

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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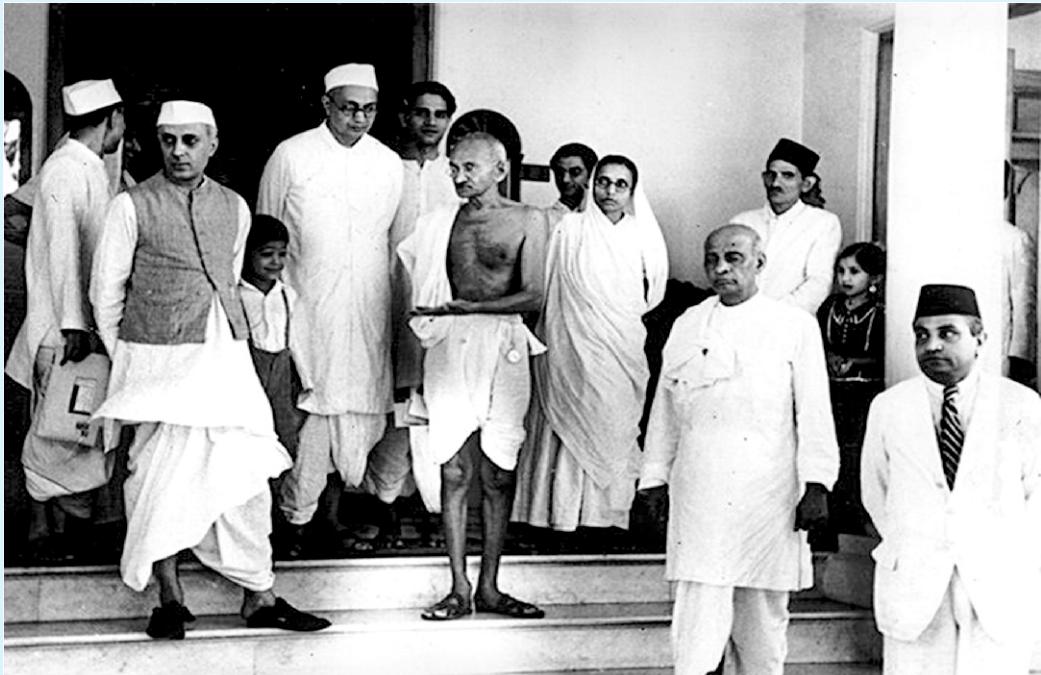
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**Mahatma Gandhi, centre, waits for a car outside Birla House, Bombay, on his arrival from Rajkot.**

**Waiting with him are Jawaharlal Nehru, second from left, and Vallabhbhai Patel, second from right, June 9, 1939.**

Photograph: Keystone/Getty Images from the *Rediff* Archives

## Photos of General Membership Meeting 24.9.2023 NOIDA



# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

Vol. 87 Number 8, November 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

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Email ID: srsingh3821@gmail.com

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## Ajit Bhattacharyya is no more

*Ajitda, a veteran radical humanist, who was an embodiment of courage and love and a source of inspiration to the younger colleagues, breathed his last at 5 pm on 4 October 2023. He is survived by his wife, a daughter and a grand child. On behalf of the radical humanist community I pay our respectful tributes to his memory and also send our deep condolences to the bereaved family. Some ex-members and friends have also sent their condolence messages.*

Mahi Pal Singh, Secretary,  
Indian Renaissance Institute & Editor, The Radical Humanist

### Editorial :

## Muzzling the Voices of Dissent will Prove Detrimental in 2024

If you want to know who the Modi government is most afraid of, besides the Indian voters in view of the ensuing assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram and Telangana and the parliamentary elections in 2024 which will soon follow, they are the people it is targeting with Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Income Tax Department and the police under its control as in Delhi. The recent early morning raids at the houses of well-known, veteran journalists with long-term service, like D. Raghunandan, Abhisar Sharma, Prabir Purkayastha, Sohail Hashmi, Urmilesh and Bhasha Singh on 3 October 2023 show that these journalists, who are known for their truthful and bold reporting, unlike the whole lap-dog media, which sits cosily in the lap of their masters and only dances to their tune, completely forgetting its bounden duty to report factually and comment critically and boldly on every event and incident. It conveniently forgets that as the fourth pillar of democracy it is expected to question the government on behalf of the people and not blindly toe the line of the leader of the party in power.

NewsClick's editor-in-chief Prabir

Purkayastha and human resources head Amit Chakravarty were arrested and stringent sections of the draconian anti-terror law UAPA were invoked against them. And the police said that it questioned 46 "suspects", which included reporters and other staff. All this purportedly happened in the name of foreign funding from China reported in some foreign newspaper.

Soon after the raids on the houses of journalists, the AAP MP Sanjay Singh was also arrested by the ED in the excise policy case in which former senior minister and party No 2, Manish Sisodia has also been jailed. It is noteworthy that the Supreme Court commented while hearing his bail plea that there was no evidence against him, something that Manish Sisodia has been saying from the very beginning when his house, village residence and bank accounts were searched and nothing incriminating was found. Now some of the ministers in the Mamata Banerjee government of West Bengal have been served notices by the ED for questioning and many more from Jharkhand, including Hemant Soren, who has been questioned earlier also, are said to be on the radar of the ED.

We know that all such cases end up in

acquittals of the accused as the conviction rate of the ED is less than half %. But even that happens many months or years after the arrest. Actually the Modi government also knows that they all will come out clean. Their purpose is also to harass and intimidate the opposing leaders by misusing the ED/CBI and to defame them in the public eye if they do not surrender and join the BJP, as has happened with so many leaders in the past in West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. They do not want any talk of rising prices, falling health and education standards, endemic unemployment, increasing crimes against women and the buring Manipur etc. in either the media or the public. They know that if their misdeeds, like supporting the hate-mongers, the rapists and eve-teasers, and murderers, like Kapil Mishra, Parvesh Verma and Anurag Thakur; Gang-rapists of Bilkis Bano during Gujarat riots in 2002 who were

prematurely released from jail, and killers of farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri, Ashish Mishra and his minister father Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni become the talk of public, it creates anti-government sentiment which can be detrimental for their party in the elections. Their motto is ‘silence the opposition and muzzle the media’ so that there is nobody to expose or oppose them and they are left alone in the political arena to win the elections and rule. But they conveniently forget that such tactics of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, no less powerful than Mr. Narendra Modi, proved to be a disaster in 1977 after the Emergency, and the people threw out her government in the elections held in 1977. Modi-Shah government does not realize that it is going to meet the same fate in the 2023 state elections and the parliamentary elections of 2024. History repeats itself and in 2024 it is going to repeat what happened in the country in 1977. 

## An Appeal For Donations

### For Republishing books written by M.N. Roy & other Humanist Literature

Indian Renaissance Institute has embarked upon republishing/reprinting the large amount of books & other material written by M.N. Roy as most of them have gone out of print, though requests for these books continue to pour in into our office. Connected humanist literature will also be published. Following books, at the first instance, require immediate publication:

‘New Humanism’; ‘Beyond Communism’; ‘Politics, Power and Parties’; ‘Historical Role of Islam’; ‘India’s Message’; ‘Men I Met’; ‘New Orientation’; ‘Materialism’; ‘Science & Philosophy’; ‘Revolution and Counter-revolution in China’; ‘India in Transition; Reason, Romanticism and Revolution’; ‘Russian Revolution’; Selected Works – Four Volumes (1917-1922), (1923-1927), (1927-1932) and (1932-1936); ‘Memoirs’ (Covers period 1915-1923).

We request readers and sympathizers to donate generously for the above project as this literature will go long way in enriching the humanist and renaissance movement in the country.

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Mahi Pal Singh  
**Secretary**  
(M) 9312206414, Email: mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com

Vinod Jain  
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# Mahatma still rocks! 10 things we can learn from him this Gandhi Jayanti

Sagarika Ghose

In Gandhi Jayanti week, we find our lives are shadowed by non Gandhian practices. Hate-speak in Parliament, abuse on social media, and communal dog-whistles are distancing us from the Mahatma. Perhaps a fitting tribute to Gandhi on his birthday would be if we were to draw 10 possible lessons from the man who opened India's first mohabbat ki dukaan.

- 1. No hatred or anger for any individual:** Gandhi never targeted anyone personally. While fighting the British raj, he made it clear he was opposed to imperialism, not to British people who he urged to stay on in India as equals. "I am not anti-English, I am not anti-British, I am anti-untruth, anti-humbug, anti-injustice...my personal religion enables me to serve my countrymen without hurting Englishmen." Gandhi's conviction in non-violence and possibility of change of heart meant that even his greatest opponents didn't doubt his sincerity.
- 2. Stood for Hindu-Muslim unity:** He created an alliance between Congress and the Khilafat agitation in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-21. In 1947, when communal riots raged over Partition, 77-year-old Gandhi walked barefoot through Noakhali villages, picking up garbage strewn. In his path by rioters and trying to bring peace between Hindus and Muslims. Noakhali has been called Gandhi's most heroic hour and a mark of his true greatness.
- 3. Spirituality not Ritualism:** Today's

leaders are known for their temple-hopping and turning attendance of religious ceremonies into photo-ops. Gandhi, however, was not known for his high-profile visits to temples or to specific deities. His prayer meetings were non-denominational and mostly open air.

- 4. Ends don't justify the means:** Politicians these days seem to live by a 'saam daam dand bhed' mindset. For Gandhi, strict rules were to be observed in the practice of politics and satyagraha, such as non-violence and a disciplined code. Civil resistance was not about creating anarchy by using any means whatsoever. "It is only when a person has obeyed the laws of society scrupulously... does to him accrue the right of civil disobedience." Unless the means are just and correct, the ends will be rendered ignoble and despicable. In 1922 when violence broke out in Chauri Chaura, Gandhi immediately called off the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- 5. Self-transformation for public life:** Gandhi transformed himself to pursue public life. Those who pursue power, he felt, must first embark on personal change by practising honesty, civility, personal hygiene, and self-restraint through daily spinning of the charkha. Real change in society begins with the struggle to be one's best self. "My life consists of nothing but experiments with truth.... I should certainly like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field..."

from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field," Gandhi wrote. In fact, Gandhi consistently disdained the trappings of conventional political power.

6. **Participation of women:** Today's parties are engaged in competitive credit-taking over the women's reservation Bill. But without any statutory compunctions, scores of women took part in Gandian agitations. Because Gandhian civil resistance was peaceful and rule-bound, it was a safe arena for all.
7. **Vocal for local:** Buying local products is all the rage these days but long before it became trendy, it was Gandhi who encouraged varied cottage industries in villages as part of the Sarvodaya movement.
8. **Connection with nature:** 'I do believe that all god's creatures have the right to live as we have,' wrote Gandhi. Gandhi believed in protection for the cow, but also wrote, "I would not kill a human being for the protection of a cow."
9. **Personal transparency:** Politicians often practice double standards and hypocrisy. Gandhi wrote openly about

his political, emotional, and sexual struggles. For Gandhi, there was no shame in sharing one's personal journeys with others. He was open and transparent.

10. **Champion of liberty:** The Mahatma stressed that freedom of speech and civil liberty were the roots of Swaraj. Today when politicians use the state apparatus to subjugate citizens, they could heed Gandhi's warning, "I look on the power of the state with the greatest suspicion." He wrote: "The state represents violence in an organised and concentrated form and is a soulless machine. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence, I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship."

Gandhi remains India's biggest international brand. His statues, depictions in popular culture and memorabilia abound showing that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Mahatma still rocks. This Gandhi Jayanti, instead of ritualistic homilies, can we give the Mahatma a real birthday gift by learning from him?

Courtesy **The Times of India**, October 1, 2023, 

## Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

*Please mail your articles / reports for publication in the RH to:- [theradicalhumanist@gmail.com](mailto:theradicalhumanist@gmail.com) or [mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com](mailto: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**

# When Mahatma Gandhi Gave British Sleepless Nights

Chakkedath Sankarakutty Menon

*Government was watching Gandhiji's mood to know if he had cooled down.*

*They found out from his letters and utterances that he was the same old firebrand and even more determined than before.*

*The third of a multi-part series:*

- **Part 1 : My Days With The Mahatma**
- **Part 2 : 'I was told not to accept money from Gandhi ji'**

Gandhi ji looked at me carefully from top to bottom and then asked me to sit down which I did on a bench.

He then asked me my name, the name of my parents, about all the people in our family in the village, their occupation, their income, their requirements, my younger brothers' school expenses and whether I used to send money home and if so what amount, what were my own requirements every month etc etc.

A lot of time was spent about enquiring about me, my commitments and every detail about my family in the village.

I wonder if any employer would spend his time and energy in enquiring about such details.

All these I subsequently realised was to make an estimate of my monthly requirement so as to fix my salary amount accordingly.

By then he studied me well and then came to the point. First he asked whether I was willing to work with him to which I said 'yes'.

Then he said that so long as I worked with him the question of accommodation and payment for food did not arise.

The only thing remained was how much money I required for sending my parents and for pocket money every month.

This amount would be my salary. When it came to this I spoke about what Dhirubhai had instructed me before my departure from Bombay.

But Gandhiji insisted that so long as I worked

with him, he must pay me.

I again reminded him of Dhirubhai's instructions and that Dhirubhai could afford to pay me as promised.

Ultimately Gandhiji said that if and when Dhirubhai stopped paying me, I must accept money from him.

I agreed to this and started work. He then dictated replies to some letters received by him and said a reply to a small letter may be written on a post card and not to be typed which I did.

This, I believe, was the last step of a test to study a person from his handwriting.

My stay in Poona was arranged with Kodanda Rao, secretary of The Servants of India Society on its premises, about six miles away from the prison.

Every morning a car belonging to Professor Joshi, a professor at the engineering college, would come to the Servants of India Society to take me to the jail. The car would come to the jail gate at 6 pm to take me back to the society.

For my mid-day lunch a *thali* containing *chapattis*, *dal*, vegetables and fruits used to come from the adjacent court yard, sent by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

In the afternoon at about 4 pm it was time for Gandhiji's evening meal and he used to give me some goat's milk, papaya, grapes etc for my afternoon *nastha*.

This arrangement went on for about a fortnight when suddenly one early morning

Gandhiji proclaimed his decision to fast for 21 days from 8th May 1933.

When I came to know about this I felt upset as everybody else.

Cables, letters and telegrams began coming in heaps imploring him not to undertake the fast and save his life for the benefit of humanity.

At this time, the government started allowing Gandhiji's most intimate friends inside jail so that they may try and persuade him against starting the fast. All this was fruitless.

Ultimately on 8th May 1933, in the early morning, as scheduled, by taking a glass of orange juice he started the fast.

Apprehending the consequences if he died while fasting inside the jail, the authorities released him soon after he started the fast.

Outside, thousands of people awaited him.

After he was released, he was taken to Lady Vithaldas Damodardas Thackersey's bungalow *Purnakuti* on top of the hill near Bund gardens.

He stayed at *Purnakuti* through the fast and for about three weeks rest thereafter.

Kasturba Gandhi was also simultaneously released from the women's jail and she too was taken to *Purnakuti*.

On reaching *Purnakuti* Gandhiji asked me to take a car and go to the Servants of India Society and fetch my belongings and stay with him at *Purnakuti*.

I was by his bedside throughout the fast along with Kasturbaji and a few near ones.

It was a very hectic time and we were anxiously waiting for the breaking of the fast.

People used to continuously enquire about his health by trunk calls and local phone calls.

Big personalities used to come to *Purnakuti* to enquire about his health and if possible to meet him.

Thank God, the 21 days passed away without incident.

At the end of the period he addressed a small gathering and then taking a glass of orange juice ended the fast.



Photograph: Photodivision

Then a period of rest followed.

It was during this period on an auspicious day the marriage of Devdas, his youngest son with Lakshmi, C Rajagopalachari's daughter was conducted in the presence of Gandhiji, Kasturbaji and a small gathering of relatives, who had come for the purpose.

After the rest before starting for Ahmedabad, Gandhiji addressed a meeting of Congressmen who were out of jail.

While in Bombay we stayed at Birla house and the next day we proceeded to Ahmedabad in July.

At Ahmedabad we stayed at the residence of the mill owner Ranchotlal.

There we stayed for about a week visiting the Sabarmati Ashram.

Government was watching Gandhiji's mood and temperament to know if he had cooled down.

They found out from his letters and utterances that he was the same old firebrand and even more determined than before.

So they decided to arrest him.

We had some inkling about it. In the night before going to bed he told me that perhaps the police might take him away that night.

If it so happened I must continue my stay till I receive word from him from jail. Our host was also informed of this arrangement.

As anticipated, that very night, the police came and took him away to Sabarmati jail.

When we went the next day to contact him, the jail authorities were non-cooperative.

At the end of the second day of my stay in

Ahmedabad after Gandhiji's arrest news came about a special rail wagon being moved from Sabarmati railway station to Ahmedabad junction and subsequently attached to the Bombay Mail.

This wagon contained Gandhiji and so the next day I left for Bombay.

On reaching Poona central jail, I understood later, Gandhiji wrote to the government to permit one stenographer (in this instance myself) to work with him in the jail as before.

But it seemed the government did not comply with it. So this time he started a fast unto death.

On the 7th day of his fast he became so weak with the result they moved him to the Sasoon Hospital.

I received word from Poona asking me to proceed there. I went to *Purnakuti* and stayed there.

Shortly after my arrival in Poona, Gandhiji was released by the government and was driven straight to *Purnakuti* from the hospital.

Gandhiji stayed for about a fortnight there and then we proceeded to Wardha.

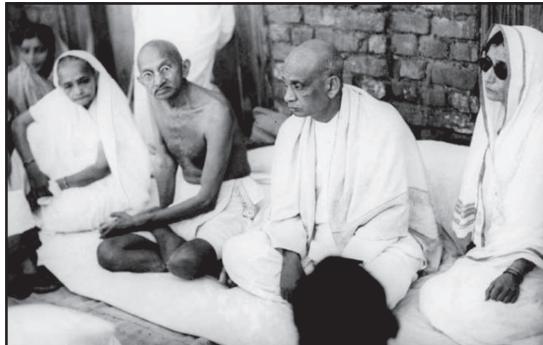


IMAGE: Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Kasturba Gandhi photographed during the Haripura Congress session in 1939. Photograph: Photodivision

At Wardha Gandhiji and party were accommodated in an old building of the Mahila Ashram.

In the middle of the one storeyed terrace there was a room where Gandhiji stayed.

The others occupied in the ground floor. In the hall, myself and Vinoba Bhave occupied a corner each.

Vinoba Bhave used to be always in contemplation and we hardly spoke to each other.

On the veranda there were two rooms — one my office room and the other somewhat like a kitchen where Kasturbaji used to prepare coffee.

At Wardha life was simple. At tea time a bell would ring and we had to go to the kitchen to get a glass of milk twice daily.

Similarly at lunch, when the bell rang at 11 am we used to go to the kitchen for lunch and at 7 pm in the evening for dinner.

At the ashram if one wanted a cup of tea or coffee we had to walk miles to get it.

One day Kasturbaji told me that since I was a south Indian I should know how to prepare good coffee.

She was the only person in the ashram who was allowed to drink coffee regularly.

From the next morning, twice daily, I made coffee for Kasturbaji and, of course, for me too.

After preparing coffee at 6 am and in the afternoon about 3.30 pm in the kitchen Kasturbaji and me used to sit together and drink our coffee.

Gandhiji knew about it as often whenever he enquired about me I used to be with *Ba* taking coffee.

It is, therefore, significant to note that when the list of Gandhiji and his party's minimum requirement for circulation among the various Congress committee meetings all over India and before the famous Harijan tour was started by Gandhiji in October/November 1933 was submitted to him for his approval, Gandhiji simply added one more item to the list — coffee.

*Translated from the Malayalam by Pottayil Aravindakshan Nair.*

Courtesy Rediff.com, October 02, 2023. 

# THE PATH OF GANDHI: IN THE EYES OF OTHERS

***Koganti Radha Krishna Murty***

While assessing the Path of Gandhi it would be necessary to take an account of the reactions of various leaders worldwide for his views. Some of them held him up as a great man and some others condemned him as preposterous. There are also some who could not come to a conclusion about what Gandhi was. Gandhi considered Gopalakrishna Gokhale as his political mentor. Gokhale was inviting western culture and civilization which were condemned by Gandhi in unequivocal terms. Gokhale was a liberal who appreciated progressive ideas. He was highly surprised and to some extent also hurt by seeing *Hind Swaraj* written by Gandhi. But he appreciated Gandhi for creating leaders out of common men in India and South Africa.

Lokamanya Balagangadhara Tilak was a leader acknowledged as a nationalist revolutionary. His prefix ‘Lokamanya’ represents the respect he commands with the people of India. But he never appreciated the policies of Gandhi. He was also against his non-cooperation movements. The festival for worshipping Lord Ganesha is very popular in his state of Maharashtra and he took advantage of it to inculcate a sense of national pride by reciting the life stories of valour and sacrifice of historical figures like Shivaji. He can be said to have resurrected the image of Shivaji as a valiant nationalist and made him an idol in every household. A political party itself came out on the name of Shivaji. He exhorted the people to drive away the colonial powers from India just as Shivaji tried to drive away the Mughal rulers. He did not hesitate to resort to violence if necessary. He wrote an exhaustive annotation to *BhagavadGeeta* which was in complete disagreement with Gandhi. But after the death

of Tilak, Gandhi paid a glowing tribute to him and created a Fund in his name and applied the funds collected for the welfare of the poor.

While Albert Einstein stated that “in the political history there was no equal to Gandhi”, the philosopher President Dr. S.Radhakrishna called him “the God born on earth”. That is, Einstein appreciated Gandhi as a political leader, Radhakrishna called him a spiritual embodiment. The Muslim leader Mohammed Ali Jinnah considered him the leader of only Hindus, Dr. Ambedkar described him as a cunning pretender.

The great historian R.C.Majumdar described Gandhi as a great failure, Luis Fischer upheld him as a great man. “Some people become great by improving the lives of people, while some others become great by suppressing others. The difference between them is the same as between Mahatma and dictators” he said. The great Indian scientist Dr.Meghnath Saha made a more realistic appraisal of Gandhi, it seems. “Even if we resort to old policies as suggested by Gandhi, there is no possibility to help handicrafts and cottage industries. By adopting slogans like ‘go to villages’ and ‘save cottage industries’ we are only hurting our own civilization. There are very few people who believe in the economic principles of Gandhi. Congress and congress governments have adopted western policies and devised economic plans on those lines. But they continue to pay lip sympathy to the plans and policies of Gandhi now and then” he stated.

Subhash Chandra Bose wrote in his diary about Gandhi as follows: “Gandhi has the capacity to captivate the imagination of the common man. But if he were born in any other country, he would have been ignored.

By following his policy of non-violence, one would have been either crucified or condemned to mental hospital. But conditions in India are different. Wherever Gandhi visits, poor people invite him as one of themselves.”

The criticism of Ambedkar was more severe. “Many of the great men have come and gone. But they did not do anything good except being a curse on the country by spreading useless sentiments. In my opinion, the Gandhi era is an age of darkness in our history. Instead of looking to the future to realize their rights, the people of the country were told to look back to the past. In the days of Ranade’s leadership, efforts were made to modernize the country, but under Gandhi’s leadership, the country is being led to old ages. Earlier leaders used to modify their ideals and practices in the light of their experiences. But the present day leaders go by their inner voices which are beyond modification. Gandhi is a man lacking in foresight and realistic judgment” he wrote.

The Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore had immense respect for Gandhi. It was he that conferred the title of “**Mahatma**” on Gandhi. In spite of it, Tagore never supported the practices of Gandhi as a political leader. He opposed the non-cooperation movement started by him in 1920. “Any movement that antagonizes our minds and hearts against western ideals and civilization is a spiritual suicide” he said. He expressed his severe disagreement with the suggestion of Gandhi that spinning yarn on the wheel must be made a precondition for membership of the Congress party. In 1934 Bihar suffered a severe earth quake and Gandhi described it as a divine punishment for practicing untouchability. Tagore condemned the statement. He never compromised with the religious discipline and anti-science stand taken by Gandhi. He was against almost every conviction of Gandhi – non-cooperation, defiance of law, spinning wheel, prohibition of foreign goods, khilafat, celibacy and fasting.

It is a big surprise that Romain Rolland had equal regard for Gandhi and Tagore. But when asked whom he preferred out of the two, he agreed that he was closer to Tagore than to Gandhi. While Gandhi was influenced by the religious preachings of Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati, Tagore was appreciative of rationalist and humanist leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Eswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Govind Ranade. They accepted western civilization as a means of saving the Indian society.

The non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi in 1920-21 was appreciated by Lenin as a movement of the people and he was tempted to call Gandhi a revolutionary. But M.N.Roy who was in Russia at that time cautioned Lenin. Even if Gandhi appears a revolutionary, he was basically a cultural and spiritual revivalist and against any social revolution, he said. It needs an integrated philosophy to establish progressive and scientific system in the society. Such a philosophy would reinforce humanist and ethical values in the society. But such a philosophy is lacking in the politics of Gandhi, said M.N.Roy. “Gandhi was more successful in defeating his adversaries either by flatter or by ignoring them” he said. But both of them were equally upset by the tragic violence and genocide that took place before and after partition of the country. Roy was certainly impressed by the humanitarian efforts made by Gandhi. He was also deeply distressed by the assassination of Gandhi.

It was a surprise that Nehru who was reputed to have assimilated western culture so much, was wavering as far as Gandhi’s philosophy was concerned. He was always supporting the leadership of Gandhi albeit criticizing him now and then on minor issues. He expressed his disappointment when Gandhi withdrew movements when they were so much involved just because there were some sporadic events of violence. We could not understand what he meant when he said that it requires another

Mahatma to write the biography of the Mahatma. He was upset when Gandhi opposed communal award and started a fast against it. He felt the attention to such minor issues diverted attention from the main issue of fight for freedom. In any movement where many people are involved and agitate against government, there will be resistance from government and there is every possibility of some violent reactions. There is no point in withdrawing a movement just because of it. Gandhi also conceded in public that he had difference of opinion on many issues with Nehru. At the same time, he also reiterated that it would not affect their personal equation and both would be bound by the ideals of the congress party. But it was obvious that those differences were not superficial and deeper than projected.

Non-violence was something more than political independence for Gandhi. For him it was a spiritual commitment and a way of life. For leaders like Nehru it was only an instrument in the fight for freedom. In the 1920 movements participation of Muslims was significant. But by 1930 the enthusiasm was not that much. In the Quit India movement participation of Muslims was minimal. JayaPrakash Narayan was fully convinced that non-violence was the best way to impart ethical values and help mental development of common man. He also stressed the importance of experiments of Gandhi in the economic and political fields. The socialist pioneer and internationalist Dr.Ram Manohar Lohia did not like the socialism of Nehru because of his wavering nature which showed lack of commitment. But he had high regard for Gandhi. He appreciated the skills of Gandhi to attract people and make leaders out of them. He used to go for walk with Gandhi during which they discussed various problems. The discussion turned to personal habits on one occasion regarding smoking and coffee. "Gandhi cornered me to an irksome situation and made me discard smoking" said Lohia. Having made a futile attempt to prevent the partition of the country,

Gandhi suffered endless agony as the day of freedom was approaching. There was no doubt that Gandhi had an extraordinary self-control and will power and he tried his best to apply the same to serve the people. At the same time it has also to be acknowledged that his will power has also some dictatorial tendencies. Nehru realized and resented it, but not in the public. M.N.Roy called it "The fear of freedom". Eric Fromm referred to the religious teachings of Luther and Calvin and said "There is 'fear of freedom' inherent in the religious ethics of Gandhi". Any person who acquires blind faith in God and subjects himself to religious influence, hesitates or refuses to think independently using his own analytical qualities. Even if he thinks he refuses to take any decision. Believing that the intention of God is the root cause of everything that happens, the individual would not be prepared for an independent life. His intellectual capacities will be considered as gifts of God and he himself has no authority over them.

It is a surprise that some of the left leaning intellectuals also appreciated the democratic values of Gandhi. Philip Spratt, who renounced communism and settled in India stated that Gandhi tried to restructure the society based on individual freedom and democracy. He knows that communism was against it and it basically accepts dictatorship. One of the young Russian scientists, who made some research on Gandhism, also stated that there are some revolutionary ideas hidden in the religious politics of Gandhi.

Some people questioned the difference between the ideals and practice of Gandhi. Having condemned the western civilization as sinful, he could not avoid using cars and trains for transport which are the direct result of that civilization. Megaphones and loudspeakers were always used to spread his speeches. He accepted donations from industrialists while opposing industrialization.

*To be continued in the next issue.....* 

## Media under attack

# No one spared in ‘NewsClick’ raids – young staffers, part-time employees, freelance contributors

*The Delhi Police examined the bank statements of journalists, rummaged through their belongings, and interrogated them on their family backgrounds.*

Arunabh Saikia



Police and security personnel at the NewsClick office in Delhi on October 3. | PTI

On Tuesday, a 30-year-old journalist living in her rented apartment in a south Delhi neighbourhood woke up to the police at her doors.

The five officials – two of them plain-clothed and the rest in uniform – told the journalist, a sub-editor at the digital news organisation *NewsClick*, that they had come to seize her electronic devices. They had sanction from their superiors to use force if necessary, so the choice was hers if she wanted to cooperate or not, they said.

“They were trying to do a good cop, bad cop kind of thing,” said the journalist. “They said we have been instructed to use brute force but we are choosing not to use it.”

*NewsClick* has been in the agencies’ radar for a while now. In 2021, the Delhi Police’s Economic Offences Wing had filed a case against the news outfit, alleging that it had received foreign direct investment from a United States-based company in violation of a law that caps FDI in a digital news website at 26%. In connection with the case, the Enforcement Directorate had raided *NewsClick*’s offices and the editor’s home in February 2021.

Ever since, the Central agencies have raided several other news organisations known for their adversarial coverage of the government, including the BBC, for alleged financial irregularities.

But Tuesday's events were remarkable even against this backdrop.

The "raids" this time were not limited to *NewsClick*'s offices or its promoters' and editors' residences. The Delhi police, accompanied by other security agencies in some cases, landed at the homes of nearly 30 of its employees – many of them young journalists with just a few years of experience. Even part-timers were not spared. Freelance contributors, many of whom had written a piece or two for the site, were also searched. The security personnel then went on to seize electronic devices, and in some cases, even detain people.

By the end of the day, the police said it had questioned 46 "suspects", and arrested *NewsClick*'s editor-in-chief Prabir Purkayastha and human resources head Amit Chakravarty.

The searches and arrests were done in a fresh case registered on August 17, under India's draconian anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Details of the case are not known.

In short, the Central government seemed to proceed against a whole newsroom and people connected to it under an anti-terror law.

As a 40-year-old Delhi-based journalist whose home in a suburb in south-east Delhi was raided put it, "If they believe there is financial irregularity, they should go to the promoters and owners. Why target people like us who are doing our jobs and taking a salary at the end of the month?"

"Our phones have been taken, all our WhatsApp messages will be read – which means my entire family's privacy has been compromised," said the journalist whose devices were seized on Tuesday morning. "If there was ever a line remaining to be crossed, it was done today."

#### **Questions about farmers' protest and Delhi riots**

The police, said several employees whose devices were seized, shared very little information about what had triggered such sweeping action.

In several cases, the police asked the journalists if they had covered the farmers' protests and the Delhi riots. Most of them had – *NewsClick* had extensively covered both these events, particularly the widespread protests against the three farm laws that the Centre had sought to introduce but subsequently backtracked in the face of stiff opposition by farmers in north India.

The police also purportedly examined the journalists' bank statements, making them download them, and made inquiries if they had received any money from foreign countries. All of this was in addition to a volley of personal queries such as their family backgrounds and education and employment history.

Most of these raids went on for around three hours – in some cases, the journalists alleged the police examined their personal belongings. One journalist said the police rummaged through their storage cupboards and trunks, even scanning their partner's belongings. "They turned one of the rooms upside down," said the journalist.

Tuesday's police action has left many journalists at the news website rattled.

A 29-year-old correspondent, who escaped being raided because he is based in a Hindi heartland state, said he had nightmares when he tried taking a nap after hearing about the development. "I was just drifting off to sleep when I saw images of them taking my car, my phone which I have bought recently after five years," said the journalist. "I felt so helpless – my life, my job, everything has been jeopardised."

Many fear the police action has "marked" them forever. "Who will give us jobs now?" asked another journalist employed at the news outlet in Delhi.

### **‘Someone has to do it’**

While most journalists said they were surprised to see the police at their doorsteps, they knew something was coming up.

On August 5, *The New York Times* had published a report claiming that *NewsClick* had received funds from a network of nonprofits linked to the American tech millionaire Neville Roy Singham that purportedly spread “Chinese propaganda” around the world.

The American daily had claimed that Singham worked closely with the “Chinese government media machine” and promoted its point of view in various countries.

Both Singham and *NewsClick* have denied the allegation leveled in the article.

For *NewsClick*’s staffers, Tuesday’s morning raids were yet another grim reminder of their precarious position – their office has been sealed. But many insisted the show must go on.

Some said they were willing to pay a personal cost because they believed in the journalism *NewsClick* did. “Someone has to do it,” said a 31-year-old Delhi-based

journalist, whose home was raided and their devices seized, vowing to continue their association with the organisation.

Others were more tentative.

“I have a press conference to attend at four,” said the outstation correspondent when we spoke on Tuesday afternoon. “Then I have to wrap up this story I have been working on for over a year now.”

However, the correspondent admitted that the uncertainty was debilitating. “I normally do not let these things deter me, but it is difficult,” the journalist said.

Another young journalist in her twenties was more apprehensive. “I will always feel unsafe as a journalist in India from now on. Always think twice before doing any story that may raise questions against the government,” she said.

“I am rethinking my future,” she added, “because doing honest journalism and platforming people’s voices and concerns of oppressed communities seems to be a crime now.”

Courtesy [Scroll.in](#), 3.10.2023. 

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## **Statement by NewsClick on Oct 3 Raids by Special Cell of Delhi Police**

**NewsClick Team | 04 Oct 2023**

We have not been provided FIR copy, or informed about the exact particulars of the alleged offences. Electronic devices have been seized from NewsClick premises and homes of employees without any adherence to due process.

Yesterday, on 3rd October, 2023, raids were carried out by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police at various locations including NewsClick’s offices, residences of journalists and employees - past and present, consultants, and freelance contributors associated with NewsClick.

Several persons were questioned and

continue to be questioned. As of now, our Founder-Editor 76-year old Prabir Purkayastha and our administrative officer Amit Chakraborty, who happens to be physically challenged, have been arrested.

We have not been provided with a copy of the FIR, or informed about the exact particulars of the offences with which we have been charged. Electronic devices were seized from the NewsClick premises and homes of employees, without any adherence to due process such as the provision of seizure memos, hash values of the seized data, or even copies

of the data. Newsclick's office has also been sealed in a blatant attempt at preventing us from continuing our reporting.

What we have been able to gather is that Newsclick stands accused of offences under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), for purportedly carrying Chinese propaganda on its website.

We strongly condemn these actions of a Government that refuses to respect journalistic independence, and treats criticism as sedition or "anti-national" propaganda.

Newsclick has been targeted by a series of actions by various agencies of the Government of India since 2021. Its offices and residences of officials have been raided by the Enforcement Directorate, the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police and the Income Tax Department.

All devices, laptops, gadgets, phones, etc. have been seized in the past. All emails and communications have been analysed under the microscope. All bank statements, invoices, expenses incurred and sources of funds received by Newsclick in the last several years have been scrutinised by different agencies of the Government from time to time. Various directors and other related persons have spent countless hours on several occasions being interrogated by these government agencies.

Yet, in the last two plus years, the Enforcement Directorate has not been able to file a complaint accusing Newsclick of money laundering. The Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has not been able to file a charge sheet against Newsclick for offences under the Indian Penal Code. The Income Tax Department has not been able to defend its actions before the Courts of law.

In the last several months, Prabir Purkayastha has not even been called in for questioning by any of these agencies.

Yet, a Government that has not been able to substantiate any charges against Newsclick

despite being in possession of all its information, documentation and communications, needed a motivated and bogus article published in the New York Times to invoke the draconian UAPA and attempt to shut down and stifle independent and fearless voices that portray the story of the real India – of peasants, of labourers, of farmers, and other oft-ignored sections of society.

***We want to state for the record:***

1. Newsclick is an independent news website.
2. Our journalistic content is based on the highest standards of the profession.
3. Newsclick does not publish any news or information at the behest of any Chinese entity or authority, directly or indirectly.
4. Newsclick does not propagate Chinese propaganda on its website.
5. Newsclick does not take directions from Neville Roy Singham regarding the content published on its website.
6. All funding received by Newsclick has been through the appropriate banking channels and have been reported to the relevant authorities as required by law, as substantiated by the Reserve Bank of India in proceedings before the High Court of Delhi.

All journalistic content ever published on the Newsclick website is available on the internet, and can be seen by anyone. The Special Cell of Delhi Police has not referred to a single article or video that they consider to be Chinese propaganda. Indeed, the line of questioning adopted by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police – regarding reportage on the Delhi riots, the farmers' protests etc., all demonstrate the motivated and malicious intent behind the present proceedings.

We have full faith in the Courts and the judicial process. We will fight for our journalistic freedom and our lives in accordance with the Constitution of India. 

# NewsClick founder-editor among 2 held under UAPA, 46 questioned in crackdown on news portal

*Police action on NewsClick comes amid ED probe into source of funding with 'China link'; those questioned say asked about CAA, Delhi riots, farm protests*

Invoking the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act**, the Delhi Police Special Cell Tuesday arrested news portal NewsClick founder and editor-in-chief, Prabir Purkayastha, and head of its human resource department, Amit Chakravarty, after day-long searches at over 50 locations linked to the news portal, its employees and contributors.

After the searches, across the National Capital Region and Mumbai, police said a total of 46 “suspects” had been questioned and their “digital devices” seized. Police also sealed the news portal’s office in Delhi.

Sources said the police action was based on an FIR filed on August 17 based on the Enforcement Directorate’s inputs that NewsClick had allegedly received illegal funding from China, routed through the United States. The ED had searched NewsClick’s premises in February 2021 as part of its probe into foreign remittances allegedly received between 2018 and 2021.

Sources added that the FIR has a reference to US businessman Neville Roy Singham and has flagged funding to the tune of Rs 80 crore. In August, an investigation by The New York Times had alleged that NewsClick was among organisations funded by a network tied to Singham for allegedly pushing Chinese propaganda across the world.

The FIR was filed under UAPA Sections 13 (unlawful activities); 16 (terrorist act); 17 (raising funds for terrorist acts); 18 (conspiracy); 22 (C) (offences by companies, trusts); along with IPC Sections 153A (promoting enmity between different group) and 120B (criminal

conspiracy).

The searches, across Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Ghaziabad and Mumbai, began early Tuesday and continued for seven-eight hours. Several journalists, technicians and contributors associated with NewsClick, currently or in the past, faced searches and questioning. Many of their phones, laptops and other electronic devices were seized.

“A total of 37 male suspects... 9 female suspects have been questioned at their respective places of stay, and digital devices, documents etc have been seized/ collected for examination. This is in connection with a UAPA case registered with Special Cell. The proceedings are still ongoing. So far, two accused, Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty, have been arrested. Further investigation is in progress,” Delhi Police spokesperson Suman Nalwa said.

Barring Purkayastha and Chakravarty, the others who were detained for questioning were released in the evening and asked to join the probe on October 5-6.

Among those who were questioned and/or searched were Abhisar Sharma, Bhasha Singh, Urmilesh, Aunindyo Chakravarty, Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, Satyam Tiwari, Subodh Verma, cartoonist Irfan, historian Sohail Hashmi and satirist Sanjay Rajoura. In Mumbai, Teesta Setalvad’s home and office were also searched.

When contacted, Thakurta said: “Nine policemen came to my home at around 630 am...I voluntarily went to the Delhi Police Special Cell office on Lodi Road. I told them I have nothing to hide, I have been a consultant with NewsClick since May 2018. I raise an

**Jignasa Sinha**

invoice, my remuneration started with Rs 1.5 lakh a month, it was reduced after Covid and there have been several months when I haven't raised any invoice. I told them I have a single bank account and they can check all this."

When asked about the ED probe into the source of NewsClick's funding, Thakurta said: "I don't know anything (about the funding), I am neither a shareholder of the company nor part of the editorial board, I am only a consultant."

Asked about the UAPA being invoked, he said: "In February 2021, the ED kept Prabir Purkayastha confined to his home for five days — they couldn't arrest him, neither could the Economic Offences Wing nor Income Tax. The Delhi High court has stopped any coercive action, that's why they invoked the draconian UAPA (the hearing in this case is scheduled for next week)...Imagine the impact all this has on my wife, family, neighbours...as if I am a criminal."

More than one journalist who was questioned by the police said they were asked if they covered the Delhi riots, the anti-CAA protests and the farmers' protests.

Another journalist who was questioned at home said: "They asked me if I reported on the G20 Summit in Delhi. They repeatedly asked me if I went to Jamia Millia Islamia during the anti-CAA protests and the 2020 Delhi riots. They

have taken my bank account details and seized my laptop and phone. The FIR wasn't shown to me. They asked me about the remuneration I received for a few articles I wrote."

Rajoura's lawyer, Ilin Saraswat, said: "They have seized a laptop, mobile phone and old DVDs...He was there for hours...being questioned about the UAPA case. He is not even an employee of the organisation...We have been called again on October 6."

Hashmi's family released a statement. "At around 6 am, the Delhi Police Special Cell raided Hashmi's house in the NewsClick case, which is now being investigated under the draconian UAPA. His family was harassed in early morning commotion where police personnel barged into his house, including his and his daughter's bedrooms. The cops eventually seized his personal computer, hard disc along with the flash drives – all containing significant files of his work life."

A police team also visited CPI (M) leader Sitaram Yechury's residence in connection with the case. "They came to my house early morning since the son of one of my employees works with NewsClick. They took his phone and electronic devices. He works as a graphic designer there," Yechury told reporters.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, October 4, 2023. 

## The Radical Humanist Rates of Advertisement/Insertion

Journal size: 18cmx 24 cm- Print area: 15cmx20cm

	Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special
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For One year				
<b>Second Back cover</b>	Rs.2,500	Rs.3,000	<b>2nd Back Cover</b>	Rs.20,000
<b>Third Back Cover</b>	Rs.2,500	Rs.3,000	<b>3rd Back Cover</b>	Rs.20,000
<b>Last Cover</b>	Rs.3,000	Rs.3,500	<b>Last Cover</b>	Rs.20,500
<b>Ordinary page:</b>				
<b>Full page</b>	Rs.2,000	Rs.2,500	<b>Full page</b>	Rs.15,500
<b>Half page</b>	Rs.1,500	Rs.1,500	<b>Half Page</b>	Rs.10,500
<b>Quarter page</b>	Rs. 600	Rs. 900	<b>Quarter page:</b>	Rs. 6000

# India 🇮🇳 China 🇨🇳 Relations & Links:

M.G. Devasahayam

Outlook

OUTLOOK MAGAZINE BUSINESS MONEY TRAVEL STARTUP RETIREMENT PLANET OTHERS



Visits: 5

Xi Jinping Meetings: 18 Times

Chinese Exports to India 2014: USD 54.2 Bn \$

Indian Exports to China 2014: USD 16.4 Bn \$

Trade Deficit with China 2014: USD 37.8 Bn \$

Chinese Exports to India 2022: USD 118.5 Bn \$ (118% Jump)

Indian Exports to China 2022: USD 17.48 Bn \$

Trade Deficit with China 2014: USD 100 Bn \$ (164% Jump)

Chinese Companies Donation to PM Care Fund: (Doesn't come under RTI & not audited by CAG)

TikTok - 30 Crore, Xiaomi - 10 Crore, Huawei - 7 Crore, OnePlus - 1 Crore, Oppo - 1 Crore

Adani 💰 & China 🇨🇳 Connection:

Chang Chung-Ling - Director Gudami International

Gudami - One of the three Singaporean firms suspected to have been involved in the AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter scam.

Gudami - Monterosa Investment Holdings total holdings USD 4.5 Bn \$

Chang Chung-Ling - Same address as Vinod Adani (Brother)

Growmore Trade and Investment - Profit USD \$ 423 Mn

Claims - India has lost access to 26 out of 65 Patrolling Points (PP) in eastern Ladakh, according to one of the research papers submitted at last week's annual police meet in

Delhi in Jan'2023. Out of 65 PPs, our presence is lost in 26 PPs (i.e. PP no. 5-17, 24-32, 37, 51,52,62) due to restrictive or no patrolling by the ISFs.

While our Prime Leader refutes any such intrusion - Today Indian Journalists get arrested / mobiles & laptops confiscated on account of being associated with NewsClick which with the help of Chinese funding is trying to destabilise India.

If that be the case:

A. Why are we year on year deepening our trade ties with a nation which is destabilising India?

B. Why isn't China being named openly for such brazen act like destabilising the nation?

C. Why isn't Adani being raided who have

very close links with China?

D. Why were funds accepted in PM Care funds knowing that the nation is trying to create un-rest in India?

While it's the easiest task to raid or harass

& pester Independent Journalist who are critical of the dispensation, but it also goes on to prove the kind of state we as a Nation are in....How Independent Voices are being muzzled!!!

For sane people to give it a deep thought!!!

**Note:**

The subject Chinese with Adani link is, apparently, a Taiwanese citizen. Not from the PRC. But, in any case, India has deep, and deepening, trade engagement with China.

Donations for the opaque PMCare Fund were obtained from a number of Chinese firms. In case of NewsClick, it has stoutly denied receiving any whatever funds from China.

Even the allegation is, understandably, that it has received funds from some American entities patronised by an American based in China!

**Sukla Sen** 

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## ‘Modi Govt May Say Mother of Democracy, But Is Turning India Into a Graveyard of Democracy’

*It is wrong to compare this repression to the Emergency in 1975, historian Gyan Prakash said. This is accompanied by spreading poison in society and an attempt to remake India in the shadow of a cult.*

**The NewsClick office was sealed by the Delhi Police on Tuesday.**  
Photo: Special arrangement



**New Delhi:** Professor Gyan Prakash, historian and Dayton-Stockton Professor of History at Princeton University, has a rich body of work on modern South Asian history, colonialism, post-colonial theory, urban history, global history and history of science.

His 2018 book, *The Emergency Chronicles, Indira Gandhi and Democracy’s Turning Point*, is a very well-regarded scholarly work on the national Emergency imposed by the then

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, when Prabir Purkayastha, then a student at Jawaharlal Nehru University, was kidnapped by the Delhi police and went on to serve a long jail sentence.



**Seema Chishti**

Prakash tracks his example as a metaphor for the abuse of power.

His being apprehended in 2023 under charges of terrorism under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is a different kettle of fish, Prakash told *The Wire*. In 1974, what India saw was “a lawful suspension of the law”. This, he says, is completely different.

He disagrees with people comparing this to what happened in 1975. “Indira Gandhi had the Youth Congress. They were nothing.” This, he says, reeks of “totalitarianism” and a desire to remake India in a different mould.

Two things are at work here, according to Prakash.

First, a threat-perception that the Modi-led government senses that despite the popular vote in two consecutive elections, that something is remiss and the control “is not complete”. The result then, “is to control every person who thinks.” If you show signs of “thinking, being able to change your mind” having ideas and a vision different from the ruling party’s and leaders, you will be throttled and proscribed.

The second aspect which is more serious and also different from the Emergency is “to achieve total domination of the person by killing the juridical person in a human being or in a citizen. And you do that by creating a system of law, outside the normal penal system. So you don’t file an FIR through the normal procedural system. You charge him through the UAPA, which creates a completely different circle around this person. I am not being hyperbolic but this is comparable to the way in which the

concentration camp functions. The concentration camp was outside the normal penal system. People who went there, had no right! They were outside any kind of juridical system, any protection of law and so, you know, you create a criminal, you create a terrorist by completely killing all the juridical protection a citizen has, or a human being has in a system of law.”

Therefore, Prakash fears for Purkayastha: “I am so sorry he is having to go through this again.” But he fears much more for India and what the abandonment of democratic norms means for India. “This is not about citing democratic values and holding them to account.” Regimes like this have a different way of functioning.

Prakash referred to a seminar on democracy he attended with colleagues last week where scholars from Poland and Hungary (in deep democratic backslide, like India) shared experiences of how the belief was in one leader and whatever he said was the truth. Prakash pointed out to ex-US President, Donald Trump’s supporters too, suspending judgement as they believed in their “one leader.”

How will it all end? Answering that, Prakash said what is most important is what happens “the day after”. On the day when such regimes are defeated “and I hope they will be, when India trumps the BJP in 2024.” But the next day, the laws and the tools of authoritarianism they leave behind, are hard to deactivate. Also, in this case, he said, “the poison they have spread in society” would need to be dealt with, that is a very major concern.

Courtesy *The Wire*, 4 October 2023. 

## 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

# INDIA alliance hasn't boycotted journalism. It has only refused to dance with the jokers

*'Journalism' that has caused riots, lynching, and hatred must be called out. In the next step, name and shame those who write pay cheques for these hate-mongers.*

**Yogendra Yadav**

What can I teach Shekhar Gupta, Rajdeep Sardesai, Karan Thapar, and Ruben Banerjee about journalism? Nothing. These are some of the well-respected journalists in the country. Each one has his quota of critics. But even the critics take their journalism seriously. So, when all of them take the same position on something concerning the media industry, I would normally defer to their judgment. But when they invoke larger principles of politics and ethics, I am tempted to examine their claims.

All of them, and many others, opposed the INDIA coalition's announcement to boycott 14 TV anchors. The Indian Express wrote an eloquent editorial, asking the 28-party opposition alliance to "Withdraw the List". Their position merits careful consideration, if only because these are by no means lackeys of the current regime or apologists for these anchors in question. They have cared to offer reasons without endorsing the "journalism" of these 14 anchors. Their opposing stance contrasts with the non-arguments offered by some of the toady journalists, including the cringe-worthy statement issued by the News Broadcasters and Digital Association that compared the opposition's boycott to the Emergency days!

For the time being, the dust has settled on this debate. Many other journalists like Ravish Kumar have offered powerful critiques of this position. For the record, the INDIA coalition has clarified that it is not a permanent boycott but a conditional non-cooperation. It's time to disentangle and examine these arguments, for some of these have long-term implications.

Critics of the boycott have offered three

kinds of arguments. First, intrinsic moral argument: there is something inherently wrong in the act of public boycott of select anchors. Second, consequential argument: this may set in motion a chain of actions that would produce more bad than good. And third, strategic argument: this is not the smartest way to deal with the media.

## An invalid moral indictment

The essence of the first argument is that a public boycott goes against the spirit of liberalism and democracy that the opposition invokes. The Indian Express comes down heavily on the opposition on this ground: "All its righteous rhetoric about not wanting to legitimise peddling of hate, all its high-minded claims about setting up a window of love in the bazaar of hate, and...restoring the nation's damaged 'secular and democratic' credentials cannot mask the intolerance that lies at this decision's core". Calling it politics of "gag and dog-whistle", the Express castigates the decision that "forecloses the possibilities of dialogue and debate". ThePrint's Shekhar Gupta echoes some of these sentiments.

On close examination, this moral indictment turns out to be a misapplication of freedom of expression arguments. It would be a strange position that a liberal must not boycott or call for boycott of anything: bigotry, hatred, or genocide. Even British philosopher John Stuart Mill, the ultimate defender of free speech, including the right to falsehood and offence, would not have called a voluntary boycott an attack on free speech. There is a difference between sealing one's lips and gagging someone

else, between preventing others from speaking and not cooperating with their speech. Also, there is a crucial difference between acts of those who wield coercive power and those who don't. The indictment would hold, if INDIA coalition parties wielded State power to order these anchors to be taken off the air. Or if it had organised attacks on these individuals or their offices. There could be a milder disapproval if the opposition had decided to prevent some journalists from gathering news in their public functions. But that is not the case.

In sum: the opposition is well within its legal, political, and moral right to refuse to join a blatantly partisan circus and dance with the jokers. In fact, it is every citizen's duty not to join hate-mongering. Boycott is a perfectly valid moral response to certain kinds of situations. Let us not forget that Mahatma Gandhi had called for a boycott, exactly in this context, against newspapers that spread communal hatred. A moral act of boycott must be extremely careful about identification of its targets. And it must also be open and transparent.

There is only one real issue here: does the act under consideration merit such a boycott? Or is the reaction disproportionate to the action? In this instance, there is no argument on this count. Let me again quote The Indian Express on these "TV anchors with hateful tongues, on bended knees": "many on the list practice, or are incentivized to practice, an upside-down journalism which seeks to flatter the government and discredit the opposition, almost by rote... whipping up hate hour by hour." I suspect Shekhar Gupta may not disagree with this assessment, though he hides behind euphemisms to avoid calling these anchors out. If this assessment is correct, there does not seem to be an intrinsic moral argument against a boycott. Yes, the critics are well within their right to call out attacks or restrictions on media by state governments led by opposition parties. But that

does not impinge on this decision.

#### **Against 'journalism' that causes riots**

The second argument is articulated most forcefully by Shekhar Gupta. As per his reasoning, public naming of a list of journalists is morally wrong, as it can have multiple consequences. One, it can set a bad precedent, with the other side hitting back with its own list, which can set off a chain reaction. Two, it makes those journalists into targets of possible attacks. Three, it polarises the media by reducing the space for dialogue and debate.

The argument about setting a bad precedent is simply false. The BJP had already set a precedent by boycotting an entire channel, NDTV, when it was independent. Until recently, the BJP boycotted all the Tamil news channels. Shekhar Gupta's advice, "Never knowingly set a bad precedent", should have been directed elsewhere.

Naming and shaming is a moral weapon that should be used very sparingly and with utmost responsibility. But it cannot be anyone's case that naming and shaming is wrong in all instances; collective norms are maintained by this practice. Clearly, the bigotry and hate perpetrated by some anchors and channels today fall in that extreme category. This variety of "journalism" has already caused riots, mob lynching, and mutual hatred. These wrong-doers must be called out, in public. In fact, we should be prepared to take the next step: name and shame those who write pay-checks for these hate-mongers.

The anxiety about polarisation is true. But the critique misses a simple point: India's media is already unipolar. A non-partisan media would be ideal, but a bipolar universe is better than a unipolar world. The idea of a dialogue with Republic TV's Arnab Goswami may look like a joke today, but this ideal should not be given up. The chances of reaching there are higher via bipolarity than through the present unipolarity.

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

# Simultaneous polls will weaken the only check on Indian politicians: Elections

**Shoaib Daniyal**

Along with the Uniform Civil Code, simultaneous elections have been one of the Modi government's pet potential policies. In the past decade, the government has pushed the idea multiple times in the media, leading to much debate and discussion. In September, the Modi government notified the constitution of a High Level Committee to "examine the issue of simultaneous elections and make recommendations for holding simultaneous elections in the country".

The notification for the creation of the committee identifies three reasons to push for simultaneous elections: "massive expenditure", "diversion of security forces and other electoral officers" and "disruption in developmental work on account of prolonged application of Model Code of Conduct".

All three reasons were thoroughly debunked in an article by former election commissioner Ashok Lavasa. To summarise, the money spent on elections is actually quite modest, election duty is part of the core job of the security forces, and there is, at worst, minor disruption in development work due to the model code of conduct.

## Real reason

To be fair to the competence of the Modi government, these arguments for simultaneous elections are so thin, it is unlikely anyone in the BJP truly believes them. Instead, the main driver for the saffron party is that most observers think linking state elections to parliamentary polls will end up helping the BJP. Indeed, there is a significant amount of data for this proposition. The BJP, for example, does much better in national elections than it does in state ones.

Moreover, there are direct studies that show

that voters end up voting for the same party when polls are held together. A study by the public-policy think tank IDFC Institute showed that "on average, there is a 77% chance that the Indian voter will vote for the same party for both the state and Centre when elections are held simultaneously".

Another study by Jagdeep Chhokar, a former professor, dean, and director in-charge of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and Sanjay Kumar, director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi also found similar results: "In 24 of those elections the major political parties polled almost a similar proportion of votes both for the Assembly and the Lok Sabha, while only in seven instances was the choice of voters somewhat different."

Simultaneous elections would, therefore, end up weakening federalism by favouring the ruling party in Delhi. Worse, since many of the proposals for implementing it involve curtailing the power of state assemblies, it would directly hit democracy at the federal level in India. This is serious in any polity but in the Indian Union, where states are the size of major countries and handle most of the heavy lifting of governance, this would be disastrous.

## Feature not a flaw

However, what is probably the strongest argument that proponents of simultaneous elections put forward is something that did not make it to the text of the notification: the idea that elections somehow distort governance since politicians start to run after short-term votes rather than long-term goals.

"Electoral compulsions change the focus of policy making," Kishore Desai, former Officer on Special Duty, Niti Aayog and co-author of a

paper pushing simultaneous elections wrote. “‘Short-sighted’, ‘populist’ and ‘politically safe’ measures are accorded higher priority over ‘difficult’ structural reforms which may be more beneficial to the public from a longer-term perspective.”

This thinking has wide support especially among Indian elites, who decry the democratic process of vote gathering often using pejoratives such as “vote banks”.

From an elite perspective, this makes sense. While Indian elites are significant beneficiaries of state largess – think, for example, the many pro-car policies most Indian cities have in spite of the fact that only a small minority own personal vehicles – these are not wrangled out using the method of the vote. Elites instead use tools such as media pressure and benefit from the banal fact that most bureaucrats who make and implement policy are elites themselves and thus see the world similarly.

### **Vote as a check**

However, for an ordinary Indian, her vote is critical to getting the state to listen to her. In fact, in many cases, it is the *only* tool she has to get the state to listen to her. For example, at the end of 2021, the Modi government reduced fuel taxes and extended the distribution of free rations. The reason? It wanted to impress voters before the critical Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

Examples such as this are common and are sometimes used to attack politicians for pandering to votes. This of course misses the entire point of a government that is elected: so-called pandering to voters is a core design of an electoral democracy – not a flaw.

Simultaneous elections will weaken this link between voters and the state. In the previous example, if there were no Uttar Pradesh elections in 2022, the Modi government would not have been pressured to address the economic concerns of ordinary Indians.

This electoral pressure assumes even greater

import in a polity like India where the executive, especially at the Centre, is incredibly strong and faces few checks. In theory, most modern democratic systems are based on a system of checks and balances where different arms of government restrict each other and reduce the probability of authoritarian action.

India, in this, is hamstrung by having a parliamentary system, where the legislature and executive are fused, meaning the legislature often has little incentive to check a cabinet it has itself elected. Even worse, India has further weakened this check by putting in place an anti-defection law which forces MPs and MLAs to vote as per their party’s direction. For example, if a motion of no confidence were to be moved against the Modi government today, Modi will himself control more than half of the votes in the Lok Sabha. It’s a bit like if the batsman on strike was also captain of the bowling team.

Even worse, much the same is the case with the judiciary. Unlike the legislature, in theory the Indian judiciary has vast powers to check the executive. However, past history shows that it rarely applies them at times of greatest need. The worst excesses of the Emergency, for example, were hurriedly rubber stamped by the courts.

In fact, the only thing that *actually* checked Indira Gandhi were – you guessed it – elections. In 1977, the Congress party was handed a massive defeat by the Indian electorate. Since then, it is highly unlikely that any government would use the device of an Emergency, even if it is legally still part of the Constitution.

A similar situation exists now, where the Modi government is unchecked by the courts even on highly controversial decisions such as electoral bonds or civil rights in Kashmir. The only functioning check on Modi remains elections, especially at the state level, where the BJP has often faced defeat from strong state-based parties.

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

# Why India won't see women's reservation in effect until 2039—it's about trickery

*Women's reservation bill is less than precise, sub-optimal, and uncertain. But the history of such reforms tells us something: once enacted, it cannot be rolled back.*

**Yogendra Yadav**

Something is better than nothing, I told myself, trying to balance mixed emotions at the passage of the women's reservation bill – officially, the 128th Amendment to the Constitution. But it was hard to say what exactly was that "something". I slipped into "wo intezar tha jiska, ye wo sahar to nahin". But that was too gloomy. Finally, I fell back on my matrabhasha: "bhaagte bhoot ki langoti hi sahi". How do you translate that into English!

This was a farcical way of enacting one of the most far-reaching democratic reforms in post-Independent India. Thirteen years of silence followed by an inexplicable mad rush to pass the Bill with no time to correct obvious drafting errors. Avoidable mystery over the agenda of the parliamentary session. The last minute delimitation twist in the tale. Lifeless debate with speakers lining up to recall what their party or leader had done for women. The law minister fumbling and failing – and the home minister imperiously refusing – to respond to the issues raised by the opposition. Secrecy wrapped as transparency. Gestures of magnanimity covered with heaps of pettiness.

Every historic event carries a farcical taint. This one was drenched in bad faith, disingenuity, and hypocrisy.

For the deep patriarchy that rules Indian politics, the name of the game was exactly what it has been for the past 27 years: how not to give up my seat while promising to do so. The rules of this game have also not changed during this period. It's all about expression of intent and not about assessment of the design. Neither the foes nor the friends of the women's

reservation bill have cared to think through the political consequences of the institutional design that they advocate to achieve greater representation for women. No wonder, what we finally have is a clumsy design that fails to answer basic questions about what it achieves for women's reservation: What exactly has been instituted? How would this be achieved? And when?

## Trickery, absurdity, uncertainty

In a sense we all know what has been guaranteed: one-third seats for women in Parliament and state assemblies. But BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab pointed out a critical ambiguity even on this score in this hastily drafted Amendment. Unlike the earlier version, the final Bill simply says that one-thirds "of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election to the House of the People shall be reserved for women". It does not specify that one-third quota shall be calculated for each state. So, presumably, one-half of Lok Sabha seats can be reserved for women in one state, while another state may not have any. Faced with this absurdity, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal was flummoxed. Home Minister Amit Shah just brushed it aside, saying the Delimitation Commission will resolve such issues.

The current Bill also fails to address a critical issue about the impact of women's reservation on representation of OBCs. There is no doubt that additional women who get elected from general women's seats thanks to this Act will be disproportionately upper caste. That would reduce the already low political representation

of OBCs, especially the lowest communities within OBC. This was a missed opportunity for attending to caste justice along with gender justice.

The Bill is unclear about how one-third reservation shall be achieved. This is not new. Inattention to the mechanism for achieving the stated objectives has marked the women's reservation bill debate right from the beginning. Just as caste-based reservation has become the only tool for social justice, geographical reservation has become our reflex demand for gender parity in politics. For well over a quarter century, the advocates of women's reservation bill have not responded to well-known objections to the mechanism of territorial reservations. If the constituencies reserved for women are not regularly rotated, it's very unfair and arbitrary. If there is a rotation, it would mean that two-third of the elected representatives (one-third women, and one-third men whose seats will be up for rotation in next election) will be free of accountability to their electorate knowing they won't be renominated, unless elected candidates belong to a political family that can be held accountable.

There are alternative mechanisms, but these were not taken seriously. One option was to make it mandatory for recognised political parties to give one-third tickets to women in each state. This was not an instant guarantee of one-third women among the elected representatives, but this was better suited to develop independent women's leadership. I had advocated it (with Jayaprakash Narayan of Loksatta Party and commentator Madhu Purnima Kishwar of Manushi journal), but we found no takers. Then I thought of what I still consider to be a much smarter design: a simple elect-one-get-one-free scheme. Every party will be able to nominate additional women legislators in the same proportion as the ones that got elected on their ticket, until the number of women legislators reaches 33 percent. (This

might look silly, but just think about its political implications and you would know why it would work better than anything else). But this was ever more difficult to communicate. So, reservations of seats may be a sub-optimal method, but that's the only template we understand. So be it.

The final version does not do justice to even this available template. The version passed by Rajya Sabha in 2010 provided for geographical reservation with a neat mechanism for regular rotation. It said that parliament would enact a law to finalise the details. The seats to be reserved in the first round could be decided, presumably, by a simple lottery. The current version, passed by both Houses of Parliament, says nothing about how the reserved seats will be decided. On the one hand, it limits women's reservation to 15 years. On the other hand, it stipulates that rotation shall take place only after each delimitation, which happens these days only once in 20 to 30 years. So, there would be rotation, but actually no rotation!

Finally, the big trick on the issue of when women's reservation might kick in. Clearly, there was no legal or logical necessity of linking this to the next census or to the next delimitation. The home minister's justification, that Delimitation Commission was brought to ensure transparency, makes too much of demands on one's credulity. It is also clear that only a miracle can ensure its implementation by 2029. Even if the next government carries out the census at the earliest, in February 2025, it would still face a constitutional hurdle of Article 82 that won't permit next delimitation until the "figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published". That would mean the 2031 census. Its final figures cannot possibly come before 2032. And the Delimitation Commission cannot take less than two years (last time it took five and a half years). Then all the electoral rolls need to be revised before the next election. So, realistically speaking, unless we have some

extraordinary constitutional device, we are looking at 2039 as the year of implementation.

Let's see this provision for what it is. The absurd precondition of the census and delimitation fits into a design. This is the political equivalent of a future deal in business. Women's reservation is a deal to redeem the pledge of one-third seats for women at an unspecified time in future. The male leaders that make the pledge get the credit and the assurance that this Bill won't affect their personal political interests in the foreseeable future while those who come later take the consequences. The deal reminds us that notwithstanding all the parliamentary rhetoric, this was a necessary condition for the patriarchy to loosen its stranglehold over political power.

#### **A cause for celebration**

Yet, we must not allow this sordid context to make us forget that something significant has been achieved. The fact is that women have been seriously under-represented in Parliament and assemblies, not merely compared to their share in population, but also compared to the rest of the world, including some of our neighbours. The fact is that while there has been a tiny improvement (especially after the debate on the women's reservation bill began), there is no way women's share in Parliament or assemblies would have reached one-third even by 2039. A legal-constitutional binding mandate was required. And we have one now. It is less than precise, sub-optimal, and uncertain. But the history of such reforms tells us something: once enacted, it cannot be rolled back. It can only be fine tuned and strengthened.

That is a cause for celebration. Not because more women MPs and MLAs would necessarily change the fate of Indian women. Nor because we should naively expect women political leaders to be free of the vices of today's politics. Women's presence in positions

of political power should be celebrated because a critical mass of women representatives would make it very hard to enact anti-women policies and bring greater attention to real issues of food, health, and education. It should be celebrated because making space for women would open up the talent pool for the country's leadership. It should be celebrated even if it does not achieve any of the above, but simply because it acknowledges that the other half exists, that it has a voice and that its voice must be heard.

Courtesy **The Print**, 22 Sept 2023. 

**Contd. from page - (24 )**

## **INDIA alliance hasn't boycotted journalism...**

#### **Boycotting to delegitimise hate**

Finally, the strategic critique argued by Karan Thapar. He thinks that it is a blunder to make this list public. A quiet boycott would have been more effective. There are two problems with this position.

One, if this boycott is a moral act – a *satyagraha* as INDIA insists – there is no room for doublespeak or secrecy here. A moral act should be transparent and offer reasons in public. Two, the whole point of this boycott is to delegitimise these anchors in the eyes of the public. A debate without opposition does offer a signal to the viewer, but a public list and rationale is necessary to complete the message.

Besides, INDIA is not BJP; they need a loud declaration to ensure that their own partners and well-wishers implement the call effectively. We do not know yet if the boycott would reduce the TRP of these shows, but it has already brought public attention to the sordid state of affairs in the news television in India. That's a good start.

Courtesy **The Print**, 2 Oct 2023. 

# Does Ideology Determine Politics in India?

Sugata Srinivasaraju

The vocabulary of our political discourse has been limited for a pretty long time. Even if we think that it has expanded at times, we soon realize that they only emphasize aspects of what we are already familiar with. To check how quickly or how slowly political language changes, or stubbornly anchors itself, and what indications it holds, would make for a fascinating study.

Of all the words that surround us politically and culturally, the one that has found new wings and new contexts in the last decade is the word 'ideology'. The word has been used variously and vaguely to mean 'doctrine', 'principle' and also a bunch of loosely defined ideas. To debate fidelity or infidelity, rigidity or flexibility of a political party and a leader to one or the other ideology has been an obsessive political pastime.

In the characterization or labelling exercise of the last decade, we no longer ask if somebody is a 'hardliner' or a 'soft-liner', 'true secular' or 'pseudo-secular' – a popular ideological distinction employed during the times of Vajpayee and Advani to accommodate the shades of grey. We only speak in terms of two extremes.

The word 'secular' as a standalone, of course has marched on to pick up a more radical shade. As long as communism had its sway in our polity, 'secular' was an indistinct yet cozy middle term, but with the decline of communism and socialism, the secular has occupied the far end in the Indian context. Rahul Gandhi and the Congress under him have adopted this radical sense of a rather unstirring term.

The greys don't seem to exist anymore, one can only be at the polar ends of the ideological spectrum. The middle or the moderates seem to have disappeared or have lost legitimacy. If brute majority commands one end, it is formulaic or ritual negation that fills up the opposition space. The word 'polarization' captures this intransigence well.

It is this polarization that sanctifies a certain kind of abusive and violent language. Social media platforms that thrive on the polarization business model encourage them as well. The absence of the middle ground becomes apparent every time there is a parliament session.

The parliament becomes a picture of an epic clash each time it assembles, and a notional violence takes over.

In the recent parliament special session, the exchange between Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parliamentarian Ramesh Bidhuri and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Danish Ali was exactly about this violent takeover. It was referred to as 'verbal lynching' in many quarters.

Even as positions have become strident, the deployment of the word 'ideology' continues to be perplexing. Even as this piece is being written the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has announced that it is exiting from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP. The reason that they have cited is that the party's ideological moorings and ideologues have been persistently attacked by the local BJP leadership. But nobody seems to ask if the Dravidian ideological position of the AIADMK could have ever allowed an alliance with the BJP in the first place. This question applies to their political opponent and ideological brother, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) too, who have been in alliance with the NDA in the past.

Now, among the two Dravidian parties who has greater ideological fidelity, and who is the bigger ideological infidel? Since both of them have severed their links with the BJP do both become secular? Does the AIADMK also technically become eligible to be courted by the Congress and the I.N.D.I.A grouping? Will the DMK allow such a courting? Or, will they say that the AIADMK has been infidel recently and we were infidel a long time ago and therefore with memory

as a measure we are more secular than them?

Rahul Gandhi in the recent past has embraced the federal model of India and has had a good word for Tamil Nadu's federal politics and the ideological counter it offers to the BJP.

He has insisted that 'India is a union of states' and not one flat nation that it is being made out to be. With the AIADMK's exit from the NDA, technically speaking, they now occupy the same ideological spectrum as the DMK. So, will the Congress have to rationally express its Dravidian preference as it goes forward? All this demonstrates that there is a certain pragmatism that decides politics in India and not exactly the ideological question.

There is also the case of the Janata Dal (Secular) or JD(S), which has joined the NDA, and the Janata Dal (United), which has swung in and out of the NDA. There is a sarcastic suggestion in Karnataka that JD (S) should drop the 'secular' classification from its name. This is something they had put in place to distinguish themselves when the Janata Dal split in 1999 and the Nitish Kumar-JH Patel faction went with NDA. A lot of ideological water has flown under the bridge after this split-moment in the Janata Dal, but who has shown more ideological fidelity – HD Deve Gowda or Nitish Kumar? These questions get answered with the expediency and pragmatism of the present. There is a certain relativism to it. The ideological cycle too has seasons when today's communal entity can become tomorrow's secular and vice-versa.

Nearly all regional parties across India, including the National Conference in a Muslim-dominated Kashmir, have followed this cycle in a small and big measure or in formal and informal ways. By any measure, then, all regional parties should be abandoned by the two national parties for their ideological infidelity.

The Cauvery water-sharing dispute is raging between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. In this context does ideology enable BJP and the Congress to support either of the states. Even if

one is in awe of a federal structure, whose federal rights will the Congress and BJP support?

Interestingly, in Karnataka, Deve Gowda as former prime minister has taken the lead to fight the Cauvery battle, and the Congress has welcomed it. The Cauvery conundrum, like many other day-to-day issues, are completely delinked from the ideological question.

Also, recently, Sharad Pawar was seen with Gautam Adani, whom Rahul Gandhi has tried to present as a crony capitalist emblem in cahoots with Narendra Modi. The secular and the larger ideological questions here appear to be independent of money equations.

All this can be dismissed in moral terms as being hypocritical and politically opportunistic, but in reality, no Indian political party, except for the communists and the Sarvarkarites, at polar ends have accepted the rigidity of ideology. The doctrinaire rigidity of the communists was visible during the no-confidence debate in 2008 when the nuclear pact with America became an ideologically defining moment. But today, the communists appear as ideological fellow travelers of the Congress.

Even with the other I.N.D.I.A. ally from Maharashtra – Uddhav Thackarey's Shiv Sena, the Congress has to wait till January to find out again what their views on the Ram temple in Ayodhya is or how they have been currently feeling about the 'Sanatana Dharma' controversy. The Congress has always appeared split in the middle when it came to the Hindu religion. Once has to pay attention to the poll campaigns in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to understand this.

During the special session, the Congress raised the issue of dropping 'secular' and 'socialist' in the preamble of the Constitution. But interestingly, the Congress itself had dropped the socialist agenda after 1991, and after 2004 embraced a certain welfarist replacement to go with market economics. On many such issues the question of ideological steadfastness does not

hold any water in the Indian political context. When it comes to the socialist agenda, it may be prickly for the Congress to outrightly welcome the ideas of people like Ram Manohar Lohia, Madhu Limaye, Raj Narain and George Fernandes.

In the meanwhile, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological fountainhead of the BJP, has repeated in the last few years that RSS is the most 'inclusive' and 'secular' organization. The RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, repeated this on 25 September too when he said in Lucknow: "We are a Sarva-Lokayut Bharat." To invade the opponent's ideological space and appropriate its terminology is a clever cultural strategy that the RSS has always employed.

What is often played out in India is a pragmatic political game to approach the corridors of power than anything ideological. No party is free of this charge of pragmatism. The ideological musical chairs will never stop because survival for political parties is not

dependent on ideological unity or purity but pragmatism. What has perhaps mattered more in Indian politics than ideology or plain democratic ideas is the identity question – that means the caste and ethnicity game.

Courtesy **The Times of India**, 27 September 2023. 

**Contd. from page - (26 )**

## **Simultaneous polls will weaken the only ....**

By reducing the number of elections and especially by undercutting the very idea of a state election, by merging it with national polls, India will end up significantly weakening its only functioning check on the Union executive. It will thus be a highly undemocratic exercise that curtails the rights of Indians to hold the state to account.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 2 October 2023. 

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# ‘If Modi comes back in 2024, India will be...’

Archana Masih

*‘...a more capable State —*

*one that operates with greater capacity, greater efficiency, and greater clarity of purpose.’*

*‘But I also see a more despotic State —*

*one that places more constraints on speech, assembly, dissent, and critique.’*

*‘It may run ‘better’, but on the regime’s rules.’*

“Time is working against the Opposition, not to mention they are at a technological, organisational, and financial disadvantage *vis-a-vis* the BJP,” says Dr **Milan Vaishnav**, Director and Senior Fellow, South Asia Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

“Where the rubber meets the road is in critical states where one party or another will have to make real concessions: Will the AAP and Congress call a truce in Punjab? Will the Left be willing to work with Mamata in Bengal?”, Dr Vaishnav tells **Rediff.com**’s **Archana Masih** in the concluding part of a must-read interview.

## How is India going to change further if Mr Modi gets a third term?

History is rarely linear so projections can be dangerous. But I foresee a more capable State — one that operates with greater capacity, greater efficiency, and greater clarity of purpose.

I see a much more developed and robust welfare system where citizens have greater access to basic amenities like sanitation, water, electricity, and clean cooking fuel.

But I also see a more despotic State — one that places more constraints on speech, assembly, dissent, and critique. It may run ‘better’, but on the regime’s rules.

I also fear that India’s attachment to a certain form of pluralism may be getting lost. Some commentators like to say that the BJP wants a more pro-Hindu India, but not necessarily one that is, say, anti-Muslim.

In many domains, the latter is the flipside of the former.

## Do you see the possibility of a Jagjivan

**Ram/Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna** sort of faction happening in the BJP where old timers break away from the parent party before the next election because they fear marginalisation should Mr Modi win a third term or because they cannot co-exist with the Modi-Shah way of doing politics?

I don’t think so. At this point, the Modi-Shah domination of the party is complete. I think any would-be breakaways will have a hard time getting out of the starting gate.

The incumbent has the benefit of mass popularity, a well-oiled machine, and the privileges of incumbency, which make the ED, CBI, and IT authorities very helpful tools for keeping dissenters in check.

There could be factional disputes, but I don’t sense they will be fatal.

## Can the INDIA alliance throw a credible challenge to the BJP?

I think the jury is still out, to be honest. INDIA on paper looks like a formidable alliance, but it has three core deficiencies — the same ones that have plagued the Congress the last two general election cycles.

It has no clear leader, no clear message, and no clear organisation.

Of course, INDIA’s leaders are trying to work on all fronts, especially the latter two. But it is not easy to find consensus on policy much less to ensure that erstwhile political rivals will start working hand-in-hand with one another.

So, time is working against the Opposition, not to mention they are at a technological, organisational, and financial disadvantage *vis-a-*



vis the BJP.

Where the rubber meets the road is in critical states where one party or another will have to make real concessions: Will the AAP and Congress call a truce in Punjab? Will the Left be willing to work with Mamata in Bengal?

These are the tough questions we don't have answers to.

**Apart from the usual names, who are the leaders who will make a difference or provoke tremors at the next General Elections?**

There are rumours that the Congress will push to make Mallikarjun Kharge, the current party president, the face of the Opposition alliance.

I don't know whether other parties will go along with that, but a Dalit from Karnataka who is a machine politician will go a lot farther than Rahul Gandhi will in terms of winning backers.

Kharge is not a politician who is always front-and-centre, but I would not discount him.

I think you must look very carefully at Arvind Kejriwal, not necessarily as a prime ministerial candidate, but because how AAP behaves in Delhi and Punjab, in particular, will be instructive.

Will they seek compromise or take a more 'no holds barred' approach *vis-a-vis* the Congress and other coalition partners?

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



IMAGE: Kharge, Ashok Gehlot, Rahul in Jaipur, September 23, 2023. Photograph: ANI Photo

Kashmir Report:

# In counting tourists, is Jammu and Kashmir taking a leap of faith?

*Before 2019, pilgrims and tourists were categorised separately. That has changed.*



Tourists at Dal Lake in Srinagar. |  
Naresh Fernandes

Earlier this month, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha predicted that the number of tourists arriving to the Union territory this year would create new records.

“There is a 350% rise in tourist footfall compared to last year,” Sinha said at a tourism festival in the border district of Kupwara. He said that 1.58 crore tourists have already visited Jammu and Kashmir. “This year, the number of tourists is expected to cross 2.25 crore, a record figure.” He credited the successful G20 summit meeting held in Srinagar in May for drawing more tourists to the region.

Given the history of conflict, shutdowns and mass public protests in the Union territory, particularly Kashmir valley, the number of tourist arrivals has been often seen as an index of peace in the region.

When Jammu and Kashmir was a state, almost every government at the state and the Centre equated higher numbers of tourists in

**Safwat Zargar**

the valley with “normalcy”.

Since August 5, 2019, the day when Jammu and Kashmir’s special status and statehood was scrapped, New Delhi has laid a massive thrust on attracting more and more tourists to the region.

In the recent hearings challenging the abrogation of Article 370 in the Supreme Court, for example, the government of India said the move was justified by the progress in the territory, including the surge in tourists.

According to the Union territory administration, the number of tourists in Jammu and Kashmir was 1.88 crore in 2022, a number that broke all previous records.

While an improving law and order situation has coincided with more visitors to the Union territory, a closer look at the figures throws up counter-intuitive insights.

For one, the prize draw for tourism in the erstwhile state is Jammu, not Kashmir.

Second, pilgrims to religious shrines drive most of the traffic to Jammu and Kashmir – as was the case before August 5, 2019.

It also raises a question: should Jammu and Kashmir be counting pilgrims as tourists?

Pilgrims head for the Amarnath shrine from Nunwani base camp in Pahalgam. Credit: IANS.

## Tourist attraction: Jammu

With a beautiful landscape, gushing rivers and snow-capped mountains, Kashmir is a tourist destination of global fame.

But despite the improving law and order

situation in the Valley, official tourism figures reveal that the Jammu region attracts many more tourists than Kashmir.

Stone-pelting and pro-freedom protests have ended after August 2019, the widespread crackdown on separatists and what authorities call the “terror ecosystem” has marked an end to frequent shutdowns. Except for targeted civilian killings, particularly of those belonging to minority communities and labourers from other parts of India, the overall security situation in the Valley has considerably improved.

In 2022, which saw a new record of tourists, only 14% visited Kashmir. That number includes the 3.65 lakh pilgrims who visited the cave shrine of Amarnath.

“This is because of the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu where millions of people come every year,” said a former official with the Jammu and Kashmir government’s tourism department, who asked not to be identified.

Pilgrims have to undertake a trek of nearly 12 kilometres to reach the holy cave of Mata Vaishno Devi, which is situated at an altitude of 5,200 feet in Jammu’s Reasi district.

Open for visits throughout the year, this is one of the biggest draws for visitors to Jammu and Kashmir – more than 1 crore pilgrims visit the shrine annually.

In 2022, more than 91 lakh pilgrims visited the shrine. “These numbers are now being included in the total number of tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir annually,” the former tourism department official added.

#### **Pilgrims plus tourists**

In November, Omar Abdullah, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and vice-president of the National Conference party said the Union territory administration’s claims of over 1 crore tourists in Jammu and Kashmir was “juggl[ing] with figures”.

“They suddenly came up with this claim that for the first time since Independence some 1.60 crore tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir,” Abdullah told *Scroll*. “I have also been chief minister and I have also tried to promote tourism. And I was never able to get more than 14-15, maybe 16 lakh, tourists in a year. I was like ‘What the hell did I do wrong?’”

He continued: “...But then, when you start looking at the number, you realise that actually all they have done is reverse a previous decision, which is that we did not count yatris [pilgrims] as tourists.”

Even though governments of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir compiled data of all the visitors to Jammu and Kashmir, pilgrims and tourists were categorised separately. This changed after 2019.

According to an analysis of official data by *Scroll*, the erstwhile state, which then included the Union territory of Ladakh, saw more than 1.25 crore visitors way back in 2012. But 88% of them were pilgrims to the shrines of Amarnath and Mata Vaishno Devi.

Similarly, the former state saw more than 1.09 crore visitor arrivals in 2013, out of which 88% again were pilgrims.

In both cases, the arrivals at Mata Vaishno Devi shrine dominate the inflows. Out of the total 1.25 crore visitors in 2012, 83 % were



A file photograph of pilgrims making their way to the Vaishno Devi temple in Jammu. Credit: Reuters.

pilgrims visiting the shrine. In 2013, 85% were pilgrims headed for the Jammu shrine.

Abdullah had pointed out: "Hardly any yatris actually perform the activity of a tourist."

A tourist's visit to Jammu and Kashmir involves a greater engagement with the local economy. They book multiple hotels, shop for local merchandise and eat at restaurants. Pilgrims, on the other hand, usually stay in the camps put up at shrines and eat in community kitchens.

If pilgrims did book hotels, the Union territory would, perhaps, have run out of rooms – a question raised by Abdullah, who pointed out the difference in the high number of tourists and the region's limited accommodation capacity.

According to Jammu and Kashmir government's latest economic survey, the Union territory has a total room capacity of 58,100 and an aggregate bed capacity of 124,196. This includes accommodation facilities in both the government as well as private sector.

Raja Yaqoob, the director of Tourism Kashmir, declined to comment on the mechanism employed by the Union territory administration to collect the tourist arrival data. He also refused to comment on why the government was publicising the figures that aggregated pilgrims together with tourists.

#### **'Mostly estimates'**

Despite the enthusiasm about tourism, Jammu and Kashmir does not have a scientific method of collecting tourist arrival details, two former tourism department officials and representatives of tourism-industry related bodies told *Scroll*.

The method that has been in place for decades involves posting tourism department officials at Srinagar airport and Banihal, the entry point to Kashmir valley in South Kashmir.

"It's mostly estimates," explained the ex-tourism department official. "They stop a vehicle and ask them from where they have come. Let's say the passengers say they are from Rajasthan;

they just peek into the car and note down the number of passengers or sometimes they just write down a figure based on the carrying capacity of a vehicle. It's just not possible to count everyone,"

The former official said tourism department members "scan through the passengers arriving from each flight and then estimate that this or that much per cent were tourists".

Only foreign tourists arriving in the region have to register themselves. "Domestic tourists don't have to register or fill up any form etc.," the official said.

In comparison, the official added, those coming for pilgrimage are duly registered. "The most authentic tourist arrival data is only about pilgrims as all of them have to get registered and they are allowed only after registration," he added.

A member of the Valley's Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association said the government should invest in creating a systematic method to collect details of tourists arriving in the Union territory. "The estimation model is not accurate," said the member, who said he is not authorised to speak to the media. "Kashmir has a huge presence of defence forces. Then there are non-locals who also come here for business and work. Therefore, not every outsider arriving in Jammu and Kashmir is a tourist."

Accurate data will help the government to draft effective policies for the tourism sector, he added. "There's no doubt that more tourists are coming to Kashmir now," he said.

For instance, the arrival of 26.73 lakh tourists in the Kashmir Valley in 2022 created a new high. The previous record for tourists visiting Kashmir valley occurred in 2016 – with around 13 lakh arrivals. "That's why the focus should be on how to make it more productive for the local economy," said the member of the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, 28.9.2023. 

# Befooling the Litigants

S.N. Shukla

In the case of Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association and Anr. etc.v. Union of India [1993] SUPP2 SCR 659 a 9 judges of the Apex Court held as follows-

“6.1. Article 216 which deals with constitution of High Courts, provides that every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and ‘such other Judges as the President may from time to time deem it necessary to appoint’. To enable proper exercise of this function of appointment of ‘other Judges’, it is necessary to make a periodical review of the Judge strength of every High Court with reference to the felt need for disposal of cases, taking into account the backlog and expected future filing. This is essential to ensure speedy disposal of cases. to ‘secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice’ a directive principle ‘fundamental in the governance of the country’ which, it is the duty of the State to observe in all its action, and to make meaningful the guarantee of fundamental rights in Part III of the Constitution. Accordingly, the failure to perform this obligation, resulting in negation of the rule of law by the laws’ delay must be justiciable to compel performance of duty. [776-C-F],” and

“6.2. Accordingly, fixation of Judge strength in a High Court is justiciable; and if it is shown that the existing strength is inadequate to provide speedy justice to the people - speedy trial being a requirement of Article 21 - in spite of the optimum efficiency of the existing strength, a direction can be issued to assess the felt need and fix the strength of Judges commensurate with the need to fulfil the State obligation of providing speedy justice and to thereby ‘secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice’ a solemn resolve declared also in the Preamble of the Constitution. In making the review of the Judge

strength in a High Court, the President must attach great weight to the opinion of the Chief Justice of that High Court and the Chief Justice of India, and if the Chief Justice of India so recommends, the exercise must be performed with due despatch.” [776-F-H; 777-A]

Again in A P. Rama Chandra Rao v. State of Karnataka [2002] 3 SCR 60 (at page 85) a 7 Judges Bench of the Apex court held as follows-

“4. Union of India and the State Government should fulfil their constitutional obligation to strengthen the judiciary-quantitatively and qualitatively by providing requisite funds, manpower and infrastructure.”

Thereafter, in ANITA KUSHWAHA v. PUSHAP SUDAN [2016] 9 S.C.R. 560 the Constitution Bench held that “The process of adjudication must be speedy: “Access to justice” as a constitutional value will be a mere illusion if justice is not speedy. Justice delayed, it is famously said, is justice denied. If the process of administration of justice is so time consuming, laborious, indolent and frustrating for those who seek justice that it dissuades or deters them from even considering resort to that process as an option, it would tantamount to denial of not only access to justice but justice itself.” (Para 30 )

Encouraged by the statement of the present Chief Justice of India, reported in the Indian Express dated 25.9.2019, that “*I see no reasons to not appoint ad hoc judges in High Courts with large vacancies*” Lok Prahar filed a PIL WP (C) No. 1236 of 2019 for use of Articles 224-A and 128 for expediting disposal and reducing pendency in High Courts and Supreme Court. This non-adversarial PIL was filed so that the purpose of making these provisions to expedite dispensation of justice is fulfilled and the litigants’ right to speedy

justice promised in the Preamble, guaranteed under Article 21 and mandated under Article 39-A is not thwarted due to chronic shortage of judges in the higher judiciary resulting in huge pendency and consequent delay in disposal.

It was brought out in the said petition that despite the aforesaid provisions and the concern expressed by the Apex Court from time to time – as in (1980) 1 SCC 81, (1997) 9 SCC 377, AIR 1999 Del. 80 and recently in 2017 (1) SCALE 164 -**speedy justice has been eluding litigants mainly due to shortage of judges.** Also, as noted in D.D. Basu's Commentary on the Constitution, while absence of quorum of permanent judges is a condition precedent for exercise of power under Article 127, *there is no such condition precedent under Article 128* and he may be appointed **in addition to** sanctioned strength. Hence, the provision in Article 128 can be gainfully used to augment the working strength of the Apex Court. By appointing 4 ad hoc Judges to sit in the regular Benches for disposal of routine cases, four permanent judges (may be future Chief Justices-to ensure continuity and consistency) can be spared to have a standing Constitution Bench, which may be expanded from time to time to larger Bench for disposal of old cases pending before such Benches for years. *Their disposal will also contain unnecessary multiplicity of litigation in various High Courts and, consequently, the Apex Court, due to authoritative settlement of important constitutional issues involved in such cases.*

In the well considered detailed judgment dated **20.4.2021** by a 3 Judge Bench presided by the then CJI Hon'ble Mr. Justice ...Bobde under the heading ‘The Challenge Before the Judiciary’ the Hon'ble Court observed as follows-

“20. It is trite to say that we have a docket explosion in our country and that it is difficult for adjudication to take place within a

reasonable period of time. This crisis situation must be tackled. Some innovation is always the rule of the game. In the present context, may be a slightly different view has to be taken in respect of the avowed purpose of Article 224A providing for ad hoc judges.”

After discussing the existing system of filling up the vacancies, the Hon'ble Court under the heading ‘The Challenge Ahead’ observed as follows-

“40. We have little doubt that challenge of mounting arrears and existing vacancies requires recourse to Article 224A of the Constitution to appoint ad-hoc judges which is a ready pool of talent, (of course subject to their concurrence) as a methodology especially for clearing the old cases. The existing strength of permanent and additional judges can be utilized for current and not so old cases. The ad-hoc judges are absolved even from the administrative responsibilities. They can concentrate on old cases which are stuck in the system and may require greater experience. For example, it is often perceived that a Regular Second Appeal is an area of concern and the more experienced judges are able to attend to this area with more promptness.

41. We see no reason why there should be an unending debate of taking recourse to Article 224A when such a provision exists in the Constitution. It should not be made a dead letter, more so when the need is so pressing.

42. We are unable to accept the plea of the learned Attorney General that though the Government of India may not have any in principle opposition to the aforesaid, first the existing vacancies should be filled in. In our view, this would be a self-defeating argument because the very reason why at present Article 224A has been resorted to is non- filling up of vacancies and the mounting arrears. We may, however, hasten to add that the objective is not to appoint ad-hoc judges instead of judges to be appointed to the regular strength of the

High Court (apprehension expressed by Mr. Vikas Singh, Senior Counsel, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association). The very provision makes it clear that it does not in any way constrain or limit the regular appointment process and consent of the retired judge is sought to sit and act as a judge of the High Court. One may say that this largely a transitory methodology till all the appointment processes are in place, though that may not be the only reason to take recourse to the aforesaid Article.”

Finally, while noticing that “*it is a common case that the present proceedings are not adversarial but a method to make the provisions of Article 224A into a practical and working arrangement*” the Hon’ble Court was pleased to issue detailed guidelines to activate the dormant provision in Article 224-A and the matter was ordered to be listed **after four months** calling upon the Ministry of Justice to file a report in respect of the progress made. However, for some inexplicable reason best known to the SC Registry despite repeated requests of the petitioner in person (General Secretary, Lok Prahar) up to the highest level it was listed only **after 16 months** on 14.9.2022 *without even notice to him*. On that date Id. AG sought time to file a status report and was ordered to be listed on 27.9.2022 but was not taken up. Thereafter, it was listed on 7.12.2022, but had to be adjourned to 8.12.2022 due to non availability of Id. AG. On 8.12.2022 it was ordered to be listed on 8.2.2023, but was not listed. Upon mention by Amicus Curiae on 16.3.2023 it was ordered to be listed on 25.4.2023, but again was not listed and for some inexplicable reason **has remained unlisted so far** despite repeated requests at various levels including the Chief Justice of India **whose suggestion had prompted this PIL**. Evidently, nothing substantial has been done in the last two and

a half years. So much for the implementation of the Court’s own well considered judgment in this matter of great importance to litigants whose cases have been languishing in High Courts for decades.

Not only this, a copy of the status report mentioned in the order dated 8.12.2022 was not served on the petitioner before filing, nor has it been made available even till now despite emails dated 7.12.2022 and 15.12.2022 to the Registrar. Also, copy of any note filed by the Id. Attorney General and Amicus Curiae in terms of the order dated 8.12.2022 has also not been received so far. The Union of India and the Supreme Court have also not filed their response to the following applications dated 29.6.2021 of the petitioner-

- (i) IA No. 72382 of 2021 for modification of the order dated 20.4.2021 to provide that, *in view of the unquestionable need to appoint more judges urgently* the Registrar Generals of High Courts shall also file similar progress reports to the Secretary General of the Apex Court.
- (ii) IA No. 72386 of 2021 for further relief by way of utilization Article 128 also to augment the working strength of the Apex Court for having a standing Constitution Bench and expedite disposal of old cases in terms of suggestion in para 10 of the IA.

The reluctance of the Ministry to act on the judgment dated 20.4.2021 is also evident from the failure of the Id. Attorney General and his associates to bring the correct position to the notice of the Court at the time of hearing on 14.9.2022 and 8.12.2022. The judgment dated 20.4.2021 did not put any “*bar of not more than 20% vacancies for making recommendations for ad hoc judges*” as mentioned in the order dated 14.9.2022. In fact, as per para 53 of the

judgment, the very first ‘Trigger Point for activation’ of Article 224-A is “*if the vacancies are more than 20% of the sanctioned strength*”. The only “embargo” in para 54 of the judgment was that “*if recommendations have not been made for more than 20% of the regular vacancies then the trigger for recourse to Article 224-A would not arise*”. Thus, while this stipulation in para 54 of the judgment also needs to be addressed, *upon making recommendations for 80% vacancies*, ad-hoc judges could very well be appointed pending regular appointments. *Hence, there was no valid excuse for the Chief Justices of the concerned High Courts and the Ministry of Law & Justice not to act on the judgment to the detriment of the hapless litigants waiting for years for their cases to be heard.*

Vide email dated 30.3.2023 the Secretary General of the Supreme Court was requested to enlighten us as to why the matter was not being listed despite categorical date fixed order dated 8.12.2022. After emails dated 28.4.2023 and 10.5.2023 the Bench Officer vide email dated 16.5.2023 informed that no further email will be entertained in future in this regard in accordance with the provisions of the Supreme Court Rules. Thereupon, vide email dated 17.5.2023 the Registry was requested to enlighten about the specific relevant Rule in the Supreme Court Rules which empowers the Registry to ignore or modify a categorical date fixed judicial order of the Hon’ble Court. However, there has been no response to it. Consequently, the two Interlocutory Applications filed on **29.6.2021** for modification of the order dated 20.4.2021 and for further relief regarding utilization of Article 128 to augment working strength of the Apex Court have also have also remained unheard due to non-listing of the main matter.

The aforesaid applications have remained

pending despite being mentioned on the last date. Accordingly, an IA dated 2.2.2023 was filed online for disposal of the aforesaid applications. It is, therefore, necessary that to ensure meaningful implementation of the judgment dated 20.4.2021-

- (i) The order dated 14.9.2022 for invoking Article 224-A is clarified in terms of paras 53 and 54 of the judgment dated 20.4.2021.
- (ii) The IAs no. 72382 of 2021 and 68129 of 2022 are allowed.
- (iii) Such other order or direction is passed as may be considered fit to ensure that the judgment dated 20.4.2021 is acted upon ***in its true spirit in a time bound manner*** both by the High Courts and the Ministry.

It is distressing that instead of taking prompt effective steps for utilizing the beneficial provision in Article 224-A, for some inexplicable reason the Central Government and the Chief Justices of High Courts with huge pendency have been dragging their feet for the last two years in acting on the well considered judgment dated 20.4.2021 to provide relief to the litigants, and thereby frustrating the mandate to provide speedy justice as envisaged in Articles 21 and 39-A of the Constitution and the decisions of the Apex Court itself. Not only this, the petitioner’s application dated 29.6.2021 for utilization Article 128 also to augment the working strength of the Apex Court for having a standing Constitution Bench to expedite disposal of Constitution and larger Bench cases has also remained unheard till now. In this context, the recent reported statement of the present CJI that Constitution benches of different strength shall henceforth be a permanent feature is certainly a long overdue welcome reform.

**S.N. Shukla** is I.A.S. (retd.), Advocate, General Secretary, Lok Prahari 

# Gone to the Dogs

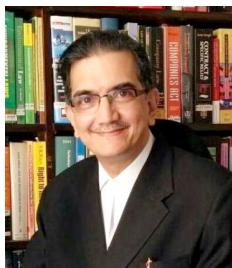
Raju Z. Moray

The story is not new  
But someone has to tell  
A stray dog on the street  
Bit a supreme counsel  
His bandaged hand held  
What looked like his brief  
This was just enough to  
Catch attention of Big Chief  
This was more important  
Than facts of the matter  
The injured hand helped  
To instigate much chatter  
Do you need a doctor?  
It's the least we can do  
But first you must tell us  
Who did this to you?  
Milords it's a menace  
A stray dog attacked me  
Of the many black coats  
Wonder why it tracked me?

(13.9.2023)



The SG rose to proclaim  
Something must be done!  
It's of national importance  
To stop the strays free run  
Big Chief said once his clerk  
Was attacked, God knows why?  
But he still performed duties  
Once bitten, twice shy  
This led to a big debate  
About man's best friend  
Some spoke for it's freedom  
Others wanted it to end  
SG kept getting up and  
Interjecting impromptu  
"Milords must take this up  
And do it soon suo motu!"  
Big Chief smiled and rose  
System retained its clogs  
Some said they understood  
Why it has gone to the dogs



**Raju Z. Moray** practices law in Mumbai. For more than 30 years he has been a contributor of articles and poems to publications of the Lawyers Collective. An anthology of his humorous writing for 'The Lawyers' magazine was published in 2017 as 'Court Jester' and the series of 60 poems he penned during the 2020 Lockdown for 'The Leaflet' has been published in December 2020 as 'The Locked Down Lawyer'. His poems have been appearing in The Radical Humanist.

## 'If Modi comes back in 2024, India... Contd. from page - (34 )

Furthermore, Kejriwal has an instinct for rabble-rousing politics which the alliance will need if it is to carve out some space in the media discourse.

Finally, I would look out for Naveen Patnaik, the CM of Odisha and the head of the BJD, the ruling party there. Patnaik seems to have a good sense of which way the wind is blowing. Right now, his recent statements suggest he sees Modi and the BJP coming back.

Just the other day, he told reporters that he would give the government an 8 out of 10 rating — which is high after a decade. If he were to start to waver and perhaps flirt with the INDIA alliance, I think that is a sign that not all is well with the BJP's re-election campaign.

**Feature Presentation: Aslam Hunani/Rediff.com**

Courtesy Rediff.com, September 29, 2023. 

## Photos of General Membership Meeting 24.9.2023 NOIDA



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