress, however, elected M.N. Roy, in absentia, as one of its vice-presidents and made the Indian Radical Humanist Movement one of the founder members of the IHEU. On August 15 1953, Roy had the second attack of cerebral thrombosis, which paralyzed the left side of his body. Roy's last article dictated to Ellen Roy for the periodical Radical Humanist was about the nature and organization of the Radical Humanist Movement. This article was published in the Radical Humanist on 24 January 1954. On January 25 1954, ten minutes before midnight, M.N. Roy died of a heart attack. He was nearly 67 at that time.

Sent by **Veeranna Gumma**, Source Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Wikipedia

Some Quotes

"A brotherhood of men attracted by the adventure of ideas, keenly conscious of the urge for freedom, fired with the vision of a free society of free men, and motivated by the

will to remake the world, so as to restore the individual in his position of primacy and dignity, will show the way out of the contemporary crisis of modern civilization."

"Men of moral and intellectual excellence will serve as friends, philosophers and guides of society."

"To restore moral order, society has to be rationally organised based on harmonious and mutually beneficial social relations."

"The criterion for value judgement, the sanction of moral behaviour is furnished by the innate rationality of human being. But the human being does not appear as a finished product. Human existence consists in an endless process of unfoldment of the potentialities -which are biological heritage."

— **M.N. ROY**

"Reason, Romanticism and Revolution"
(1950)

Sent by **Meduri Satyanarayana**, Andhra Pradesh 

Contd. from page - (38)

Neo-Vitalism

The Nominalists, after them the men of the Renaissance, and finally the fathers of modern philosophy (Descartes and Bacon) conceived mind as an independent force in order to liberate reason from the domination of theology which taught "life is the breath of God".

Rationalist revolt against the theological perversion of a scientifically correct view was vitiated by dualism. The fight for freedom of the mind degenerated into a new religion — of rationalism. In order to be a sovereign force, reason must have a super-natural origin.

The present state of biological knowledge hardly leaves any room for an immaterial vital force or the spiritual essence of man, and with the immaterial soul, God also must go.

The hypothesis of spontaneous generation was definitely set up by Huxley and Haeckel. Even before them, a whole succession of natural philosophers and biologists had been moving in that direction. Already in 1819, the German naturalist Oken had traced the origin of life to the "primitive slime". Then came Schultze's theory of protoplasm and Schwamm's discovery of the cell. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the French Academy of Science led by Pasteur was vehemently defending spontaneous generation. Haeckel's discovery of the 'monera' occupies a place in the process of organic evolution very near to the recently discovered 'bacteriophages', which are considered by Haldane and other contemporary biologists to be the bridge between the 'organa' and the 'inorganica'.

To be continued in the next issue....

Scanned copies of Volume I, II, III and IV of the 'Selected Works of M.N. Roy' (all volumes published so far) and 'A Journey from Marxism to Radical Humanism' by Mahi Pal Singh also released

We are happy to release scanned copies of Volumes I, II, III and IV of the Selected Works of M.N. Roy which are in great demand but are out of print. These volumes are now available at the website: www.lohiatoday.com.

These volumes have been placed at www.lohiatoday.com for the benefit of students, researchers and readers, courtesy Manohar Ravela who manages the website.

Another collection of articles written by Mahi Pal Singh between 2000 and 2021, which traces the social and political history of the country for that period and also 'A Journey from Marxism to Radical Humanism' has also been released by the Indian Renaissance Institute on 26th January 2022 and this collection has also been placed at www.lohiatoday.com.

'Selections from The Radical Humanist, Vol 1' placed at 'Academia.edu' has received 1,256 views till 12.04.2022 and 'Selections from The Radical Humanist, Vol 2' has received 2,829 views till 05.04.2022. These two volumes are also available at the website along with other works of Roy.

The two volumes have been accessed in 661 cities, 220 cities in India and 441 cities across the world till 16.4.2022.

- Mahi Pal Singh

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