

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



ESTABLISHED : APRIL 1937

(Formerly in the name of 'INDEPENDENT INDIA'
from April 1937 to March 1949)

Founder

M.N. ROY

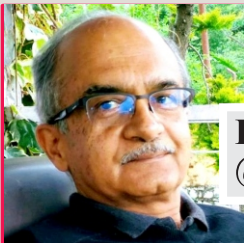
Vol. 86 Number 10

JANUARY 2023

Rs. 15 / MONTH



634



Prashant Bhushan
@pbhushan1

**The present regime has learnt
well from Hitler's
propaganda minister**

**JOSEPH GOEBBELS
NAZI PROPAGANDA
MINISTER**



GOEBBELS' PRINCIPLES OF PROPAGANDA

1. REPEAT LIES TILL ACCEPTED AS TRUTH.
2. BLAME OPPONENTS FOR ALL PROBLEMS.
3. EVERY ACT MUST BE JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF NATION.
4. AGGRESSIVE MEDIA MANIPULATION.
5. FLOATING THEORY OF CONSPIRACIES.
6. BRAND OPPONENTS AS ANTI-NATIONAL.
7. CONSTANT VISIBILITY OF THE LEADER.
8. USE RALLIES, SLOGANS, SYMBOLS, ICONS.

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

Vol. 86 Number 10, January 2023

Monthly journal of the Indian Renaissance Institute
Devoted to the development of the Renaissance
Movement and to the promotion of human
rights, scientific temper, rational thinking and
a humanist view of life.

Founder Editor:

M.N. Roy

Advisor:

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

Editor:

Mahi Pal Singh

Editorial Board:

Vinod Jain, Dr. Ramesh Awasthi,
Bhaskar Sur, Dr. Dipavali Sen,
Mahi Pal Singh- Editor (Ex-Officio)

Printer and Publisher:

Sheoraj Singh

Send articles and reports to:

Mahi Pal Singh at Raghav Vihar, Phase- 3,
Prem Nagar, Dehradun- 248007. (Uttarakhand)
(M) 9312206414, (Landline): 013-53549624.

or E-mail them to:

theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or
mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com

Please send Subscription/Donation

Cheques in favour of :

The Radical Humanist to:

Sheoraj Singh,
3821/7, Kanhaiya Nagar,
Tri Nagar, Delhi- 110035. (M) 9891928222.
Email ID: srsingh3821@gmail.com

Subscriptions can also be transferred directly to :
The Radical Humanist, Current Account
Number 0349201821034, IFSC Code
CNRB0002024, Canara Bank, Totaram Bazar,
Tri Nagar, New Delhi- 110035.

Please Note: Authors will bear sole
accountability for corroborating the facts that they
give in their write-ups. Neither the IRI/the Publisher,
nor the Editor of this journal will be responsible for
testing the validity and authenticity of statements
& information cited by the authors. Also, sometimes
some articles published in this journal may carry
opinions not similar to the Radical Humanist
philosophy; but they would be entertained here if
the need is felt to debate and discuss them.

CONTENTS :

Page No.

Editorial Notes:

- COP 15 and Mass Extinction on Earth** 4
Renewable Energy — A positive Development
Vinod Jain

Articles and Features:

- Let us update our beliefs** 5
Vinod Jain

- Special Feature on 30th January, the Martyrdom** 6
of Mahatma Gandhi:

THE PATH OF GANDHI: Koganti Radha Krishna
Murty

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH VERSION:

Lavanam Gora

- You can call NDTV elitist, anglicised. But it** 11
defended democracy, gave us Ravish Kumar
Yogendra Yadav

- Perspiring School Education and queer innovation** 14
of education department of the State of West Bengal
Bimal Kumar Chatterjee

- ‘We talk of this perpetually’: Ambassador Elizabeth** 17
Jones on hate speech in Indian poll campaign
Kallol Bhattacharjee

- A tale of two pardons** 19
Sandeep Pandey

- Distorted Histories and Unconstitutional** 21
Autocracy in the ‘Mother of Democracy’
Rajesh Venkatasubramanian

- The Election Commission is Revelling in Past** 24
Glory and the Supreme Court Has Called its Bluff
M.G. Devasahayam

Interview: 27

- Why the Election Commission’s appointment is**
being questioned by the Supreme Court
Umang Poddar

- IFFI jury chief slams ‘The Kashmir Files’:** 30
‘Propaganda, vulgar... shocked, disturbed’
Alaka Sahani

- How RSS’s intrinsic authoritarianism, casteism** 32
are laid bare by Devanura Mahadeva
Ramachandra Guha

- The attack on the last bastion — the judiciary** 35
Ajit Prakash Shah

- Hindu-Muslim divide, is it religious?** 37
P.A. S. Prasad

- Row over Savarkar: What the Hindutva leader** 40
said about Ram, Akbar, and Buddha
Yashee

COP 15 and Mass Extinction on Earth

Montreal in Canada is hosting (at the time of going to press) a delayed COP 15 summit to halt ‘alarming’ global biodiversity loss. COP 15 is the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity — a key UN Summit to halt nature loss.

We have already had five mass extinctions on Earth. The first (called Ordovician) was 445 million years ago in which 85% of life was destroyed. The second (called Devonian) was 340 million years ago in which 70% of life was destroyed. The third (called Permian) was 250 million years ago in which 95% of life was destroyed. The fourth (called Triassic) was 300 million years ago in which 76% of life was destroyed. And fifth (called K-T) was 75 million years ago in which 80% of life was destroyed

that included the dinosaurs.

We may note that a species is considered extinct if no member of the species is living; that most organisms that have lived on earth are now extinct; that mass extinctions have shaped Earth’s geologic and biological history.

We are living in the midst of the sixth mass extinction. Scientists believe that human impact on the environment is the leading cause of extinction today.

This summit was to take place in China two years ago but could not happen because of China’s internal problems. Experts warn that ambitious targets for nature must be agreed at this UN meeting. If we fail, and if mass extinction takes place, Humanity may as well disappear from Earth. 🌈

Renewable Energy — A positive Development

There have been many factors disturbing the earth’s environment. Scientists have been saying that the role played by the burning of the fossil fuel for energy is major in this. The alternative of going in for renewable energy like solar and wind will be fruitful, is widely recognized for quite some time now.

India is among the countries that had years ago started installing the capacity for renewable energy. It had lately increased its total share of installed non-fuel capacity to 50% per cent by 2030. However, according to draft electricity plan, India would have 57% per cent non-

fossil capacity by 2027 and 68 per cent by 3032.

Now according to the International Emergency Agency, renewables are likely to be the largest source of global electricity generation by early 2025, surpassing coal.

The International Energy Agency has said that the sharp acceleration in renewable energy installations, with the total capacity worldwide set to almost double in the next five years, could possibly keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius alive. This will be a positive development. 🌈

Articles and Features :

Let us update our beliefs

Vinod Jain

A section of our society has for long been talking of “Panch Tatva” (five elements). They say that that is from where we emerge and that it is that in which we merge when we die (“panch tatva mein vileen ho jaate hain”). It was not their view originally. It was the view of our ancient thinkers who were exploring the unknown.

The five elements mentioned above have been Agni (fire), Vayu (air), Jal (water), Dharti (earth) and Akash (space). The French chemist Antoine Lavoisier (1743-94) showed that burning is a chemical reaction, that air is a mixture of gases, and water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. So neither fire nor air nor water is an element. Similarly, Dharti (earth) and Akash (space) are not elements.

An encyclopedia explains thus: An element is a substance composed of only one type of atom. Elements are the most basic substances in the Universe and cannot be split into anything simpler. There are 109 elements — 91 of which occur naturally, and 18 of which can be made artificially. All life on earth is based on the element carbon, which is vital to the functioning of living cells. Oxygen is the most plentiful element on Earth. It occurs in air, water, and even rocks. Readers will notice that the element carbon is no part of our “panch tatva”, without which life is not possible because without carbon a cell cannot be.

And without cells life, as we know it, cannot be. Similarly, without calcium which gives bones their hardness, a bone-based structure either of a human or of an animal, cannot be.

Hydrogen — The element hydrogen makes up 90 per cent of all the matter in the Universe. It was the first element to form when Universe got created in the explosion known as the Big Bang. Hydrogen is a tasteless, colorless, odorless, non-toxic gas. It is the simplest of all the elements, with its atoms containing just one proton orbited by a single electron. Hydrogen gives acids their acidic properties.

Similarly, there are many elements and compounds that go into the making of life.

We should update our knowledge as well as our socio- cultural practices by basing them on updated knowledge. 🌈

When we say Let Us Save....

Then we should be open to knowledge—scientific knowledge. We should not enclose ourselves into any kind of cultural cocoon, because that will lead us nowhere. The entire humanity is finding itself in great peril. The entire humanity should try to find a way out. That is possible only on the sound basis of science-based knowledge. Here is a sample of what I mean.

Vinod Jain, Chairman, Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)

Special Feature on 30th January, the Martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi:

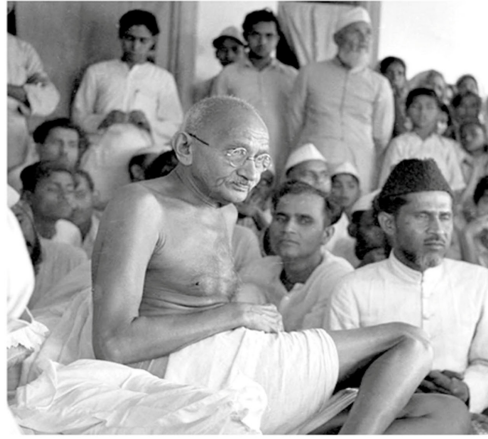
Violence is not the answer to violence:

THE PATH OF GANDHI

A Rationalist Appraisal of Contributions of Gandhi

By Koganti Radha Krishna Murty

mkgandhi.org



The principle of nonviolence
necessitates complete abstention
from exploitation in any form.

mkgandhi

Harijan, 12.11.1938



Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal - Gandhi Research Foundation

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH VERSION

(Translated from Telugu by Jawaharlal Jasthi)

I consider it a privilege that an opportunity is given to me to write a foreword to the book on Gandhi written by late K.Radha Krishna Murty, three decades back. I know him intimately. He was a kind hearted gentleman. He grew up in

the background of independence movement of India. He was influenced by socialist ideals and became a part of the society that accepted Gandhi as the Mahatma. Later on he was impressed by the philosophy of M.N.Roy and

stayed with it to the end. He belongs to the cadre that believes in and encourages difference of opinion as a means of enlightenment. He was a democrat who was willing to take best of other ideas and improve himself. He was born and brought up in the Gandhian era and studied his philosophy deeply. He appreciated his ideas in some aspects and also disapproved some other ideas which are manifest in this book. He paid complements to Gandhi as the man who could influence the world with his principles of truth and non-violence. He disagreed with the traditional values of Gandhi. To a large extent this work is a comprehensive analysis of Gandhi's principles and practices. In the 1970s Mr. Radha Krishna Murty looked to Gandhi as many of the progressive democrats looked to him, albeit with some reservations. The Soviet Union was still intact at that time and globalization did not lead the national markets into international market empires. In the present circumstances, we may have to look at Gandhi from different perspective. As an atheist I differ completely from his traditional way of thinking and his complete dependence on God. Even then, I consider Gandhi a revolutionist.

During 1945-46, my father "GoRa" (Goparaju Ramachandra Rao, the untired crusader of atheism) engaged Gandhi in a serious discussion on atheism. At that time Gandhi invited all the members of our family to his Ashram in Sevagram. I had an opportunity to stay with him continuously for three months and observe him closely. Later, I participated in the Sarvodaya (Improvement of All) movement of Vinoba Bhave, a close follower of Gandhi. I took the opportunity to analytically study how his followers admire Gandhi. Perhaps, if Mr. Radha Krishna Murty is alive today he would agree with me to a large extent as both of us are basically atheists.

When I made frequent tours around the world, I had to speak about Gandhi and his philosophy at many places. When I spoke in

the Harvard University in 1994, one of the participants raised many critical questions. I was happy I could satisfy his curiosity to a large extent. "If you please tell me the book which contains what you said, I would like to get it" he said. I told him it would be possible only when I write the book and I have not yet written it. "Then why don't you write it now?" he asked. "If anybody is willing to stay with me for some time and help me in studying the works of Gandhi afresh, I would certainly like to write the book" I said. The next day the person met me and offered to spend the required time with me. He was prof. Mark Lindley. At that time he was Assistant Chaplain in the Humanist Chaplaincy of Harvard University. He was a member of the American Humanist Association and toured extensively in Europe and Asia. He also worked as Professor of Music in the universities of Hong Kong, England, Italy and America. With this background, when he offered to come and spend time with me, I was immensely happy. For three years after that he spent four months each year with me in India. Together, we studied nearly a hundred compilations of Gandhi's works published by the government of India. We together wrote the book "Gandhi As We Know Him" in English. It was popular in Europe and America as well as in India. With this background I would like to share some of my thoughts on how to analyze and understand Gandhi.

Until he went to South Africa, Gandhi was a timid person. Everybody considered him a person of no consequence. He passed only matriculation and joined Intermediate in the college. He was poor in mathematics and was literally afraid of the teacher to such an extent that he discontinued his studies. Later he went to England. At that time there was a system to get Barrister Degree just by attending regularly and hearing the lectures on law without any need to write examinations. Gandhi became a Barrister that way.

Since his childhood he had high regard and

respect for Truth. When he started practicing law in India, he found there is an element of untruth involved in every litigation and stopped his practice as a lawyer. In 1893 he went to South Africa as a legal advisor to the businesses of Seth Abdullah. He purchased a ticket and boarded the first class compartment of the train in Durban to go to Johannesburg. It was a rule at that time that when there are white passengers in the first class compartment, others are not allowed, even if they have the ticket. He refused to vacate and he was thrown out on the platform in the next station. He felt hurt deeply and realized the need for everybody to uphold his honor and self-respect. Then and there he decided to make a coordinated effort to help all the Indians living there. He also decided that the movement shall be based on Truth and non-violence. It was a movement that the world has never seen before.

At that time three types of individualities were manifest in Gandhi – one is traditionalism, the other is action for future and the third is a revolutionary. By the side of these three individual characters of Gandhi, it was necessary to look at him from a different angle to understand him. There were clearly two different outlooks inherent in him – as an individual and as a social creature. The matters on which we differ belong to Gandhi as an individual. His activities using Truth and non-violence as weapons belong to Gandhi as a social creature. Because he tried to introduce his individual beliefs into his social activities, he became a controversial person. But if anybody questioned his introduction of his personal beliefs into his social activities, he would not hesitate to change.

Gandhi had many discussions with GoRa on atheism when they stayed together in the Ashram. In the course of those discussions, he asserted that when you say “God is Truth” or “Truth is God”, you have to agree that there is no Truth without God. It was pointed out to him

that there are people who do not believe in God but believe in Truth. “How do you reconcile with them?” he was asked. He thought for a while and said “Truth is different from faith in God. Faith in God is individual while Truth is a social factor.” He also agreed that atheism also could be a way of searching for Truth. When he conceded this in 1945, there was clear change manifest in his outlook. The details were given in the book written by GoRa “An Atheist With Gandhi”. This book was published in 1951 by Navjivan Trust who was the publisher of all the works of Gandhi. The original was in English. Later they published Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati versions also. This book has a great value in Gandhian literature. Since he believed that Truth is higher than God, God is a personal faith and Truth is a social necessity, the revolutionary aspect in him got strengthened gradually. If we look at Gandhi with this background, we would realize that Gandhi had no blind faiths and he would not agree to anything that did not stand to reason. He has himself stated that. In my book I selected some of his statements and quotations from his writings to show his initial opinions on certain matters and how he changed his opinions over time and to what extent he changed. On many issues he changed his ideas radically over time. Gandhi was a man always ready to change. He was not dogmatic. That made him the Mahatma.

There is another thing. From the beginning Gandhi considered every problem faced by him as a problem faced by every individual. It was a rule of railways in South Africa at that time that when there are white passengers in the first class compartment, non-whites shall get down even if they have a ticket for it. Gandhi considered it an affront for every person who was non-white. He started his struggle to uphold the self-respect of every non-white along with his own. Similarly, while fighting for independence from colonial rule, he wished

freedom for every country under colonial rule. That is why he could influence Martin Luther King in America. Similarly Nelson Mandela in Africa and some leaders in other countries (Ireland) also were influenced. Primarily Gandhi converted non-violence, which was basically a mere theory till then, into a weapon to bring revolutionary changes. Violence in retaliation of violence is easy. But violence against non-violence is not that easy. Somewhere in the heart of the aggressor, his conscience would trouble him that he is hitting a non-violent peaceful person. What all Gandhi has achieved is only to make people over the world think on those lines.

Gandhi was against exploitation, against inequalities. He considered both as violence. He knows that common man cannot afford to show interest in practicing non-violence. To provoke them, he said that “non-violence is greater than violence. But violence is better than timidity.” This shows the importance given by him for a revolt against exploitation and inequality. A woman asked him how to save herself if somebody tries to violate her. He simply said “God has given you teeth and nails.” That is, he advised her to save herself by biting the invader and scratch him with all her power. He did not consider it as violence. The inevitable violence is the first step to non-violence, he said.

Once lakhs of monkeys descended in groups on fields with crops in Orissa and damaged it. One of the farmers asked Gandhi how could he protect his crops if not violently. Monkeys were considered sacred and he did not think of using violence against them. But Gandhi told him he has a right to save his crops. If you cannot drive away the monkeys, you kill them, he said. He identified three stages in the practice of non-violence – universal acceptance, passive resistance and constructive policy. If we follow these steps, equality and Truth will necessarily get established in our society, he said. While in South Africa he had to gather all the Indians, irrespective of their religion, language and

region. To that extent, it was a secular effort. Similarly, he felt the need to get participation of every Indian in the fight for freedom – from Tatas and Birlas to the utmost poor, from Maharajas to the common man, including people of all the religions. That was why he could not insist on making communal unity and eradication of untouchability an integral part of the freedom movement, however important they are. He did not forget them. He said that immediately after getting independence, it will be necessary to try for social and economic independence.

Hindus are about 80% of the population in India. It was necessary to attract them to his line of thinking. Before him Tilak succeeded in making Hindus follow his leadership. Gandhi decided to follow the same technic. Tilak politicalized the religious celebrations on the occasion of Ganesh worship. He impressed Maharashtrians by describing Sivaji as a fearless freedom fighter. Tilak was himself from Maharashtra and he knows the situation there. Before coming to India Gandhi had to think of gathering all the Indians in South Africa irrespective of caste and community. After coming to India he had to lead the entire country and majority of them are Hindus. He used the name of Lord Rama by saying that he wants to establish ‘Ramarajya’. He lost no time to explain that he was not referring to the rule of Ayodhya or to the son of Dasaratha. He said he was referring to an ideal ruler. He had to put before the society the issues involving secular ideas in a traditional language. Old language attracted the people, but they failed to understand the new interpretation given by Gandhi to the old terminology.

Neither Marx nor M.N.Roy had the need to lead people’s movements in their lifetimes. They were free to explain and propagate their theories as and how they felt it. If you need to convene and coordinate people on those views, it would be necessary to compromise with their beliefs to some extent. Lenin made such changes in

the philosophy of Marx. In order to consolidate the Soviet Union Stalin had to make more modifications. Even Mao adopted the theory of Marx. But he had to work with farmers and agricultural laborers. He too had to make some concessions to coordinate them. When he had to convert his personal views to practical popular movements, Gandhi also made so many adjustments while appealing to the people. But once it was clear that independence would come only with partition, he refused to compromise and stuck to his original opinions against partition. This aspect would have been clearer if only he lived longer.

I think those people who lived close to Gandhi in his Ashram also did not understand his foresight and failed to uphold his views after his death. In the Harijan issue dated 20 April, 1947 he wrote clearly that he “would not stop mentioning the names of Ram and Rahim in the same breath even if you kill me. Those two names stand for one God in my opinion. I will die happily while repeating those names.” In January, 1948 it was clear that he may have to die any moment. When he was shot dead on 30th January, 1948 he must have recalled those names only while dying. In the Harijan issue dated 15 Feb, 1948, his personal assistant Pyarelal wrote that Gandhi said only ‘Ram, Ram’ while dying. When Gandhi was hit by the first bullet, what he said could be clear “Ram”. Before he said the next word “Rahim” he was hit by the second bullet and his shock could have weakened his voice further and what he said could not be audible clearly. Most of the people around him at that time were Hindus. The utterance of ‘Rahim’ could be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted as ‘Ram’. But in view of categorical statements of Gandhi on this issue, if we fail or refuse to see the possibility of him keeping his faith, we would be doing grave injustice to Gandhi. After his death, Hinduism has become more important than Gandhi. We preferred to ignore his ideals and


confined him to ‘Ram’ only leaving ‘Rahim’. To confirm our interpretation, it was inscribed on his tomb at Rajghat “Hey Ram!” How Gandhi would have reacted to it? When what he said actually could not be heard clearly, we should have given credit to what he said earlier instead of putting our words into his mouth. If only “Ram Rahim” was inscribed on the tomb, Muslim visitors to the Ghat would have been more impressed and their respect for Gandhi would have been increased. It would have helped unity between the two religions as well. Gandhi succeeded to divert Muslims in Naokhali and Calcutta from violence. It could have been possible only because they considered Ram and Rahim as representing the same God and they understood it. The inevitable conclusion is that the so-called followers of Gandhi did not do justice to his secular outlook after his demise. That is why we should try to understand Gandhi from what he himself said about himself instead of depending on what his followers say. Gandhi was more secular, rational and tolerant.

In his book, Mr. Radha Krishna Murty, having narrated the points on which he differs, also explained in detail where he concurs with Gandhi. That was his magnanimity. That is why his book on Gandhi is more precious. It is necessary to get it translated into other languages. Because I am surviving him, I took liberty to incorporate in the foreword the changes in society after his death and my own ideas on detailed study of Gandhian literature. I hope readers would take it in proper spirit.

— — — — —
LAVANAM GORA

Atheist Center, Vijayawada

10 December, 2014
 — — — — —

(The book **THE PATH OF GANDHI** will be published serially in the coming issues of **The Radical Humanist** as a tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. – Editor) 

You can call NDTV elitist, anglicised. But it defended democracy, gave us Ravish Kumar

In all these years of covering elections on NDTV, I do not recall a single occasion when I was asked or even hinted to say or not say something. I disagreed with Prannoy Roy off-screen and on-screen and that was never a problem.

Yogendra Yadav



File photo of NDTV co-founder Prannoy Roy |

Photo by Ana-Bianca Marin/Getty Images

Ravish Kumar's resignation confirms what everyone dreaded. This is the beginning of the end of the NDTV that we have known.

Elite, professional, defender of democratic India

When I say Radhika and Prannoy Roy, it is not a facile nod to Mrs. Roy. If Prannoy has been the face and the voice of the news channel, I saw Radhika Roy as its brain and spirit. I write less about her because my engagement with *NDTV* was mainly with its election team headed by Prannoy. Radhika Roy is widely credited for the professionalism, so sorely missing from Indian institutions, that marked *NDTV*. Besides its editorial

line, *NDTV* has been an exemplar of high production values. It is among the few TV channels that understood the value of visuals and graphics. It is only at *NDTV* that you could be in a studio with all women crew including camerapersons on the floor and producers in the backroom. That must count as rare achievement in the all-male culture of the Indian media. But above all, what I cherish about the institution is the work culture of its non-editorial staff. Something that speaks volumes about the core organisational values.

They carried it like a badge of honour: the driver who navigated the vehicle with poise, the office attendant who was courteous but not craven. And the cleaner who was always dressed appropriately and was used to being treated with dignity.

Yes, *NDTV* was as elitist and anglicised as it could get, overpopulated with the children of India's who's who. Rank outsiders like Ravish and I, who got an entry into this club, watched it with resentment and amusement. But it was an elite that could not take its merit for granted, that consciously bore the responsibility to be the carrier of the best in their civilisation. Above all, it was an elite who stood up to defend the constitution that its forefathers crafted, and who was willing to pay a price for defending the idea of a democratic and secular India. Will ANDTV carry this legacy forward? Is this question even worth asking?

Yogendra Yadav is among the founders of Jai Kisan Andolan and Swaraj India. Views are personal.

Those who know business and corporate law better than I do might disagree. They say that *NDTV*'s executive chairpersons Prannoy and Radhika Roy have not resigned. We are told that they have only exited from the holding company, that they continue to be the largest share-holders, and that there are many avenues open for them and *NDTV*. But I happen to know something about politics. No legality comes in the way if a country's most powerful person backs its richest person. The brand name will persist, it may even flourish, but it won't be the *NDTV* that we have known for three decades.

Those who know media better than I do say that the new directors appointed by chairperson of Adani group, Gautam Adani are independent journalists. I can testify that about Sanjay Pugalia, having known him for over 20 years. He is a fine journalist and by no means a Modi loyalist. That, however, only indicates

that Adani's *NDTV* — let us call it ANDTV — may not take a sharp U-turn. The channel may be allowed to carry its image and viewers till orders come from above. That is exactly what happened after Mukesh Ambani's takeover of *Network18*.

It is a tribute to *NDTV* that Ravish Kumar's resignation has drawn more popular attention than the resignation of its founders, Radhika and Prannoy Roy. Over the last few years, Ravish's shows have become the flagship of the news channel and not just of its Hindi channel. Some time ago, I had written in this column series that "Ravish Kumar's journalism is a testament to the travails of truth in our times." He is an icon and with good reasons. At the same time, we cannot overlook the self confidence and vision of the Roys who they allowed a young colleague from outside their own charmed circles to reach where he did and overshadow them. This is in sharp contrast to what I call the standard Indian "jaan-doonga-jaan-loonga" model of institution building, where the founder gives his life to build an institution, keeps it under his thumb and sucks away life before his departure. Radhika and Prannoy Roy dared to be different.

Model of generosity, fairness

I clearly remember my first visit to *NDTV* sometime in 1993. I was at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and was invited to edit a special issue on elections for the magazine *Seminar*. Prannoy's book, (co-authored with Ashok Lahiri and David Butler) *A Compendium on Indian Elections*, had already inspired me to step out of the esoteric world of political philosophy and write a few pieces on what is now called psephology. I was keen to do an interview with Prannoy Roy for the special issue. Tejbir Singh, the editor of *Seminar* and another fine specimen of the truly liberal elite that I was beginning to discover in Delhi, picked the phone

and fixed an appointment with Prannoy with an ease that amazed me. And there we were in the W Block, Greater Kailash office of the *NDTV*. It was a fan boy moment for me. I don't remember much about the interview. All I can recall is his offer of Chinese tea (I didn't know such a thing existed) as an option and the attentiveness with which he responded to a young nobody that I was.

Over the years, I have had the fortune of being at the receiving end of Prannoy's warmth. I can never forget the election counting day in 1996. I had made an exit poll-based forecast for *Doordarshan*. For some reason, this exercise was seen and presented as a rival to Prannoy Roy, the king of election forecasting. On the counting day, Karnataka was among the first few states to report trends and we were wrong there — perhaps the only major state where we were off. The late Jaipal Reddy, ever ready with his one-liners, said, “*exit poll ki pol khul gayi*”. Prannoy could have joined him in this debunking, quietly encouraged him with a smirk or just let him be. I wasn't there to defend our forecast. But Prannoy stopped Jaipal Reddy in his tracks, firmly requested him to desist from a premature judgment and provided evidence from other

states to show how good our forecast was. That's Prannoy Roy for you: a model of generosity, fairness and grace.

Radhika and Prannoy Roy turned these personal virtues into institutional values. Over the last three decades, I have seen *NDTV* both as an outsider and an almost-insider. I have been a consumer of its news right from the *World This Week* days. I had the privilege to work with its famous election team. In between I worked with its competitors (first *Aaj Tak* and then *CNN-IBN*). Of late, I have also been the subject of its news coverage. Fairness and editorial independence have been the hallmark of *NDTV*. In all these years of covering the most sensitive political event, namely elections, I do not recall a single occasion when I was asked or even hinted to say or not say something. I disagreed with Prannoy off-screen and on-screen and that was never a problem. When we failed to forecast NDA defeat in 2004, Prannoy came out from the studio and announced to the entire newsroom that he made a mistake in not heeding to my reading of the survey evidence. I cannot image any proprietor, editor or even an academic doing this.

Courtesy **The Print**, 1 December 2022. 🌈

‘Selections from The Radical Humanist, Volume I and II’ reach still bigger audience

As reported by www.academia.edu:

‘The Radical Humanist Volume I’ was your top paper last week - 1,632 Views till 22.11.2022

‘Selections from The Radical Humanist Vol. II’ was your top paper last week - 3,264 Views till 13.12.2022

You have 442 highly engaged readers till 10.9.2022. A total of 1,613 people have read your papers on Academia.

The two volumes have been read in **236 cities in India and 534 foreign cities.**

Editor, The Radical Humanist

Perspiring School Education and queer innovation of education department of the State of West Bengal

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee

All those who have been arrested and are being held in judicial custody (prison) as a consequence of investigation by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) being directed by High Court at Calcutta in recent unfolded scam in Education Department of the State and more particularly in its School Service Commission legally deserve to be presumed innocent until each of them is held guilty on full trial by the appropriate judicial authority according to the laws and procedure established in our Anglo Saxon legal system. The rationale behind this legal proposition is that utmost benefit of doubt has to be given to the accused and further that no accused should be made to suffer any disgrace of being held guilty and be punished without a fair trial where the burden of proof of guilt wholly lies on prosecution. As not very many people are aware of this part of English jurisprudence they are susceptible to be influenced by public opinion built on media reports. Due to long British rule historically India has adopted Anglo Saxon legal system. Prior to British rule there was no native legal system uniformly applicable to whole of India.

Since after arrest of the accused the Hon'ble Chief Minister of the state of West Bengal Ms. Mamata Banerjee has been repeatedly pleading and/or reminding all of us in presence of judicial authorities including the recently retired Chief Justice of India Hon'ble Mr. Justice U. U. Lalit that let there be no media trial although her appeal was made in general and not referring to any specific case.

Media trial simply means that no trial should be done by media through its rights to almost unrestricted freedom of speech said to be necessarily made available to the media in a democracy by abusing its said valued freedom

implicating and at times unfairly opining an accused to be guilty before the trial of the accused is actually held by the authority i.e., appropriate court having jurisdiction and power to hold him guilty. There can be no denying that media has right to dissipate information of events happening both in our immediate and distant world. The relevant question seems to be how the narrative of such information should be presented to the recipients of those informations. There is an acknowledged demarcation between responsible and irresponsible journalism which, if not most often, at irregular intervals gets blurred due to breach of demarcation between the two for purposive political and/or commercial and/or for some other similar objectives. There is also a great distinction between news and views and if the views of the dissipater of news rules over actual news purposively or negligently or otherwise then the information has a good possibility, if not probability, of influencing minds of recipients of news. We the recipients are all varied beings born with our human frailties and after all a man or woman presiding over a court may not be an exception to the said rule either. Careful and cautious media will therefore have less danger for those minds.

As a subject matter media trial is a highly debated subject in a democratic country. There seems to be three schools of thought. One school of thought argues that as media trial tends to influence the decision of the judicial authority concerned, media trial should never be permitted irrespective of any risk of likelihood or otherwise as to whether any the judicial authority will actually get influenced or not. The second school of thought says that freedom of speech the media, the fourth pillar of democracy, is

endowed with in any democracy must be honoured and respected without any restriction thereon for survival of a true democracy and it is for the judiciary to take care and be vigilant not to be influenced by the narratives of media. The judicial authority concerned should independently be qualified and also trained to be able to separate and exclude the chaff from the seed. In any event there is a legitimate presumption that the mind of judicial authority having knowledge of law and being especially trained is expected to be strong, rational and unwavering and should be least susceptible to any kind of influence from any corner including media. There is a third school of thought which pronounces its opinion relying on the principle of reasonable balance between the two extremes based on exercise of rational, and not whimsical, discretion of the responsible scribe concerned to avoid mixing inseparably news with views.

Some of those deprived candidates, who notwithstanding having eligible qualification and being successful in the tests for being employed as teachers in schools being deprived of the promised posts of teachers and facing a jolt at the beginning of their working life, are holding sit in demonstrations to draw attention of public at large to their grievances of deprivation, it is reported, for more than 600 days at a stretch as those who are in power, according to those candidates, despite their repeated assurances have done nothing to ameliorate the situation by redressing their grievances and deprivation. They have been so deprived as instead of them some others not qualified and/or unsuccessful in the tests have been illegally appointed by the people in power in the state in exchange of unethical monetary consideration. The news of the scam is doing its rounds both in print and electronic media for quite a long time. The unearthed hidden booty in awful heaps of currency notes in dribblets running into crores of rupees being exhibited in the media has not only

left the news readers and viewers in awe but has also deeply pricked their conscience. All deprived candidates are now in despair.

Ordinary citizens have a very small and legitimate expectation that the state administration, they had voted for, in every field of its governance would be free from all kinds of scam with zero tolerance. That expectation of theirs has been belied by the state and has remained unfulfilled at least in its education department and its agency for the time being. The hue and cry generated is being blown by a strong wind of suspicion towards other departments of governmental activities.

In the midst of all these it is now reported that claiming to be a benevolent and welfare state the government's education department came up with an application before the concerned court with a couple of said to be welfare proposals to bring a close to the present impasse subsisting in the matter of appointment of school teachers in the state. Their first proposal was that the government would, if permitted by court, increase the number of posts for teachers. The next proposal was that those who have suffered deprivation so far would be employed as they deserve and the third proposal was that those who were illegally and unethically employed having no right to be employed be also absorbed in employment in the newly created posts as the government does not wish to cause any deprivation to any. As soon as those proposals were put forward the court expressing its angst rejected the proposals outright. Although the government in a hurry immediately sought to withdraw its application but the court disallowed the said prayer and instead directed a further CBI investigation to find out as to who were responsible behind the innovation of and advising those proposals. It is in circulation that the government had supported its said proposals pleading about existing dearth of teachers in schools in a number of subjects. Before the

court's direction for CBI investigation could take off the government immediately moved the Apex court praying for an order of stay of the order of High Court so that no such investigation could take place in pursuance of High Court's order in aid of further unfolding of ugly truth. It may not be disputed that the sinister proposal were mooted and brought on public domain the government would have done well to acknowledge and give due importance to the issue with regard to appointment of eligible teachers in school education where a pedagogue's knowledge and competence to teach should have utmost priority for selection to educate the tender minds of school children. It was not an issue of appointments in the posts of sweepers in schools where physical fitness for sweeping could be a determining criterion for selection.

It is not at all unheard of that a wrong cannot be made right by another wrong and also that two wrongs cannot make a right. Increasing number of teaching posts is a matter of governmental policy and does not require any permission from court therefor. Moreover, there could however be no wrong if the government of its own desired and actually increased the number of posts of teachers. It is also a matter of welfare policy that there should be adequate number of teachers in all subjects for the students. The wrong committed by depriving the successful in the tests and legally entitled to be employed deserves to be rectified and redeemed only by giving them due employment. But by the proposals put forward before the court the government under the garb of compassion for the unsuccessful and unfit candidates evinced an illegal desire to continue them in employment although they got employments by resorting to bribing the concerned wrong doers in power in the government. It is well known that who give bribe are equally, if not more, culpable and guilty of illegality with those who take bribe. The proposals if were allowed would have legalised wrong,

illegal and unethical conduct of both. Further, those who are now in prison were not required to be in prison or be tried for their wrongs, if any. To say the least, the government and its advisers deserved deprecation for their queer ingenuity and innovation! By the proposals the government seems to have intended to kill more than two birds with a single stone. It is also now not being illegitimately wondered whether the government also intended to create a precedent to facilitate and make way for commission of similar wrongs and illegalities in future.

An universally acknowledged and acclaimed principle of jurisprudence is that equity has no role to play and also not applicable to the field fully covered by law. The Court is also not expected to be compassionate to facilitate or perpetuate commission of wrongs or illegalities. In administration and more particularly in education where mandate for requirement of quality is essential compassion can be no substitute for quality. Alas, it seems from the trail of events they unleash that illegality and corruption have been domesticated in the state of West Bengal. All executives including the government need to be reminded that the judges are primarily adjudicators with limited jurisdiction and power conferred on them by law from time to time to adjudicate the disputes brought before them according to laws applicable thereto. However, Courts in appropriate cases while doing justice may exhibit compassion in measured degree for some deserving good cause. During their tenure of judicial service they can at best be social engineers but they cannot be elevated to the position of reformers. They have also lesser freedom of being personally or emotionally involved in the subject matter of disputes brought before them for adjudication and their power of adjudication rests in their knowledge of law and concept of justice expressed by them through their pens and not otherwise.

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee is Barrister and Senior Advocate 

'We talk of this perpetually': Ambassador Elizabeth Jones on hate speech in Indian poll campaign

U.S. Charge d'Affaires rules out trade pact with India

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India and the United States have been holding “frank discussions” on “social challenges” for a “long time”, said the senior most American diplomat stationed in India. Attending a round table with select media representatives Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, Charge d’Affaires in the Embassy of the United States responded to questions on a wide range of issues including communally charged speeches in ongoing State-level election campaigns in India, and said given the “gigantic” volume of bilateral trade there’s no requirement now for a trade pact between the two sides

“India-U.S. relation permits us to have frank discussions regarding social challenges. In the United States, treatment of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities attracts a lot of attention — just as it does here. We can learn from each other, I believe, about how to promote tolerant behaviour among diverse communities because we have similar experiences and similar challenges in those social areas,” said Ambassador Jones who is the face American diplomacy in India right now. India does not have an American Ambassador as the Biden administration’s choice of envoy has not found legislative clearance so far. Ms. Jones’ comments about trade, regional security and social values came days after the Government of India extended the tenure of its envoy to the United States Taranjit Singh Sandhu by one year. Mr Sandhu was scheduled to retire in January 2023 but after the latest extension, he will retire in January 2024.

Elizabeth Jones is one of the senior most diplomats in the U.S. foreign service and has served previously as the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia (2001-2005) when the late Colin Powell was the Secretary of State. She achieved the rank of “Career Ambassador” in the US Foreign Service.

The U.S. envoy said the bilateral ties with India is “one of the most consequential relationships” that has been developed “relatively recently” and it has potential important outcomes for both sides. Responding to a question from *The Hindu*, Ms Jones dealt with the use of hate speech and communally inflammatory remarks as witnessed during the current state-level elections in India and said, “We talk of this (with India) perpetually. We discuss both easy and difficult issues. We have been discussing this for a long time and will continue to do so.”

The recent report of the USCIRF (US Commission on International Religious Freedom) had urged the State Department to designate India as a “country of particular concern” or CPC. Ms Jones said the USCIRF is not an executive arm and that it is “free to write whatever report they write, and we are free to deal with it in whatever way we like”.

The responses reflect American foreign policy establishment’s consistent position on difficult issues like hate speech that was recently highlighted by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres during his visit in Mumbai on October 19.

Ms. Jones described the numbers of India-U.S. bilateral trade as “gigantic” and said companies on both sides are collaborating in

“newer sectors”. India has signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the United Arab Emirates and an Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement (ECTA) with Australia, India’s partner at the Quad initiative. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had said in September that India would like to discuss a trade pact with the United States. Ambassador Jones expressed satisfaction about the large volume of trade between two sides and said that there is no discussion on this issue between the two countries and added, “With the doubling of trade in the last 7 years. I don’t think anyone believes we need a trade deal”.

The veteran diplomat said Biden administration will support Indian Presidency of the 2023 G-20 summit and announced that the two sides will hold the “2+2” dialogue in 2023. She dealt with the differences with India regarding the Ukraine crisis and said the U.S. side is willing to be “in the same room with Russia”. “We are very energised by India taking over as the President of the G20. It demonstrates to the international community the leadership capacity of India in a very

complex world and in a world in which there’s a tremendous effort to find ways to improve the situation in climate, health, education- the kind of issues that touch people’s lives every day,” said Ms Jones.

She informed that the U.S. government has issued 82,000 student visas to Indian nationals during the summer of 2022 and that the U.S. government is currently recruiting many consular officials out of which several will be posted to India. She announced that the delay in getting U.S. visas is an issue “generated by the (systemic effects) of the pandemic” and the delays will be sorted out by next summer when the U.S. visa facilities across the world will be “fully staffed”.

The senior envoy said the recent defence equipment supplies meant for the F16 fleet of Pakistan Air Force were “not upgrades” and that the threats from China are something “that is for India to talk about.” When asked about the Chinese objection to the India-U.S. joint military exercise ‘Yudh Abhyas’ that was held in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, she said, “It is none of their business”.

Courtesy **The Hindu**, December 02, 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

Opinion / India: A tale of two pardons

The difference between the release of convicts in Rajiv Gandhi's assassination case and those convicted in the Bilkis Bano case

Sandeep Pandey

25 November 2022: Two sets of convicts were released from jail this year in India: Rajiv Gandhi's assassins and men who had been convicted for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano, then pregnant, and for the murder of 14 of her family members including her three-year-old daughter, in Gujarat, 2002. The first pardon cannot be used to justify the second, as there are critical differences between the two.

The Indian Supreme Court's premature release of the six remaining convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case was not unexpected. The court had already set a precedent by ordering the release of A.G. Perarivalan, who had been incarcerated for over 30 years in the same case.

The suicide bombing that killed India's prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu, 1991, was planned in revenge for sending the Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

A popular Tamil sentiment in India favoured the release of the convicts, who are all ethnically Tamil – two Indian citizens, and four Sri Lankan. Tamil political parties have also supported the release of the convicts. In September 2018, the previous All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government in Tamil Nadu passed a cabinet meeting resolution calling for the release of these convicts. The current Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government has continued to judicially pursue the matter of their release.

Pardon

Rajiv's family – widow Sonia, daughter Priyanka Vadra and son Rahul – have not objected to the convicts' release. In fact, Sonia Gandhi played an important role in getting the

death sentence of four convicts commuted to life term, including the only woman among them, Nalini.

Priyanka even visited Nalini in Vellore Jail and is reported to have wept with her. Nalini has described Priyanka as an angel and prayed for her wellbeing.

While the Congress Party has opposed the Supreme Court's decision to order the premature release of the convicts, the Gandhi family has tacitly condoned the release by staying silent on the matter. This demonstration of large-heartedness comes as a welcome relief and stark contrast at a time when the politics of religious nationalism are fostering hatred and vengeance.

Some instances in recent history come to mind where the victims' families have pardoned the perpetrators. Gladys Staines pardoned those who killed her husband, Australian missionary Graham Staines, and their two sons in Odisha.

Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter, Ela Gandhi, a peace activist and former parliamentarian in South Africa, holds no grudge or wishes any vengeance upon those who shot and killed her son at his home in South Africa in 1993, as she told me in a private conversation some time ago.

While strongly condemning all forms of killing and violence, she believes that it is only when perpetrators of violence understand and appreciate the injustice and inhumanity of their act of violence will they change and not commit such offences again.

"This realisation and change does not necessarily happen through condemnations, punishment and incarcerations" but "through a

process of learning, conscientising and education,” she confirmed recently over email.

Such forgiveness requires elevating human consciousness to a high moral level. It is far easier, and more common, to pursue revenge after a grave crime.

Restorative justice

There is no room for capital punishment in a civilized society. It is better to attempt to reform the convicts, or rather help the convicts reform themselves. If possible, there could be facilitation of some kind of reconciliation between perpetrators and their victims or family members – such as the concept of restorative justice popularised by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission after Nelson Mandela took charge in South Africa.

Unlike retributive justice which is based on vengeance and punishment, the restorative justice process allows perpetrators to seek amnesty after being made to understand the trauma and pain of the victims or their families. The hope, as Ela Gandhi says, is that they will then “be remorseful and will change and not commit such offences again”.

As a parliamentarian in South Africa, she herself has been involved in the process of promoting restorative over retributive justice, taking forward the vision of Bapu, her grandfather Mahatma Gandhi.

Critical differences

There are some critical differences in the release of convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, and the 11 convicts released this past August in the Bilkis Bano case:

- Firstly, it was the judiciary that took the decision to release convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. In the case of Bilkis Bano, the government (Home Ministry) ordered the release, following a recommendation by a Gujarat government committee. The committee, headed by a District Collector, comprised five government officials: the

Superintendent of Police, the jail superintendent, a district judge, a social security officer and two legislators from the ruling BJP party. The move may also again rake up the Hindu-Muslim issue ahead of the upcoming Gujarat elections.

- Secondly, the convicts in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case had already spent over 30 years in jail. In the Bilkis Bano case, the convicts, sentenced 14 years ago, have already been out on parole and furlough for thousands of days each.
- Third, there is popular Tamilian sentiment backing the Supreme Court’s decision to prematurely release convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi case, although this support may well be of a sub-nationalism variety at variance with the national sentiment given that a prime minister was killed. On the other hand, only a handful of hardcore BJP-RSS cadres support the decision to release convicts in the Bilkis Bano case.
- Last but most crucially, the Rajiv Gandhi assassination convicts have been set free more or less with the concurrence of his family. These released convicts pose no threat to the Gandhi family, which has in fact pardoned them. This is clearly not the case with the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case. Since the convicts’ release, many Muslim families in the area feel threatened, and Bano and her family fear for their safety.

Ominous message

The release of the Bilkis Bano case convicts has left the victims vulnerable. The perpetrators in this case have exhibited no remorse for their crime. Right-wing Hindutva groups feted them with garlands and sweets when they emerged from Godhra sub-jail, celebrating criminals as heroes.

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

Distorted Histories and Unconstitutional Autocracy in the ‘Mother of Democracy’

By tracing the roots of democracy on the eve of Constitution Day to a most undemocratic, religiously ordained social order, the BJP government is inflicting humiliation on millions of Dalits and other marginalised sections of the Indian population.

Rajesh Venkatasubramanian

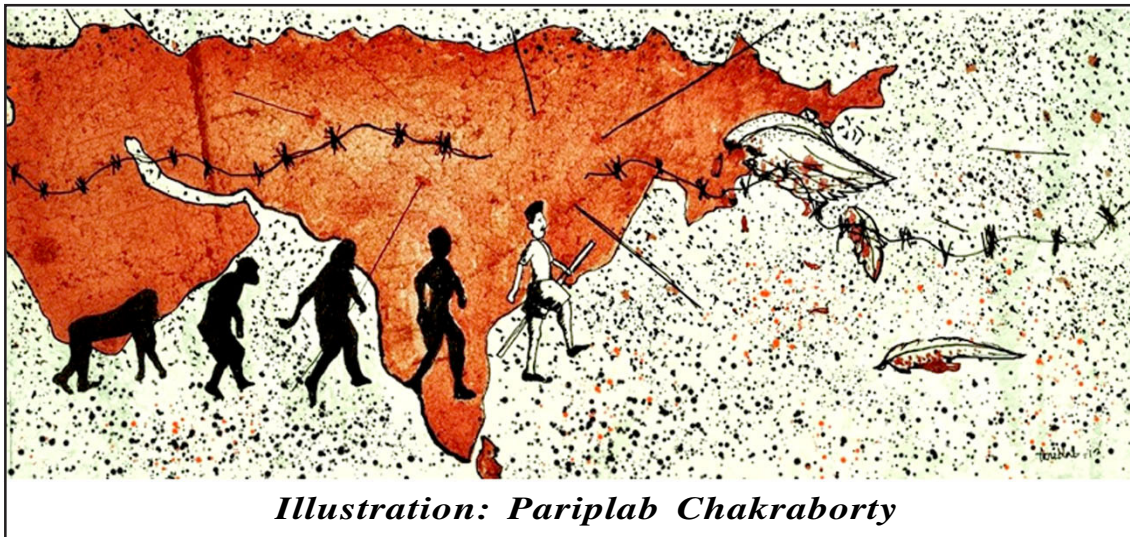


Illustration: Pariplab Chakraborty

The concept note has all the necessary ingredients of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Hindutva ideology and is totally out of tune with the progress made in Indian historiography since Independence. However, it does provide a useful service of nakedly displaying the RSS's institutional capture of the premier national research institute of historical studies in the country under Modi's regime. The fact that it is thrust upon institutions of higher learning in the country warrants a stringent criticism of its views, notwithstanding the hotchpotch of words put together in the document and the poverty of imagination.

The concept note begins with an ahistorical claim that Indians have been all over the globe since 'time immemorial' and, therefore, the idea of Bharat needs to be cherished! In its urge to

find roots for modern democracy in ancient India, the concept note presents a muddled and distorted history drawing on features from European and British colonial writings on Indian village systems.

The note reads, "In India, from the Vedic times itself, two kinds of states, *janapada* and *rajya* have been in existence. The Indian experience evolved its own form of governance at the levels of village and the central polity: (i) the federal/central political structures were delinked from the life of the community (village communities), and consequently (ii) village communities became self governing and autonomous, and (iii) developed a hierarchy of self-governing institutions, such as Panchayat and Khaps, that enabled them to remain unaffected by and large by the changing kingdoms/empires particularly those of invaders hostile to Hindu culture."

This view of the Indian village community as ancient autonomous self-sustaining units free from external influence has long been a trope of European colonial discourse on India of the 19th century, spearheaded by the likes of Charles Metcalfe, James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Maine and others.

The ministry of education sent an order to institutions of higher learning in the country to celebrate Constitution Day on November 26 on the subject of ‘India – the Mother of Democracy’.

It is reported in media that the University Grants Commission (UGC) has urged all universities and colleges to hold lectures on such themes as the “ideal king” in Indian philosophy as well as khap panchayats and their “democratic traditions” to celebrate India as the “mother of democracy” on Constitution Day. The circular carried a concept note prepared by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) titled ‘Bharat: Loktantra ki Janani’.

As historian Ronald Inden argued in his book *Imagining India*, statements on Indian villages are one of the pillars of the imperial constructs of India. It appears that the Hindutva champions of our times, whose share in the anti-colonial freedom struggle is totally blank, have taken shelter in the semi-historical narratives of the sacred pristine past of ancient (Aryan) villages sought by the European colonists of the 18th and 19th centuries.

This ossified and long-abandoned view of Indian history is combined in the concept note with the primordial attribution of Hindu religious and cultural identity centred firmly on the Brahmanical Vedic tradition. It would help if the authors of the concept note read the chapters on Hinduism and Village India from Inden’s book and see for themselves where they stand in relation to the European imperial narratives on India. The fact that in early India, there were traditions that challenged the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmanical schema of things did

not occur to the protagonists of Hindutva ideologues at the ICHR who are keen to whitewash dissenting alternative traditions in early Indian history.

The concept note tries to put forth the idea that democracy evolved in India from Vedic times and locates the chronology of the Vedas to 5000 BCE in the archaeological remains of Rakhigarhi and Sanauli. It collapses the two distinct cultures of Harappa and Vedic and presents them as a singular stream; a staple template of the Hindutva version of history from the days of V.D. Savarkar.

The concept note presents muddled puranic geography and labels of the first millennium CE totally ripped from the historical context of their usage and attributes a timeless perception to it. We are told that, “the Hindu mind from the beginning addressed the central question of how to weld this vast multiplicity that is India into a single larger community and from ancient times a geo-cultural definition has been given to this entity, *rashtra*, Bharata – the country which lies to the south of the Himalayas and the north of the oceans is called Bharata and the Bharatiyas are the people of this country.”

In a brilliant introduction to the collection of essays titled *The Concept of Bharatavarsha and Other Essays*, historian B.D. Chattopadhyaya had shown the need for a historically sensitive reading of such puranic categories and descriptions, which had a larger cosmographic design than any concrete geographic reference. Arguing that the early meaning of Bharatavarsha can be discussed and understood without any reference to Indian nationalism, Chattopadhyaya pointed out that the notions of ‘border’, ‘frontier’ or ‘foreigner’ were absent in the connotation of Bharatavarsha in early sources.

Further, it was not the invasions which split the ‘self’ from the ‘others’; rather, the major divide in Indian society was perceived through the angle of *varna* or the hierarchical social order. The concept note is not only silent on this

uncomfortable feature of caste divisions in Indian society but makes a lofty claim that “Indian people, infused with the spirit of equality, have had since the very Vedic times a *lokatantrika-parampara*.”

Combined with the toxic othering of ethnicities and cultures labelled as ‘alien invaders’, the concept note goes on to depict institutions supposedly unique in character in ancient India. The ‘Bharatiya context of governance’ that the concept note puts forward identifies these alternative roots of democracy and governance merely in order to reinforce the idea that India is a mother of democracy.

M. Jagadesh Kumar – the chief institutional spokesperson of Hindutva in the university system as head of the UGC and the person responsible for the troubles of Jawaharlal Nehru University in the past as its vice-chancellor – has written to the governors of states to ensure that universities and colleges in the states observe the government’s diktat.

The circular from the Ministry of Education with the concept note prepared by the proponents of Hindutva at the ICHR clearly tries to project the so-called Bharatiya roots of the constitution and democracy in contemporary India by distorting the past and whitewashing the history of the anti-colonial freedom struggle. The most heinous crimes against humanity were committed against Dalits and women by the very same tradition – the Brahmanical Manu *Dharmasastra* – which led to its burning by Babasaheb Ambedkar and Periyar.

By tracing the roots of democracy on the eve of Constitution Day to a most undemocratic, religiously ordained social order, the BJP government is inflicting humiliation on millions of Dalits and other marginalised sections of the Indian population. Democracy, as Ambedkar argued, is not merely a form of government but essentially an attitude of respect for our fellow beings. On this count, the so-called Bharatiya tradition, as defined by the RSS and its proponents

at the ICHR, is far from anywhere close to democracy.

Instead of seeking pride from a distorted ancient past, the road to democracy lies in imparting critical historical knowledge capable of questioning the dominant power structures around us.

Rajesh Venkatasubramanian is a history teacher. He is the author of *Manuscripts, Memory and History: Classical Tamil Literature in Colonial India* (2014). 🌈

Contd. from page - (23)

Opinion/India: A tale of...

Ruling party member of the legislative assembly CK Raulji, a member of the committee which recommended the release of the convicts, justified the decision by terming some of them as ‘virtuous Brahmins.’ He plans to contest the upcoming Gujarat elections while senior politicians from his party have been made to withdraw from the contest.

The message being sent out is ominous. What kind of society do we wish to create where, if victims and their families belong to a certain religion or class, they must be prepared to live with the perpetrators of crimes against them roaming free?

The release of convicts in the Bilkis Bano case sets a bad example of remission of a sentence. It must be undone.

The writer is an educator and peace activist in Lucknow, a recipient of the 2002 Ramon Magsaysay award. He has organised several peace marches for better relations between India and Pakistan and for communal harmony in India. He is General Secretary of Socialist Party, India. Email: ashaashram@yahoo.com.

Courtesy **Southasia Peace Action Network**, 25 November 2022. 🌈

The Election Commission is Revelling in Past Glory and the Supreme Court Has Called its Bluff

M.G. Devasahayam

While the top court noted the need to appoint a Chief Election Commissioner with ‘character’ like the late T.N. Seshan, much water has flown under the bridge in the three decades since his tenure.

On November 17, 2022, while hearing a petition for the setting up of an Independent Body to choose Election Commissioners, Justice K.M. Joseph of the Supreme Court made a significant observation:

“The Election Commission of India (ECI) is perhaps the envy of the world. Perhaps one institution which has come in for a lot of compliments, largely due to the reforms of T.N. Seshan. He had succeeded in putting in place a lot of rules to reduce human discretion to the minimum. By doing this, he eliminated fear. That is, the Election Commissioners just had to follow the rules and did not have to bother about coming under pressure from any political party.”

The judge also remarked that while an election commissioner may be proficient, competent, completely honest and armed with an outstanding record of service, they may also have personal political leanings which show themselves while in office – not very complimentary to the present set of Election Commissioners!

Seshan did not put in place any rules because rule-making or -changing would require government approval. Instead, he had resorted to the innovation of issuing instructions and directions, (which later became ‘Rules’) taking advantage of his plenipotentiary powers further fortified by the far-reaching Supreme Court judgment in *Mohinder Singh Gill versus Chief Election Commissioner* (1978. 2 SCR-272):

“When Parliament or any State Legislature made valid law relating to, or in connection with elections, the Commission, shall act in conformity with, not in violation of, such provisions, but where such law is silent, Article 324 (of the Constitution) is a reservoir of power to act for the avowed purpose of not divorced from, pushing forward a free and fair election with expedition...”

Through this route, Seshan introduced ID cards, deputed Observers for elections and brought them under the control of the ECI, and adopted new counting methodology by mixing votes. And he effectively implemented all these by adopting tough posture with the governments and recalcitrant officials.

He even countermanded elections in five constituencies in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh citing mass rigging. This sent shivers down the spines of political parties and candidates who had violated the principles of ethical voting while contesting elections. In some cases, he even threatened cancellation of elections if ethical principles were not adhered to. In short, Seshan put the ‘fear of man’ in the minds of those who did not have the fear of God.

But Seshan’s is a three-decade-old story which took place from December 12, 1990 to December 11, 1996. Since then, much water has flown down all rivers and canals. Today is a total far cry from that time, and a very different ball game.

Take the example of one-instance counting of votes before declaring election results – the most critical aspect of the electoral process. With the introduction of Voter Verifiable Paper Trail (VVPAT) in all Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), there

are now two votes – one recorded in the EVM memory and one printed by the VVPAT.

Rule 56D(4)(b) of the Conduct of Election (Amendment) Rules, 2013 says that in the event of a dispute, it is the VVPAT slip which will be considered as the real vote under Section 61A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and not the electronic memory in the EVM. Despite this Rule, the ECI is consistently refusing to count VVPAT slips and keep on counting only the EVM memory, which is not the real vote.

What is distressing and intriguing is that ECI has been defending its indefensible action by filing a false affidavit in the Supreme Court. This is the extent of decay that has set in.

This brazenness prompted 64 former senior civil servants belonging to the Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG) and 83 armed forces veterans, academics and journalists to write a strongly-worded letter to the ECI on July 2, 2019. The letter read:

“The 2019 General Elections appear to have been one of the least free and fair elections that the country has had in the past three decades or so. In the past, despite the efforts of criminal elements, musclemen, and unscrupulous politicians, the persons who graced the ECI did their best to ensure that elections were conducted as freely and fairly as possible. In these General Elections, however, an impression has gathered ground that our democratic process is being subverted and undermined by the very constitutional authority empowered to safeguard its sanctity. It was rare in the past for any serious doubts to be raised about the impartiality, integrity and competence of the [ECI]. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the present ECI and the way it has conducted the General Elections of 2019. So blatant have been the acts of omission and commission by the ECI that even former

Elections Commissioners and CECs have been compelled, albeit reluctantly, to question the decisions of their successors in office.”

It is worthwhile to note that most of the civil servants who signed this letter had, during their service, conducted, supervised, monitored and observed elections to Parliament and state legislatures. Pointing out that viewed in totality, the mandate of 2019 has been thrown into serious doubt, the letter ends with a poignant and disturbing note:

“Our Election Commission used to be the envy of the entire world, including developed countries, for its ability to conduct free and fair elections despite the huge logistical challenges and the hundreds of millions of voters. It is indeed, saddening to witness the process of the demise of that. If it continues, it is bound to strike at the very heart of that founding document the people of India proudly gave themselves – the Constitution of India – and the democratic ethos that is the very basis of the Indian Republic...”

ECI did not even acknowledge this letter, let alone respond to the critical issues raised.

This deliberate inaction of the ECI led to the formation of a Citizens Commission on Elections (CCE) in March 2020 jointly by the CCG and People-First, which came out with reports in two Volumes (2021). Chairman of the CCE, former Supreme Court Justice Madan B. Lokur and Vice-chairman Wajahat Habibullah, former Chief Information Commissioner along with eminent judges, technocrats, academicians and journalists were part of the Commission.

The Commission took up six themes that have direct bearing on the integrity and fairness of election and examined them in great detail through research and depositions from experts and domain specialists. The themes are:

- Integrity and inclusiveness of the Electoral Rolls to ensure that no

- voter is left out.
- Electronic Voting/Counting [EVM/VVPATs] and their compliance with Democracy, Principles and standards of End-to-End verifiability.
 - Criminalisation of electoral politics and the role of money power, including electoral bonds, in seriously compromising integrity of elections.
 - Scheduling and processes of elections and compliance of Model Code of Conduct.
 - Role of media including social media, fake news and how they adversely influence level playing field.
 - Autonomy of ECI and its functioning before, during and after Elections.

On all these, India's electoral system and the functioning of ECI were shown in poor light, thereby seriously questioning the very credibility of India's electoral democracy. Yet the ECI, like the proverbial ostrich, has its head deep inside heaps of sand, touting India's election system as infallible and the "eighth wonder of the world".

Former CEC S.Y. Quraishi is an ardent disciple of Seshan and had done some good work during his time. Writing in 2013, he identified seven pillars on which the edifice of the ECI is solidly built:

1. The Constitution of India;
2. Acts and rules made thereunder;
3. Judicial support;

4. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) formulated by political parties;
5. The bureaucracy that conducts the mammoth exercise;
6. The media that acts as the eyes and ears of the EC; and
7. The trust of the people of India.

Among all these, the Constitution [Article 324] is the strongest pillar because it gives the ECI control of elections to Parliament and state legislatures. But due to its mad pursuit of machine voting/counting and the linkage of Aadhar Cards with Voter IDs, the ECI is fast losing this control which could pass on to tech companies manufacturing the machines and the UIDAI, which owns Aadhar.

Some pillars like the judiciary and media are propping up the ECI largely because of its past glory and not its present performance. And though the people of India may be going through the motions of voting due to pecuniary and other considerations, their trust in the ECI is receding fast and no amount of 'past glory' can sustain this most vital pillar.

It is time ECI realised that "We, the People" have given our mandate of conducting free and fair elections to this constitutional body and for this purpose, bestowed it with prestige as well as plenipotentary and legal powers. It is incumbent on this exalted institution to deliver the mandate instead of standing on the cleft stick of 'past glory'.

M.G. Devasahayam is a former Army and IAS officer and coordinator of Citizen's Commission on Elections. 🌈

The Radical Humanist on Website

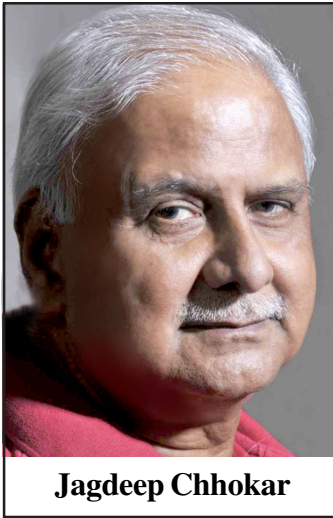
'The Radical Humanist' is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

– Mahi Pal Singh

Interview:

Why the Election Commission's appointment is being questioned by the Supreme Court

Scroll.in speaks to Jagdeep Chhokar, co-founder of the non-governmental organisation Association for Democratic Reforms.



Jagdeep Chhokar

Umang Poddar

On Thursday, the 1st of December, the Supreme Court reserved its judgement on a batch of petitions challenging the appointment process of election commissioners, the officers who comprise the Election Commission – the body responsible for conducting national and state elections.

Scroll.in spoke to Jagdeep Chhokar, co-founder of the non-governmental organisation Association for Democratic Reforms and one of the petitioners in the case, about why he filed the petition and what he hopes to achieve.

Edited excerpts from the interview below:

What are the problems in how the election commissioners are appointed today? Does the process have any checks and balances?

According to Article 324(2) of the Constitution, they are appointed by the president subject to any law made by the parliament in this regard.

Then there are other articles in the Constitution that say that the president will work under the advice and guidance of the cabinet. So effectively, what it means is that the cabinet appoints the election commissioners.

And there are no checks and balances. The prime minister sends a recommendation to the president on behalf of the cabinet, and then the president appoints. The Union government has the entire discretion.

The other issue is that when the chief election commissioner's term gets over, there is always

a mystery about who will be made the chief election commissioner.

In general, so far, it has always by and large happened that the senior of the two election commissioners gets appointed as the chief election commissioner. But there is always this speculation about who will be made the chief election commissioner.

The other problem is that while the chief election commissioner cannot be removed from his position unless there is a process of impeachment like that of a Supreme Court judge, the other two election commissioners can be removed from their positions merely on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner.

So that is another problem. Because if the two election commissioners have this thing in their mind that the chief election commissioner can recommend my removal, then perhaps they

would find it difficult to take a position against the chief election commissioner.

What's the relief that you want from the court in this particular case?

In this case, we want that the selection of the election commissioner should be done by a collegium consisting of the prime minister, the leader of the Opposition and the chief justice of India.

The second is that election commissioners should be given the same constitutional protection as the chief election commissioner.

And the third is that it should be laid down, specifically, that the senior-most election commissioner will become the chief election commissioner.

These are the things that we have proposed. There would be many more that we will learn over time.

Have there been any controversies in the past regarding the appointment of election commissioners?

There is a checkered history [regarding election commissioners]. Earlier, the election commission used to be a single-member commission. There used to be only one chief election commissioner. Then somewhere down the line, during the time TN Seshan was the chief election commissioner, he was doing a lot of things that the government did not approve of. So to put a check on his power, so to say, the government [in 1989], through the President, created the post of two more election commissioners.

Now the Election Commission was a three-member commission and the decision will be made by the majority, hoping that these two will check the powers [of the third commissioner].

Then, about three or four years ago, there was one election commissioner who dissented from a decision by the other two. And this happened on some issues which had something to do with allegations of violation of the Model Code of Conduct by the prime minister and the

home minister.

So then there were reports that this particular election commissioner, his past was being searched with a fine toothcomb. And there were apparently some kind of raids or intimidation of his wife and his son and so on. So this went on for a while, and then it was reported that this gentleman has been appointed as a vice president in a multilateral body. So he resigned from the election commissionership.

Usually, who are the people who are appointed election commissioners?

All retired bureaucrats, by and large, Indian Administrative Service officers. There are very few exceptions, but they are all also bureaucrats from other central services.

Are there any appointments that raise a suspicion about them being close to the Union government?

A lot of them. I would not like to name anyone. But this is all circumstantial evidence. There could be people from a particular state cadre, who might have a preponderance [towards the government]. And then somebody who has worked with some senior-level politician in the past very closely.

These kinds of things often happen.

One of the reasons why these things are brought up is because how these appointments are made is not known to anybody. So out of the blue, you have an announcement that so and so has been made election commissioner.

For example, this appointment that was made a few days ago – the post had been vacant for something like six months. And the hearing in the court started and an application was filed that there is a vacancy that should not be filled until the case is decided.

And the very next day, a serving Indian Administrative Service officer who was the secretary to the government of India took voluntary retirement from service. He was given voluntary retirement, and the next day he was appointed as an election commissioner.

It could be a sheer coincidence, but when things happen, sometimes it defies that it is a coincidence. So that creates doubts. Actually, a lot of it is a lack of transparency.

If there was a process of selecting election commissioners that was transparent, such doubts will not be raised.

What instances have been there recently where there have been allegations of the election commission acting in a way that distorts free elections?

So there are mysterious things that happen and when not reasonable explanations are coming forth, then one wonders what is going on. Electronic voting machines are found in strange places. There are constituencies where a large number of voters are not found on their voters' list.

Some people do insinuate that people of particular categories are found to be missing from the electoral rolls. The Election Commission has to answer for it.

Then, there are violations of the Model Code of Conduct. Somebody makes a speech that can be considered to be seeking votes on religious grounds. And that is ignored. Whereas another member of another party says something similar in a slightly different context and that person is given a notice.

So similar kinds of infractions by people of different parties being treated seemingly differently.

Take, for example, on November 7, the Finance Ministry issued a notification that in a year when there is an Assembly election, an additional window of 15 days for the sale of electoral bonds will be available.

But elections are still happening in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, and the Model Code of Conduct is in force. And the Model Code of Conduct says that the government cannot introduce any new policy which may have a bearing on the result of the election without taking permission from the Election

Commission of India.

So this announcement is a violation of the Model Code of Conduct. And people have written to the Election Commission and there has been no response.

There is also the thing about the announcement of dates. For example, even this time, for Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh elections, the dates when the result will be declared were announced. And dates of polling for Himachal Pradesh were announced, but the dates of polling for Gujarat were not announced.

So some people have felt that this is not the right thing to do and perhaps leeway was being given to a particular political party to do some announcements before the dates of polling are announced. So these kinds of things keep happening, and they create misgivings about the impartial role that the Election Commission should be playing.

Sometimes in a small state, elections are held in seven phases and [other times], in a similar sized state, it is held in one phase. There are rumors that this is being done so that particular people can campaign in every phase, and so on.

A similar process exists for the appointment of the Central Bureau of Investigation director. But still, there have been allegations of unfairness about these appointments also. So will this panel help with bringing fairness to the appointment of election commissioners or will it only be slightly better than the current position?

It will be significantly better. If you recall, in the appointment of the CBI director a year ago, the then chief justice did not agree with what was being proposed and then names were changed.

See, the process is finally managed by three or four people. But if each of them is true to their jobs, then they will do what they think is the best for the country as a whole.

(To be Contd....on Page -34)

IFFI jury chief slams ‘The Kashmir Files’: ‘Propaganda, vulgar... shocked, disturbed’

Nadav Lapid delivered his remarks before a number of dignitaries, including Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur, as well as prominent actors such as Ashok Parekh, Akshay Kumar, Ayushman Khurrana and Rana Daggubati.

Alaka Sahani



The Kashmir Files was a huge blockbuster at the Indian box office. (Photo: ZEE5India/Twitter)

DESCRIBING THE controversial movie “The Kashmir Files” as “propaganda” and “vulgar”, Israeli filmmaker and a jury chief at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Nadav Lapid, said he was “shocked” and “disturbed” by its inclusion in the competitive section.

Sharing the jury report during the closing ceremony of the 53rd edition of IFFI in Goa, Lapid said: “Usually, I don’t read from paper. This time, I want to be precise. I want to thank the director and head of the programming of the festival for its cinematic

richness, the diversity and complexity... There were 15 films in the international competition — the front window of the festival. Fourteen out of them had the cinematic qualities... and evoked vivid discussions. We were, all of us, disturbed and shocked by the 15th film, ‘The Kashmir Files’. That felt to us like a propaganda, vulgar movie, inappropriate for an artistic competitive section of such a prestigious film festival.”

Lapid was the jury chairman of the International Competition section of IFFI. The writer-director, whose film “Synonyms”

won the Golden Bear award at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival in 2019, said: “I feel totally comfortable to share openly these feelings here with you on stage since the spirit that we felt in the festival can surely accept a critical discussion which is essential for art and life.”

Lapid delivered his remarks before a number of dignitaries, including Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur, as well as prominent actors such as Asha Parekh, Akshay Kumar, Ayushmann Khurrana and Rana Daggubati.

Thakur later retweeted a statement from another jury member, Indian director Sudipto Sen, who said Lapid’s remarks were “completely his personal opinion”.

Other members of the jury for the International Competition at IFFI were American producer Jinko Gotoh, French film editor Pascale Chavance and French documentary filmmaker, critic and journalist Javier Angulo Barturen.

“Whatever has been said by IFFI 2022 Jury Chairman Mr. Nadav Lapid about the film Kashmir Files, from the stage of closing ceremony of 53-rd IFFI was completely his personal opinion. In the official presentation of the Jury Board to the Festival Director and in the official Press Conference, where we 4 juries (the fifth jury had to leave for her personal emergency) were present and interacted with the press, we never mentioned anything about our likes or dislikes. Both were our official collective opinion. As a juror, we are assigned to judge the technical, aesthetic quality and socio-cultural relevance of a film. We don’t indulge in any kind of political comments on any film and if it is done, it is completely in personal capacity – nothing to do with the esteemed Jury Board,” Sen tweeted.

Tel Aviv-born Lapid made his directorial debut in 2011 with the feature film “Policeman”, which won the special jury prize at the Locarno

International Film Festival that year.

He shares an old connection with the IFFI as his 2014 film “The Kindergarten Teacher”’s actor Sarit Larry was awarded the Best Actor Award (Female) at the festival. This film was also featured in the 2014 Cannes Film Festival’s International Critics’ Week. In 2016, Lapid was chosen as a member of the International Critics’ Week’s jury.

Lapid’s latest feature “Ahed’s Knee” (2021) was selected to compete for the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival last year, when it shared the Jury Prize with ‘Memoria’.

Released on March 11 this year, “The Kashmir Files”, directed by Vivek Agnihotri, ran to packed halls. The film is based on the “exodus and killings” of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley in the 1990s and was endorsed by a number of Union Ministers and granted tax-free status in most all BJP-ruled states. At the time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the movie had rattled the “entire ecosystem” that claims to be the torchbearer of freedom of expression but does not want the truth to be told.

But critics of the movie said it presented a one-sided narrative of events and raised concerns over communal polarisation. Agnihotri did not respond to a request from The Indian Express seeking comment on Lapid’s remarks. Incidentally, the 53rd edition of the festival also held a special screening of “The Kashmir Files”.

Meanwhile, the Spanish Film “I Have Electric Dreams”, directed by Costa Rican Valentina Maurel, won the Golden Peacock for the Best Film at the festival. Iranian writer and director Nader Saeivar was awarded the Silver Peacock for Best Director for “No End”, a portrayal of Iran’s socio-political system.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, November 29, 2022 

How RSS's intrinsic authoritarianism, casteism are laid bare by Devanura Mahadeva

The Kannada author writes from the perspective of a defender of the Indian Constitution.

Ramachandra Guha

In the Kannada literary world, Devanura Mahadeva first made his name through short stories and a novella, *Kusumabale*, of striking originality and power. He has since won respect for his political integrity and his moral courage, for his refusal to succumb to the seductions of state patronage, and for his identification with the disadvantaged and the oppressed. He is a passionate advocate of inter-faith harmony, his commitment to pluralism witnessed most recently in his going to a market in Mysuru to buy halal meat when a ban on the product was sought to be imposed by thugs of a Hindutva persuasion.

In July, Mahadeva published a tract outlining his views on the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. A week after it was printed, the website *The News Minute* reported: "A critical exploration of the RSS, the book has been flying off the shelves since its release, prompting the state's rightwing ecosystem to unleash all its arms to discredit both the book and its author." MPs of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, as well as those who pass as "intellectuals" on that side of the political spectrum, unburdened themselves with a torrent of abuse aimed at the author. No matter; the tract sold tens of thousands of copies, being discussed and debated in the farthest corners of the state.

Happily for those of us who do not read Kannada, Mahadeva's pamphlet is now to appear in other languages, including Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. I have recently been reading the English translation, by SR Ramakrishna, which is soon to be published as a book.

Endorsing caste inequalities

The main text begins with quotations from MS Golwalkar and VD Savarkar, the two ideologues who have shaped Hindutva as it is today. Here we find Golwalkar justifying the caste system and its in-built hierarchies, on the grounds that they have scriptural sanction, and Savarkar urging worship of the *Manusmriti*, notwithstanding the fact that its endorsement of caste and gender inequalities is so antithetical to the Indian Constitution. The Savarkar quote chosen by Mahadeva is especially telling:

"*Manusmriti* is that scripture which is most worshipable 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."

Another quote from Golwalkar has the RSS ideologue calling the federal system of a union of states "poisonous", urging instead a unitary political system based on the homogenising principle of "One Country, One State, One Legislature, One Executive".

Devanura Mahadeva draws our attention to the crudity of what passes for thinking in the RSS. The Sangh's Bible, as it were, is a book of Golwalkar's entitled *Bunch of Thoughts*, but, as Mahadeva writes, "If you look inside this book for anything that could be

considered a ‘thought’, or ‘chintane’, you will find absolutely nothing. What it offers is only a set of random, dangerous beliefs, and that too from a bygone time.” (Having read the book several times myself, I entirely concur with this judgment). The RSS’s ideology is so narrow-minded that, as Mahadeva remarks, “forget about anyone else, no sensible Brahmin even can accept this devilish view of the past that the RSS presents”.

Mahadeva writes from the perspective of a defender of the Indian Constitution. For all the lip service leaders of the RSS and BJP pay to that document, in truth they are deeply averse to its core tenets such as pluralism, caste and gender equality, freedom of speech, and federalism. Mahadeva goes so far as to suggest that “the more they damage the Indian Constitution, the more victorious they feel”.

He continues: “To destroy the Constitution, the RSS and its affiliates are committing unspeakable acts. They are playing games they shouldn’t be playing. And not just one or two! They are waging a war to overturn the federalism that binds the states and the union government, and that constitutes the bedrock of the Constitution.”

Mahadeva acidly remarks that since coming to power in 2014, “the BJP has offered Golwalkar its guru dakshina by burying federalism, by stifling to death the federal system that constitutes a critical part of the Constitution”.

Mahadeva also highlights the scant regard for the truth, the distortions of the historical record and the fake news that the Hindu Right has long been known for, now amplified by WhatsApp and Facebook. As he crisply puts it: “Falsehood is their family deity.” He examines the many falsehoods propagated in textbooks issued by BJP Governments controlled by the RSS, which seek to poison the minds of our children with hatred for Indians who do not happen to be Hindus.

Dominant position

To his credit, Mahadeva acknowledges that political forces other than the RSS and the BJP have also contributed to democratic decline. As he observes: “When you look at India’s political parties, these are the facets you see: 1) single-person led party (2) family-controlled party (3) a party led by an anti-Constitution organisation. All three are detrimental to democracy.”

However, it is the BJP that is in power at the Centre and in many major states too. Given the dominant status the Sangh Parivar occupies today, it was imperative of Mahadeva to focus on the pernicious social ideology of the RSS and its dangerous political articulation through the BJP.

Mahadeva also talks of the promises made by the lifelong RSS pracharak Narendra Modi when he came to power, such as the return of black money, the doubling of farm incomes, the generation of millions of jobs. These promises have remained wholly unfulfilled. Instead, economic inequalities and disparities of wealth have grown alarmingly. Among the principal beneficiaries of Modi’s prime ministership have been people like Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani (both incidentally from the prime minister’s home state, Gujarat).

However, it is the ideological rather than economic critique of the RSS and the BJP that constitutes the heart of the exercise. This is a brilliant excavation of the totalising and homogenising impulses of the RSS. In the space of a few thousand words, Mahadeva lays bare its intrinsic authoritarianism, its casteism, and its majoritarianism.

Recently, swayed by an invitation from the smooth-talking RSS sarsanghchalak, a group of elite Muslim males in New Delhi came away thinking the Sangh was amenable to change. They should read Devanura Mahadeva’s pamphlet. So should every thinking Indian, whether Muslim, Hindu, or neither.

Mahadeva's tract distils the learnings gleaned from decades of study and experience. He has carefully read the texts of the most influential Hindutva ideologues; and he has personally witnessed the operations of the Sangh Parivar in Karnataka. He has seen how organisations like the RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal have sought assiduously to expand their footprint in his state, by infiltrating the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the police, by creating fresh disputes around religious sites, by outright thuggery on the street.

Mahadeva knows that if the Sangh was to be ultimately victorious in Karnataka, it would signal the end of the state's pluralist and humanist traditions, its rich literary and intellectual culture, the very possibility of reason and civility in public life.

It is thus that Devanura Mahadeva issues a gentle call to action, a plea to all those who oppose the RSS and the BJP to come together on a common platform to restore the foundations of the Republic and rescue it from being further ravaged by the fanatics on the Right. It is worth quoting his call at some length:

"At least now, forward looking groups, organisations and parties should rise above being just little streams; they should flow collectively as one river. To be able to do that, they must abandon the unhealthy attitude of being pure and superior to others. They must give up their ego, and develop the humility to accept that hundreds of paths might exist for attaining an aim. They must put an end to their leadership squabbles. Rather than insist narrow-mindedly that they lead, or that their party lead, they must join a broad alliance to save federalism and the Indian Constitution and the diversity that is the life breath of India. They must come together to build a participatory democracy, where all citizens and communities participate, to create a culture that is tolerant, loving and free of distinctions of high and low."

Ramachandra Guha's new book, Rebels Against the Raj, is now in stores. His email address is ramachandraguha@yahoo.in.

This article first appeared in The Telegraph.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 3 December, 2022. 🌈

Why the election Commission's...

Contd. from page - (29)

And then if one of them finds that the other two are in collusion, then it would be that person's responsibility to bring it out in the public domain.

Allegations also exist for state election commissions. For instance, like in West Bengal, there were allegations that the Panchayat polls were influenced in favor of the state's ruling party. What do you think about the reforms in state election commissions?

State election commissions are a totally different ballgame.

Because there is only one state election commissioner in most places, and the appointment is done by the governor at the recommendation of the state government. And in most places, these are retired officers who are not direct recruits to the Indian Administrative Service but who have been departmentally promoted to the Indian Administrative Services.

So they are sort of supposed to be more malleable than the direct entry Indian Administrative Service officers. And are perhaps amenable to greater pressure than the central Election Commission.

So that is a very different activity. Our petition does not cover the state Election Commissions.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Dec 02, 2022 🌈

The attack on the last bastion — the judiciary

Issues of pendency and infrastructure ought to be broached in appropriate forums and in high-level meetings to quell the growing acrimony between the executive and the higher judiciary

Ajit Prakash Shah

Recent comments by the Vice-President, Jagdeep Dhankar, and the Law Minister, Kiren Rijiju, can be read as a concerted attack on the collegium system, the Supreme Court of India, and even the basic structure doctrine (conveniently forgetting that it is this doctrine that has kept the Indian Constitution intact). Clearly, the present government continues to try and undermine judicial independence, which it has been doing since it first came to power in 2014. As a long-standing critic of the collegium system, I might have joined a chorus that called out the problems with judicial appointments. But this onslaught from the Government has been particularly disturbing and wholly unwarranted.

An ‘elected autocracy’

The Supreme Court, conceived as the custodian of the Constitution and the final arbiter of the law, has had an inconsistent history. The ghosts of *ADM Jabalpur* continue to haunt to this day. While the government under Indira Gandhi intended to destroy the judiciary during the Emergency, the entire Court, barring Justice H.R. Khanna, was also complicit in the erosion of citizens’ rights that took place then.

Over the decades, after much reflection and repair, from both within and outside the judiciary, those dark days have been seemingly left behind. But what worried us then has now re-emerged to torment us again.

The present move — of attempting to undermine and discredit the judiciary, as seen in the comments — is part of the larger mission to make the executive the most powerful entity. Today, executive accountability is a thing of memory, for no one raises any questions about

its actions. Since 2014, the Government has undertaken a well-crafted, deliberate takedown of various institutions and mechanisms that could hold the executive accountable. Its efforts may not be as brazen as the Indira Gandhi-led government, but the same ends are being achieved: the state is rendered practically comatose, and the executive, most often, has the upper hand.

Parallels can be drawn with ‘elected autocracies’, where elected governments use the very institutions integral to democracy to kill democracy itself and destroy civil liberties. We have heard nothing of the Lokpal since. The National Human Rights Commission has been made dormant. Investigation agencies are misused at the slightest opportunity, with action against activists, journalists, students, political opponents, or anyone who protests against the government. The Election Commission of India appears to have been clearly compromised. The Information Commission is almost non-functional. The list is long and disturbing. Others who can hold the executive accountable — academia, the press, and civil society — have also been systematically emasculated. Universities are under attack. An unbiased mainstream fourth estate in India no longer exists, and the media operates mostly as a propaganda machine. Civil society, too, is being slowly but surely strangled.

And a resurgent judiciary

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in 2015 on the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, arguably, from the Court under the Chief Justices of India (CJI)

Dipak Misra onwards, through the tenures of notably Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice S.A. Bobde, the judiciary has remained passive, even submissive, to the executive. Consequently, not even a whisper emerged against the collegium. However, with the last three CJIs, i.e., Justice N.V. Ramana, Justice U.U. Lalit, and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, the Court is being more assertive and speaking in a non-aligned and confident voice. The executive seems to have recognised that the judiciary is the last bastion and final protector of civil liberties which it must overcome to claim its position as the most powerful entity in India.

History tells us that in the early years of modern India, decisions on judicial appointments were usually made on the advice of the CJI. Even if concurrence was not contemplated, for our founding fathers, an independent judiciary was non-negotiable. B.R. Ambedkar was unambiguous that appointments should have no political pressure and considerations, but that 'consultation with persons who are well-qualified ... to give proper advice' would be appropriate. This was followed through the Nehru-era.

Both the Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi governments attempted to manipulate the process. The collegium was created as a historical response to contemporaneous challenges, and succeeded in preventing the executive from hijacking judicial appointments. However, I maintain that 'judges appointing judges' is never a good idea, and a formal, structured appointments commission, with rules and accountability mechanisms, is the ideal way forward.

The NJAC law could have fixed this problem but it had many flaws, structured to undermine judicial independence, including giving a veto to so-called 'eminent persons'. The Court could have read down these flaws and at least set up a body that could incrementally improve with every selection round. But the Government refused to accede to any change or modification

in the law. Eventually, the Court was forced to strike down the law completely, leaving us, once again, with the collegium system.

Fixing the system of appointments

For better or for worse, the collegium system is currently the law of the land, which everyone, including the executive, must adhere to. Instead, we see a defiant government refusing to cooperate, let alone consult, with the Supreme Court. Names proposed by the collegium are left pending for years, only to be eventually returned unceremoniously. The Government would also do well to think about its own culpability in allowing the problem of pendency and vacancies to fester. Pendency is caused majorly by poor judicial infrastructure, including an abysmally low number of judges. Court funding is at the mercy of the government, which is either particularly frugal or deliberately parsimonious in the matter. Similarly, vacancies in the higher judiciary are directly due to the Government's frequent refusal to accept names of persons who are out of favour, or who have not toed the Government's line.

All this points to the same thing repeatedly, i.e., the appointments system must be fixed. Pending a clear, rule-based system, even the existing collegium system can be improved, e.g., through well-defined criteria for appointments, transparency and accountability in selection, better methods of assessing candidates for elevation, and improved ways of ensuring diversity and representation. CJI Chandrachud, with two years in office, has a wonderful opportunity to make these changes, even as, in the long term, we strive for a well-structured and balanced legislation on a judicial commission that brings in transparency without compromising judicial independence.

Until then, issues of pendency and infrastructure should be broached in appropriate forums, such as the Chief Justices Conference, or meetings between the Prime Minister and the CJI.

(To be Contd....on Page -39)

Hindu-Muslim divide, is it religious?

“Religion: People believe in it, the wise discard it and the rulers use it.”

Seneca, Roman senator and philosopher of the BC era.

P.A. S. Prasad

The purpose of the article is to highlight the misinformation about religious divide poisoning the people by fanatics and politicians among the two ethnic groups in India for electoral gains, power and prominence at any cost.

What was true then has been proved truer down the ages and even today. If we examine the issue in depth, we will find:

The conflicts down the path of history are mostly political; loot and plunder, expansion or annexation of territories and conflicts created in the name of religion for reasons never made public, but usually never due to a natural religious divide like a Hindu hating a Muslim or vice versa just because of the religious beliefs of the other. The recent phenomena of extremists, jihadis, fanatics etc are induced by systematic brainwash by colourful religious interpretations to satisfy the lust for power of a few people.

In the Indian context, the earliest Muslim invaders like Ghazni and Ghoris were only interested in loot and plunder. The next arrivals in Gujarat and nearby places were after grabbing areas to establish a caliphate but we do not see any religion spreading motivations or hatred on such grounds except the natural contempt of an invader towards the vanquished.

Then India witnessed the rule of the slave, Khilji, Tughlaq and others

till the advent of the moguls. During these miscellaneous dynasties there is no evidence of forced conversions or mass scale massacres. But there is evidence of destruction of temples and construction of mosques on the Hindu structures. But the practice of destroying places of worship had been going on in India even before Muslims came.

With the advent of Adi Sankara Buddhism was

on the decline. In the revival of Hinduism we have evidence of Buddhist structures destroyed and Hindu temples constructed over them or nearby. We can see it today in Amaravathi in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh which was a very important Buddhist centre. A big stupa was there. It was subjected to destruction and a big Amareswara Saivite temple was constructed close by on the Krishna river front. Many exquisite artefacts, sculpture pieces were excavated from the stupa site and conserved in a museum nearby. Another stupa resembling the original one was constructed. The Dalai-Lama consecrated the new stupa. Not only the Hindu-Buddhist conflict, but there were conflicts between Saivite kings and Vaishnav rulers in the south. We have the case of a Saivite king threatening to send the idol of lord Ranganatha of Srirangam temple into the ocean as the natural home of lord Vishnu was the ocean. Scared of the threat, the idol was sent to Tirupathi for safety till the danger was over.

Hence destruction of places of worship by a victor of the vanquished was a usual practice in history to exhibit the superiority of the victor and the subjugation of the defeated.

It is emphasised that in India no battle or conflict took place after the advent of the early Muslim rule on religious grounds. The rulers were only obsessed with expanding their borders or conquering other territories. It was not religion but political and geographical considerations.

Even in the Mughal era that followed, the same precept and practice is found. Religious card was rarely played. It is significant to note that throughout history India did not witness a war on religious grounds on the lines of theological wars in Europe or the Christian armies vs the Saracens elsewhere, or the conflicts of the Muslims

amongst themselves in the Middle East on religious grounds.

It is also interesting to note that a community of Brahmins from Punjab now known as *husseini* Brahmins fought along with Hussein in the battle of Karbala in Iraq in the 7th century A.D. Some of their descendants still live in Pune presently. Such was the amity between Hindus and Muslims during the early advent of Islam.

In the Mughal era the conflicts were purely due to expansionist desires and protection of one's own regimes. Muslims were fighting Muslims and with Hindus too. Humayun drove the Muslim ruler of Gujarat into the hands of the Portuguese who pushed him to drown in the sea. Again, Humayun himself was ousted from his throne by another Muslim, the very progressive Sher Shah.

Akbar fought Chand Bibi who ruled the sultanate of Ahmadnagar and Chand Bibi defeated him towards the end of 16th century. Rana Pratap had a Muslim commander Hakim Khan Suri who fought Akbar in the battle of Haldighati but Akbar won the battle. Hakim Khan laid his life in the battle and his burial place is revered by all and treated as a shrine.

Aurangzeb had nearly one third Hindu commanders in his vast army. His senior commander Raja Jaisingh defeated Shivaji. He fought Shivaji as he was seen slicing away his territories. Aurangzeb fought many battles against the Deccan sultans and especially with the ruler of Golconda. He could not conquer the Golconda fort till he got the two brahmin brothers, who were advisers of the sultan, assassinated.

Shivaji had many Muslim soldiers in his army. Shivaji had a tough time with his son Sambhaji who rebelled against his father.

In the south in Mysore, Tipu hated the Nizam so much that he depicted the Nizam forces running away from battle as the loathsome pigs in the paintings in his summer palace. Tipu was maligned for destroying Hindu temples and

persecuting them, but the contrary evidence proves otherwise. The Ranganatha temple inside the Srirangapatam fort with the huge reclining idol of the deity stands intact even to day. Tipu and his father Hyder Ali had a brahmin chief adviser Punnayya. A temple in Salem is said to have been constructed by Tipu.

After that we had the mutiny of the Sepoys in 1857 during which the Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder against the British.

From the above historical background it can be surmised that the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims were largely territorial expansionist or protecting one's own regimes against the onslaughts. But a large scale repression of Hindus by the Muslim rulers never happened on grounds of religion. We find that the Hindus continued with their rituals and culture unhindered. The conflicts among the Muslim rulers between themselves were more than with the Hindus.

Coming to the modern times:

Regarding conversions: forced conversions were few and voluntary conversions form the bulk. Most conversions either to Islam or later to Christianity were from the lower strata of Hindu society. The practice of untouchability and oppression of the upper castes drove people into conversion, e.g., in Kashmir in the past majority were Hindus but the oppression and ill treatment of the masses by the upper castes made the population in large numbers to convert to Islam, resulting in only the Pundit Brahmins remaining Hindu and becoming a small minority group. In the rest of India the untouchability and caste oppression were the main reasons for conversion. Conversions into Christianity were due to the dedicated missionaries by inducements of education, better living conditions and modern medical services.

But even after converting people found Caste system being in the DNA of the people and being practiced all over. The Muslims who sported titles like Sheikh and Chowdhary are converts from either Brahmins or Rajputs.

The Rabbani and Ansaris also indicate caste. The Sayeds are the highest being direct descendents of the prophet. Marriages between the castes is not the norm and with Christian converts a Yadav or a Gowda convert does not marry a Dalit convert. All the talk of equality in Islam and Christianity in India remained an unrealised dream.

The actual Hindu Muslim divide on religious lines propped up in the early days of the independence movement and later by the leaders of both the groups. It has now become a continuous process of rulers and leaders using religion to come to power or to prominence.

The Muslim leaders realised, especially Jinnah, that with the popularity of Nehru, Gandhi, Patel, Bose and others, they would never get a chance to come to power. Actually Jinnah was a cosmopolitan, a Shia and pork eater. He fought in the movement along with Gandhi and others and went to jail. He too was much respected. The Jinnah tower in Andhra Pradesh, Guntur, which stands even today, was erected as a mark of respect to Jinnah during the struggle. But he was ambitious to become a ruler in his own right. So he played the communal chord, harping on the theme that Muslims would be treated as second class citizens after independence in Hindu majority India. Therefore, Muslims wherever they were in majority should have their own land. This chant reverberated in the eastern side also as East Bengal was Muslim majority region. When independence was granted and partition was a reality, it resulted in massacres and destruction on a large scale. Jinnah became the ruler of Pakistan's two wings. In course of time even after independence sporadic riots used to take place between the two communities by being incited by leaders of all hues for electoral gains or for revenge of a previous incident. In two major riots in the suburbs of Bombay the majority community was found guilty. The Krishna Commission

headed by a Hindu brahmin found that Shivsena was responsible. In another riot Justice Madon was disgusted to find that the riots were patronised by the state and the police brought shame to the uniform they wore. Much later in the Gujarat riots the state govt did not cover itself in glory. In the aftermath of Indira Gandhi assassination, there were riots in which several sikhs lost their lives. It was reported that prominent Congress leaders were responsible for the revenge killings.

The list is long and is a matter suitable for a doctoral dissertation on the subject.

The bottom line is that in India from the grassroot rural level upwards there is no such inborn hatred towards Muslims. The divide is manipulated by the concerned leaders using the people as sacrificial animals. 🌈

Contd. from page - (36)

The attack on the last...

Press interviews or parliamentary addresses are not fit stages for this, and only serve to incite acrimony and reinforce the view that the Government does not have a cooperative spirit.

We can rest assured that the leadership at the Supreme Court appears to be in good hands now and is resisting the pressure and attacks in a dignified and restrained way. If the Government continues to stonewall, perhaps the judiciary should find ways to persuade or even compel the Government to follow the law of the land. This is the best that the Supreme Court can do to protect democracy, and for the sake of Indian citizens.

Ajit Prakash Shah is former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court and Madras High Court, and former Chairperson, Law Commission of India

Courtesy **The Hindu**, December 14, 2022. 🌈

Row over Savarkar: What the Hindutva leader said about Ram, Akbar, and Buddha

Savarkar is a much-debated figure. But what is agreed upon is that he was among the foremost ideologues of Hindutva, defining the term in his treatise, 'Essentials Of Hindutva'. Here are Savarkar's views on various subjects, in his own words.

Yashee



Recent comments by Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** on Hindutva ideologue **VD Savarkar** have caused a furore in Maharashtra, with Uddhav Thackeray, whose Shiv Sena is a Congress ally in the state, saying he does not agree with Rahul.

Reading out excerpts from Savarkar's mercy petition to the British, Rahul had said that in the letter, Savarkar calls himself an obedient servant. "Wasn't it the betrayal of freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru who sacrificed their lives for the country but never bowed in front of the British," he said.

Savarkar is a much-debated figure, as he took **hardline as well as rational positions** on various subjects. His views on the cow being just a useful animal are cited as going against the conservative Hindutva stand. His mellow attitude

towards the British post his release from Andaman's Cellular Jail are used to question his credentials as 'veer' (the title he used for himself, meaning brave) and as a freedom fighter. But what is agreed upon beyond debate is that he was among the foremost ideologues of Hindutva, defining the term in his **1923 treatise, 'Essentials Of Hindutva'.**

In the book, Savarkar elaborates on his views on a variety of subjects. Here are some excerpts.

'Hinduism is a derivative of Hindutva'

Arguing that Hindutva is different from Hinduism, Savarkar asserts the importance of using the right names in certain contexts.

"Jesus died but Christ has survived the Roman Emperors and that Empire. Inscribe at the foot of one of those beautiful paintings of 'Madonna' the name of 'Fatima' and a Spaniard would keep

gazing at it as curiously as at any other piece of art; but just restore the name of 'Madonna' instead, and behold his knees would lose their stiffness and bend his eyes their inquisitiveness and turn inwards in adoring recognition, and his whole being get suffused with a consciousness of the presence of Divine Motherhood and Love!"

Saying Hinduism is just a fraction of Hindutva, Savarkar adds, "To this category of names which have been to mankind a subtle source of life and inspiration belongs the word Hindutva, the essential nature and significance of which we have to investigate into....Forty centuries, if not more, had been at work to mould it as it is. Prophets and poets, lawyers and law-givers, heroes and historians, have thought, lived, fought and died just to have it spelled thus... Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva."

'Ram's conquest of Ceylon real birth-day of Hindu people'

Tracing the history of Aryans as the 'sapt-sindhu' (seven sindhus) spreading over the Indian subcontinent, Savarkar writes that thanks to the expansion, the name 'Hindu' was overshadowed. "As time passed on, the distances of their new colonies increased, and different settlements began to lead life politically very much centred in themselves. The new attachments thus formed, though they could not efface the old ones, grew more and more pronounced and powerful until the ancient generalizations and names gave way to the new. Some called themselves Kurus, others Kashis or Videhas or Magadhas while the old generic name of the Sindhus or Hindus was first overshadowed and then almost forgotten."

However, he claims, the "great mission which the Sindhus had undertaken of founding a nation

and a country, found and reached its geographical limit" with Ram's victory over Ceylon.

"...the valorous Prince of Ayodhya made a triumphant entry in Ceylon and actually brought the whole land from the Himalayas to the Seas under one sovereign sway. The day when the Horse of Victory returned to Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that Imperial throne of Ramchandra, the brave, Ramchandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of Aryan blood but Hanuman, Sugriva, Bibhishana from the south-that day was the real birth-day of our Hindu people. It was truly our national day: for Aryans and Anaryans knitting themselves into a people were born as a nation."

On Akbar and 'moral victory'

Savarkar writes that as the "sword of Islam" overran nation and civilisations, India stood as a lone bulwark. "But here for the first time the sword succeeded in striking but not in killing. It grew blunter each time it struck, each time it cut deep but as it was lifted up to strike again the wound stood healed," he writes.

Savarkar claims that Akbar coming to the throne and Darashukoh's birth was a moral victory.

"Day after day, decade after decade, century after century, the ghastly conflict continued and India single-handed kept up the fight morally and militarily. The moral victory was won when Akbar came to the throne and Darashukoh was born. The frantic efforts of Aurangzeb to retrieve their fortunes lost in the moral field only hastened the loss of the military fortunes on the battlefield as well," he writes.

On Buddhism

Savarkar writes that the "political consequences of the Buddhist expansion" were "disastrous to the national virility and even the national existence of our race", although he asserts his respect for Buddha and Buddhism multiple times.

“The reaction against universal tendencies of Buddhism only grew more insistent and powerful as the attempt to re-establish the Buddhist power in India began to assume a more threatening attitude. Nationalist tendencies refused to barter with out national independence and accept a foreign conqueror as our overlord,” Savarkar writes.

And, in opposition to this expansionism, “...And thus we find that institutions that were the peculiar marks of our nation were revived: – The system of four varnas which could not be wiped away even under the Buddhistic 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.”

However, Savarkar does assert, “We yield to none in our love, admiration and respect for the Buddha-the Dharma-the Sangha. They are all ours. Their glories are ours and ours their failures.”

On inter-caste marriages

Savarkar addresses the claim that because of the caste system, Hindus could not really be called a race.

“We are well aware of the not unoften interested objection that carpingly questions ‘but are you really a race? Can you be said to possess a common blood?’ We can only answer by questioning in return, ‘Are the English a race? Is there anything as English blood, the French blood, the German blood or the Chinese blood in this world? Do they, who have been freely infusing foreign blood into their race by contracting marriages with other races and peoples possess a common blood and claim to be a race by themselves?’ If they do, Hindus also can emphatically do so.”

On the caste criticism, he says, “For the very castes, which you owing to your colossal failure to understand and view them in the right

perspective, assert to have barred the common flow of blood into our race, have done so more truly and more effectively as regards the foreign blood than our own... Even a cursory glance at any of our Smritis would conclusively prove that the Anuloma and Pratiloma marriage [marriage between a man and a woman of different castes] institutions were the order of the day and have given birth to the majority of the castes that obtain amongst us...”

“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 fertilize and enrich all that was barren and poor, without famishing and debasing all that was flourishing and nobly endowed,” he adds.

First published on: 19-11-2022

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, November 21, 2022. 🌈

2800 Years of Kiss



***Erdem Gökmen Archaeology News,
Art & Ancient wonders***

These human skeletons were discovered in 1972 at the Teppe Hasanlu archaeological site in the Solduz Valley of Iran's West Azerbaijan Province. That the skeletons had been there since 2800 years ago was confirmed by the archaeologist who studied them.



Prashant Bhushan ✓

@pbhushan1

Economics report of an MA in "Entire Political Science"

Dollar rate Rs. 62.33

Debt Rs. 56 Lakh crores

Black money in
swiss banks Rs. 7000 Cr

Global Hunger Index 55



Dollar Rs. 81.47

Debt Rs. 156 Lakh crores

Black money in
swiss banks Rs. 30,000 Cr

Global Hunger Index 107

9:28 AM · Dec 1, 2022

Postal Regn. No.: DL(E)- 20/5537/2021-23

Total Pages : 44

RNI No. 43049/85

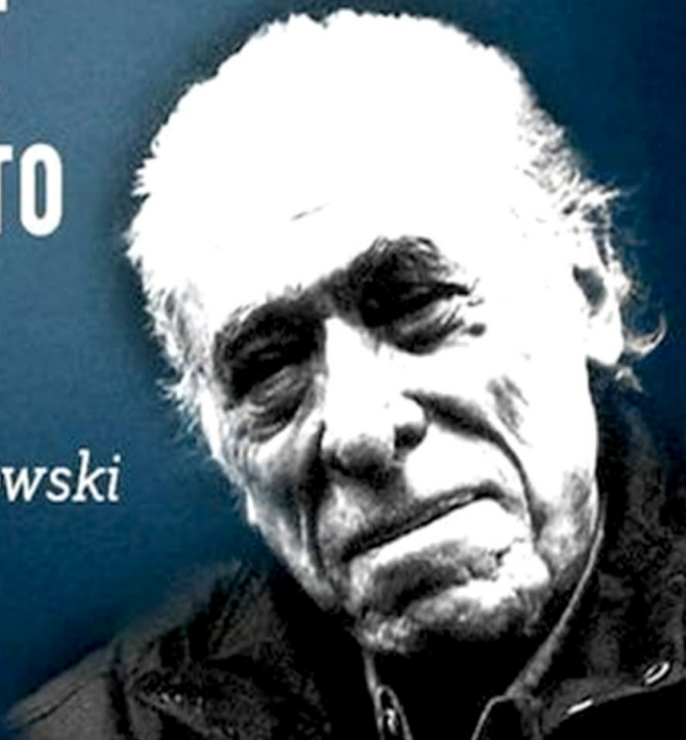
Posting: 1-2 January 2023 at Krishna Nagar H.O. Delhi-51

Date of Pub.: 27-28 Decemer 2022

**“I GUESS THE ONLY TIME
MOST PEOPLE THINK
ABOUT INJUSTICE
IS WHEN IT
HAPPENS TO
THEM.”**

Charles Bukowski

TRUTH THEORY



Printed and Published by **Sheoraj Singh**, on behalf of the Indian Renaissance Institute at
A-1/103, Satyam Apartments, Vasundhra Enclave, Delhi- 110096. (M.) 9891928222
printed at **Subhashini Offset Printers, F-10, Jagdish Nagar, Patel Nagar III, Ghaziabad-201001 (UP)**
Editor: **Mahi Pal Singh**, Raghav Vihar, Phase- 3, Prem Nagar, Dehradun- 248007. (Uttarakhand)